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HERCULES COLLINS:  
ORTHODOX, PURITAN, BAPTIST

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
Garry Stephen Weaver, Jr.

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**APPROVAL SHEET**

HERCULES COLLINS:  
ORTHODOX, PURITAN, BAPTIST

Garry Stephen Weaver, Jr.

Read and Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas J. Nettles (Chair)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael A. G. Haykin

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gregg R. Allison

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To Gretta,  
my amazing wife,  
whose sacrificial care for me and our children  
made it possible for me to complete this work,  
and to our six children,  
Haddon, Hannah, Isaac, Jonathan, Lydia, and Katherine,  
who are indeed a treasure from the Lord.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

*BDBR* *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals*

*BQ* *The Baptist Quarterly*

*DNB* *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

*WCB* *Wapping Church Book, 1676–1712*. This handwritten minute book is housed in the archives of the Strict Baptist Historical Society in Dunstable, England.



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## PREFACE

I still remember the first time I stepped onto the campus of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I had arrived late on a Sunday night in January of 2002 for my first “J-Term” class, which was scheduled to begin the next day. Accompanied by my friend and fellow East Tennessee Extension Center student Mark Martin, I walked into an empty and silent Norton Hall. I was in awe of the beauty of the buildings, but more so of the seminary’s legacy of confessional fidelity that had been recovered under the leadership of President R. Albert Mohler, Jr. As I walked by the office of Dr. Mohler (then on the first floor of Norton Hall), I was reminded of the reason I had become a Southern Baptist in the first place. It had been the theological commitment to biblical inerrancy in the Convention’s entities brought about the Conservative Resurgence that had brought this former Independent Baptist into the fold. The campus at 2825 Lexington Road was a tangible reminder that I was part of something bigger than myself and my small local church. Our participation in the Cooperative Program allowed us to have an investment around the globe in the work of God. One very important part of that work for Southern Baptists for over one hundred and fifty years has been Southern Seminary. Over a decade later, I still never walk onto the campus of Southern Seminary without a tremendous sense of gratefulness to God for the privilege of attending such a historic and strategic institution.

I completed my Master of Divinity while serving as a pastor in East Tennessee. While as a student at the extension center in Maryville, Tennessee, I was encouraged especially by professors Chad Owen Brand and M. David Sills. These men enabled me to believe that Ph.D. work was a possibility for me. I remain grateful for their

encouragement then, and their friendship now. Although my love for history dates back to my reading of baseball history books as a child, I first remember a desire to do historical research while taking a course on the history of Baptists with Gregory A. Wills in the summer of 2003. His combination of meticulous historical research and impeccable Christian piety is one which I hope to emulate. As a Ph.D. student at Southern, I have been challenged and encouraged by what seems like the entire faculty, but especially professors Gregg R. Allison, Michael A. G. Haykin, Thomas J. Nettles, David L. Puckett, Gregory A. Wills, and Shawn D. Wright.

While at Southern, I have been afforded the opportunity to work closely with two of the premier Baptist historians alive today. I will forever be grateful for the privilege of having Thomas J. Nettles as my doctoral supervisor. His trust of my instincts and confidence in my ability have been both inspiring and intimidating. To know Dr. Nettles is to know a Christian gentleman whose very demeanor makes one want to be a more devoted follower of Christ. Words alone will never be able to repay the debt that I owe to Michael A. G. Haykin. Without him I likely would never have had the opportunity to pursue Ph.D. studies. God, in his providence, used this man to open the door for me to study at Southern. Dr. Haykin has been my teacher, boss, mentor, and friend. In every relationship, he has been a model of Christian piety. His investment in me is such that every academic opportunity that I have heretofore have been given, or ever shall be given, can be credited in some way to his influence and support. I must also express gratitude to Russell D. Moore, who has always encouraged me and whose hiring of Michael A. G. Haykin in 2007 paved the way for me to serve as Dr. Haykin's research assistant for the past five years.

Farmdale Baptist Church has been home for me and my family for the past five years as I have pursued doctoral studies. This church family has been loving and supportive every step of the way. They have not begrudged the time that I have spent in seminars or writing this dissertation. They have loved me and my family and have shown

it by their prayers and financial support. There is no doubt that God placed us at Farmdale, and we are thankful for the opportunity to serve Christ's people here.

Of course, most supportive of my academic endeavors has been my family. My parents, Garry and Jan Weaver, have always encouraged and supported me in every pursuit. As long as I can remember, they have been a model of sacrificial service to Christ. I am thankful for their example and investment in my life. They have recently reenlisted as missionaries at an age when many would be considering retirement. Their desire to finish strong and to see the nations reached with the gospel is a challenge and inspiration to me. They are my heroes. My brother and sister, Jeremy Weaver and Elizabeth Ramseyer, have been more than siblings; they have been lifelong friends who always bring laughter into my life. My grandparents, Frank and Hazel Weaver, have also been supportive throughout this long educational process. Their prayers and financial gifts have been used by God to meet needs at just the right time. My wife, Gretta, and our children have been patient with my long hours of writing and a constant source of encouragement. The children's questions of "Are you done yet?" have provided motivation to finish the job as soon as possible. Gretta has always supported me, and her care for me and the children during what must have seemed like an eternity to her, is the key reason why I have been able to complete this project. Therefore, this dissertation is dedicated to her and our children, all of whom I adore.

Among the many who have provided academic assistance are the staff of the James P. Boyce Centennial Library at Southern Seminary, the staff of the British Library in London, the staff of the Angus Library at Regent's Park College, Oxford University, and Lara Beth Lehman, Curriculum Materials Center Manager at Peabody Library, Vanderbilt University. Special thanks go to the Strict Baptist Historical Society and its librarian David Woodruff. The Society's Library and Archives possesses the *Wapping Church Book*, which has been invaluable to this dissertation. In September 2011, not only did David Woodruff allow me access to this historic manuscript, he also assisted me in

photographing it. Even more graciously, he opened his home to me and allowed me to spend a very pleasant evening with his family. A word of thanks should also be extended to the Church Hill Baptist Church, Walthamstow, the present-day descendent of the Wapping Church, who generously donated the *Wapping Church Book* to the Strict Baptist Historical Society's Archives.

Two individuals deserve special recognition for their assistance on this project. Larry J. Kreitzer, Fellow at Regent's Park College, Oxford, was unbelievably generous with his time during my research trip to England. Not only did he show me the ins and outs of the London Metropolitan Archives, he has since also graciously provided images by e-mail of materials related to my research which he has come across, as well as answering numerous queries. His discoveries have been invaluable in assisting me to illuminate the historical background of Hercules Collins. James M. Renihan, Dean of The Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies at Westminster Seminary California, has likewise provided gracious assistance to me in this project. His kind sharing of research materials allowed me to check secondary sources against the primary sources.

Throughout this dissertation, in the citations of primary sources, the original punctuation, capitalization, and spelling have been retained, with the exception of the long *s*, which has been converted to its modern equivalent. All dates, however, have been adjusted for a new year beginning on January 1.

Louisville, Kentucky  
December 2013

Steve Weaver

CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

**Personal Interest**

I first became interested in Hercules Collins after Michael A. G. Haykin suggested him to me as “a largely neglected figure” in Baptist life.<sup>1</sup> At first the uniqueness of his given name intrigued me and drew me to look into his life and ministry more closely. As I examined what little I could find about the life and writings of Hercules Collins, I was even more attracted to this forgotten pastor. He had published a catechism, written on believer’s baptism, experienced persecution, signed the Second London Confession of Faith, and served as the pastor of London’s oldest Baptist church for twenty-six years. All of these factors combined to give me a settled motivation to research and write about Hercules Collins.

Later that year, Michael A. G. Haykin asked me to co-author a volume with him which focused on the piety of Hercules Collins as seen in his life and writings. This small volume was published by Reformation Heritage Books in 2007 as “*Devoted to the Service of the Temple*”: *Persecution, Piety, and Ministry in the Writings of Hercules Collins*.<sup>2</sup> The research for this volume required that I read all of Hercules Collins’ writings, mining them for excerpts demonstrating his piety. This work only served to deepen my appreciation for Hercules Collins and my commitment to continue to work to bring to light his writings which had long been neglected. The small book of 139 pages

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<sup>1</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, e-mail message to author, February 20, 2006.

<sup>2</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin and Steve Weaver, eds., “*Devoted to the Service of the Temple*”: *Persecution, Piety, and Ministry in the Writings of Hercules Collins* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007).

which resulted from my research is the only book-length treatment of Collins printed in the three hundred plus years since his death.

### State of the Question

As mentioned above, the only full book devoted to the study of the life and writings of Hercules Collins is the one that Michael A. G. Haykin and I published in 2007.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Collins has not been completely unknown to Baptist historians. The two earliest English Baptist historians, Thomas Crosby and Joseph Ivimey, contained biographical sketches of Collins,<sup>4</sup> which were largely dependent upon Collins' funeral sermon preached by John Piggott.<sup>5</sup> Between Collins' death and Crosby's *The History of the English Baptists*, only the aforementioned funeral sermon by John Piggott was published. Between Crosby and Ivimey, however, selections from Collins' work on the decrees of God<sup>6</sup> were published in a work featuring "extracts from sundry old and eminent divines."<sup>7</sup> Also during this period, John Bailey<sup>8</sup> republished Collins' book on believer's baptism<sup>9</sup> twice, in 1803<sup>10</sup> and 1808<sup>11</sup> respectively. In 1846, the final chapter of

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<sup>3</sup>For shorter treatments, see also Michael A. G. Haykin, "Collins, Hercules (d. 1702)," in *DNB*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Michael A. G. Haykin, "Hercules Collins and the Art of Preaching," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: Calvinistic Baptists in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Times, 2006), 21-26.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists, From the Reformation to the Beginning of the Reign of King George I* (London, 1740), 3:129-30; and Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists* (London, 1814), 2:273-74.

<sup>5</sup>John Piggott, *Eleven Sermons Preach'd Upon Special Occasions* (London: John Darby, 1714), 199-240.

<sup>6</sup>Hercules Collins, *Mountains of Brass, Or, A Discourse upon the Decrees of God* (London: John Harris, 1690).

<sup>7</sup>R[ichard] H[all], *A Library of Divinity: Or, Select Extracts From Sundry Old and Eminent Divines, Collected in a Course of Reading for Private Use* (London: George Keith, 1780). Collins was the only Particular Baptist cited.

<sup>8</sup>This pastor of the Particular Baptist Church at Zoar-Chapel, Great Alie Street, Goodman's Fields wrote an autobiographical account. See John Bailey, *The Poor Pilgrim: In a Series of Letters. Being Some Account of the Life and Experience of J. Bailey, Etc.* (London: E. Justins, 1810).

<sup>9</sup>Hercules Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven, and of Divine Institution. Infants-Baptism from Earth, and Human Invention* (London: J. Hancock, 1691).

*Believers-Baptism from Heaven* was republished as an article in *The Baptist Memorial and Monthly Record* under the title “The Reputed Anabaptists of Germany.”<sup>12</sup>

Apart from these few sightings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Collins, like most of his seventeenth-century Baptist contemporaries, was indeed largely neglected. He has, however, been cited by some twentieth-century Baptist historians for his contributions in at least three important areas of Baptist studies: theories of Baptist origins, the beginning of hymn-singing among the Particular Baptists, and the education of Baptist ministers.

In his controversial work exploring Baptist origins published near the turn of the twentieth century,<sup>13</sup> William H. Whitsitt called Hercules Collins “one of the foremost Baptist pastors of the day.”<sup>14</sup> Whitsitt cited a passage from Collins’ work *Believers-Baptism from Heaven* as evidence that the seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists did not acknowledge that their baptism had been derived from John Smyth. Collins had written,

Could not the Ordinance of Christ *which was lost in the apostasy be revived . . .*  
unless in such a filthy way as you falsely assert, viz., that the English Baptists  
received their Baptism from Mr. John Smyth? It is absolutely untrue, it being well

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<sup>10</sup>Hercules Collins and John Bailey, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven, and of Divine Institution. Infants-Baptism from Earth, and Human Invention. Proved from the Commission of Christ. With a Brief, yet Sufficient Answer to Thomas Wall’s Book, Called, Baptism Anatomized. Together with a Brief Answer to a Part of Mr. Daniel Williams’s Catechism, in His Book Unto Youth* (London: E. Justins, 1803).

<sup>11</sup>Hercules Collins and John Bailey, *Believers’ Baptism from Heaven, and of Divine Institution: Infant Baptism from Earth, and of Human Invention: Proved from the Commission of Christ, the Great Lawgiver to the Gospel Church* (London: E. Justins, 1808).

<sup>12</sup>Hercules Collins, “The Reputed Anabaptists of Germany,” *The Baptist Memorial and Monthly Record* 5, no. 11 (November 1846): 330-34. This chapter was defense of the Anabaptists of Europe with whom the English Baptists were often associated and derided.

<sup>13</sup>William H. Whitsitt, *A Question in Baptist History: Whether the Anabaptists in England Practiced Immersion Before the Year 1641?* (Louisville: Chas. T. Dearing, 1896). The controversy surrounding this book became known as “The Whitsitt Controversy.” Whitsitt, the third president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, published his research showing that contrary to the traditional successionist view of Baptist history, immersion did not begin to be practiced in England until 1641. For a recent treatment of this controversy, see James H. Slatton, *W. H. Whitsitt: The Man and the Controversy* (Atlanta: Mercer University Press, 2009).

<sup>14</sup>Whitsitt, *A Question in Baptist History*, 142.



known by some yet alive how false this assertion is.<sup>15</sup>

After giving this quote, Whitsitt opines,

This Baptist minister here concedes that the ordinance of Christ had been “lost in the apostasy” and that it had been “revived. . . . Mr. Collins stood at the turn of the seventeenth century, having passed away in the year 1702, sixty-one years after the introduction of immersion among his people, and yet the facts were still well known to him and he without embarrassment conceded the loss of immersion and its revival in England.<sup>16</sup>

Whitsitt clearly believed that the statement, which Collins apparently made in passing, was an important piece in his case against the perpetuity of Baptist churches in England.

In 1680, Collins produced a Baptist version of the Heidelberg Catechism which included an appendix in which Collins argues for the duty of congregational singing.<sup>17</sup> James Barry Vaughn has suggested that Keach first instituted the practice in his local congregation, then Collins, influenced by Keach’s practice, argued for it in print first.<sup>18</sup> The authors of a recent magisterial treatment of North American Baptist hymnody follow Vaughn’s suggestion in their survey of the British background to Baptist hymn-singing.<sup>19</sup> More research, however, is required in this area to ascertain when Collins first instituted hymn-singing in the Wapping congregation. This information, combined with the research that has already been done on Keach’s implementation of hymn-singing, should provide an answer to the beginning of this important aspect of Baptist life.

A final key area in which Collins has been cited by modern historians is for his

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<sup>15</sup>Collins, *Believer’s Baptism from Heaven*, 115, cited in Whitsitt, *A Question in Baptist History*, 143. Whitsitt is actually citing Henry Martyn Dexter’s citation of Collins in his *The True Story of John Smyth, the Se-Baptist, As Told By Himself and His Contemporaries; With an Inquiry Whether Dipping Were a New Mode of Baptism in England, in or about 1641* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1881), 48n27.

<sup>16</sup>Whitsitt, *A Question in Baptist History*, 143.

<sup>17</sup>For more information on “the hymn-singing controversy,” see Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach* (Leeds, England: Reformation Today Trust, 1996), 91-96. For an in-depth treatment, see James C. Brooks, “Benjamin Keach and the Baptist Singing Controversy: Mediating Scripture, Confessional Heritage, and Christian Unity” (Ph.D. diss., The Florida State University, 2006).

<sup>18</sup>James Barry Vaughn, “Public Worship and Practical Theology in the Work of Benjamin Keach (1640–1704)” (Ph.D. diss., St. Mary’s College, University of St. Andrews, 1989), 162.

<sup>19</sup>David W. Music and Paul A. Richardson, *“I Will Sing the Wondrous Story”: A History of Baptist Hymnody in North America* (Atlanta: Mercer University Press, 2008), 9.

role in promoting the education of ministers. H. Leon McBeth has declared in his standard work of Baptist history that Hercules Collins' *The Temple Repair'd* "set the tone of Baptist emphasis upon education."<sup>20</sup> Collins is normally seen as representing a turning point in Baptist life from an uneducated ministry to a learned one. This reading of Collins too deserves some further analysis. In order to interpret *The Temple Repair'd* properly, one must read it in light of the sixty year debate in print during the period. Only then will it be clear whether Collins represented a dramatic break with previous Baptist thought on the education of ministers.

In recent years, the name of Hercules Collins has come up in a surprising place: gender studies. Patricia Crawford has used an incident from the seventeenth century involving a woman in Hercules Collins' congregation as an illustration of how women were treated in seventeenth-century Nonconformity.<sup>21</sup> In 1694, Honour Gould desired to move her membership from the Wapping to the Maze Pond church because she did not enjoy or profit from Collins' preaching. She was refused admission at Maze Pond because Collins denied her allegations. This instance is cited as evidence that women were not allowed to criticize their ministers in Baptist churches in the latter part of the seventeenth century.

Although Collins has not been completely forgotten by Baptist historians, he has largely been reduced to the status of a footnote for various authors' arguments on matters of historical debate. These matters are not unimportant. They are matters of justified curiosity among scholars of the period. Therefore, I plan to address these issues in the dissertation at relevant points. However, this dissertation will argue for a much greater significance for Hercules Collins.

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<sup>20</sup>H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 192.

<sup>21</sup>Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500–1720* (London: Routledge, 1993), 200-201.

## **Thesis and Methodology**

### **Thesis**

This dissertation will argue that the writings of Hercules Collins demonstrate that he, and by extension his fellow Particular Baptists, viewed themselves as faithfully operating within both the historic Nicene-Christianity shown in the early creeds and the Protestant orthodoxy codified by the Westminster Assembly in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Collins' writings demonstrate that he affirmed historic Christianity and those evangelical doctrines hammered out in the Protestant Reformation. In order to prove this thesis, I will show Collins' prominence among the Particular Baptist community, as well as how representative Collins was of that community. This dissertation will show that Collins was not only a respected member of the Particular Baptist community, but also that he can be seen as a faithful representative of that community. An examination of Collins' commitment to historic Christianity and Protestant orthodoxy can therefore serve as an opportunity to understand better the doctrinal commitments of seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists.

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this dissertation is to clarify the pervasive influence and representative status of Hercules Collins. His importance in Baptist life far exceeds the brief references given to him on questions of Baptist origins, the beginning of hymn-singing, the education of ministers, or the oppression of women. Instead, the writings of Hercules Collins provide a window into understanding how seventeenth-century Baptists viewed themselves in relationship to historic Christianity and Puritan orthodoxy. This dissertation will examine Hercules Collins in his own historical context, in his own words, and as a pastor of a congregation of believers. As such, the primary sources for

this work will be of two kinds: the published writings of Hercules Collins,<sup>22</sup> and the unpublished Wapping church minute book, which begins with the start of his pastorate in 1677.<sup>23</sup> Research will demonstrate that Collins consciously situated himself in his published writings within a theological framework that was committed to historic Christianity, Protestant orthodoxy and Baptist ecclesiology. This will be further illustrated by his collaboration with other ministers who likewise identified themselves in this framework. An examination of the Wapping minute book will demonstrate how these convictions worked themselves out in the context of the local church.

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<sup>22</sup>See the bibliography of this dissertation for the complete list, as well as Appendix 1, which places the publications of Collins in a timeline of key events in his life.

<sup>23</sup>*Wapping Church Book, 1676–1712*. This minute book is currently held in the archives of the Strict Baptist Historical Society, which are housed at the Dunstable Baptist Church in Dunstable, Bedfordshire, United Kingdom.

## CHAPTER 2

### “FAITHFUL TO THE LAST”: THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF HERCULES COLLINS

In his funeral sermon for Hercules Collins, John Piggott described his recently departed friend as “Faithful to the last.”<sup>1</sup> He described the way that Collins was “not shock’d by the Fury of Persecutors, tho he suffer’d Imprisonment for the Name of Christ.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Collins’ life was characterized by faithfulness during the midst of a time of great persecution. Hercules Collins was born in c. 1646,<sup>3</sup> into a world of unprecedented political, social and religious upheaval. This period of history has been described by historians variously as the century of revolution, a time when the world was turned upside down, and an era when the entire British monarchy was transformed.<sup>4</sup> It was a century plagued by Civil War and the execution of the monarch, Charles I. It was a century divided by an Interregnum that featured a republican Commonwealth (1649–1653) and the Protectorate of the Cromwells, Oliver (1653–1658) and Richard (1658–1659). This period was succeeded by the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II in 1660 and the Glorious Revolution of 1688 when James II was deposed from the thrones

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<sup>1</sup>John Piggott, *Eleven Sermons Preach’d Upon Several Occasions, By the Late Reverend Mr. John Piggott, Minister of the Gospel. Being all that were Printed in his Life-time* (London: John Darby, 1714), 235. For the quotation of primary source materials, the punctuation, capitalization and spelling of the originals are maintained, with the exception of the long *s*, which has been converted to its modern equivalent.

<sup>2</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 235.

<sup>3</sup>The date of his birth can be deduced from his tombstone in Bunhill Fields, which states that when Collins died in 1702, he was in his 56th year. For the tombstone inscription, see Appendix 2.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, the following titles of works on seventeenth-century England: Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603–1714* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2006); idem, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1985); Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1603–1714* (London: Penguin Books, 1997).

of England, Scotland, and Ireland.<sup>5</sup> When Collins was born, the First English Civil War (1642–1646) was at its end bringing a temporary cessation of hostilities before the resumption of fighting in 1648.<sup>6</sup> The king of England was being held in custody by Parliament who would eventually put him on trial with the result of his being found guilty of treason against the people of England on January 27, 1649.<sup>7</sup> The king was beheaded three days later. Collins lived his first fourteen years in the Commonwealth. Collins would also live through the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II in 1660 and the Glorious Revolution of William of Orange in 1688.

Not only was the seventeenth century a period of great political upheaval, remarkable changes were also taking place in society. Historian Mark Kishlansky well describes the societal advances of the period:

It is astonishing to reflect on the achievements of Britain's seventeenth century. The period that coincided with the rule of the Stuarts (1603–1714) introduced so much that defined the nation for decades to come, and so much that remains vibrant today. The modern business world was born; science came of age; literature matured as never before or after; feudal forms withered; torture, witchcraft and heresy died away. . . . In 1603 Britain was an isolated archipelago; in 1714 it was among the intellectual, commercial and military centres of the world.<sup>8</sup>

It is certain that by the time that Hercules Collins died in 1702, England was a very different place than it had been when the seventeenth century had begun.

In addition to the great political and societal upheavals during the seventeenth century, the religious world was also experiencing dramatic change. In the year of Collins' birth the Westminster Assembly of Puritan divines produced the Westminster

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<sup>5</sup>For a detailed look at the Glorious Revolution, see Steve Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>6</sup>For a recent interpretation of how the British Civil Wars shaped modern Britain, see Diane Purkiss, *The English Civil War: Papists, Gentlewomen, Soldiers, and Witchfinders in the Birth of Modern Britain* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

<sup>7</sup>For the fascinating story of John Cooke, the lawyer who prosecuted the case against the king, see Geoffrey Robertson, *The Tyrannicide Brief: The Story of the Man Who Sent Charles I to the Scaffold* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2005).

<sup>8</sup>Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 1.

Confession of Faith. The publication of this confession of faith and its accompanying catechisms brought to a climax, in the words of John H. Leith, “in a grand and monumental way one of the very great theological periods in the history of the Christian church.”<sup>9</sup> In 1689, Collins would affix his name, along with thirty-six other Particular Baptist ministers, to a revision of the Westminster Confession known today as the Second London Confession of Faith, to demonstrate his “hearty agreement with them, in that wholesom Protestant Doctrin.”<sup>10</sup>

### Early Life and Family

Nothing is known of the parents of Hercules Collins or his childhood. What is known is that John Piggott noted in his funeral sermon for Collins that he “began to be religious early.”<sup>11</sup> This probably meant that he was raised in a Christian home which resulted in an early exposure to the gospel. Michael A. G. Haykin has pondered the curious possibility that Christian parents would name their son after a pagan Greek hero. He offers as one possible explanation that the parents wanted their son to be known for “great exploits for Christ” just as the legendary Hercules was known for his “great feats of strength and heroism.”<sup>12</sup> Although one can only speculate about Collins’ childhood based on the cryptic statement from Piggott, we do know for certain that by his early twenties Collins was already committed to the dissenting cause. In the year 1696, in a work titled *Three Books*, Collins refers to a time some twenty-seven years prior when “Some of those Experiences contained in the first and second Books, were felt and begun

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<sup>9</sup>John H. Leith, *Assembly at Westminster: Reformed Theology in the Making* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1973), 11.

<sup>10</sup>*A Confession of Faith, Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations Of Christians (Baptized upon Profession of their Faith) In London and the Countrey*, 3rd ed. (London: S. Bridge, 1699), “To the Judicious and Impartial Reader”; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 245.

<sup>11</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 235.

<sup>12</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin and Steve Weaver, eds., *Devoted to the Service of the Temple: Piety, Persecution, and Ministry in the Writings of Hercules Collins* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007), 1-2.

upon my Heart.”<sup>13</sup> This comment probably recalls Collins’ beginning as a preacher or at least as a serious student of Scripture in 1669 at the age of twenty-three. By the next year, the name “Hercules Collins” appears in the public records when he was arrested along with thirteen others for assembling in a conventicle in violation of the newly enacted Conventicle Act of May 1670.<sup>14</sup>

Collins was married to Sara Peirson on September 6, 1669 in the small village of Croxton, which is about 13 miles west of Cambridge.<sup>15</sup> They were married for just over thirty-three years when Sara was parted from her husband by his death on October 4, 1702. Their union was blessed with at least one child, a boy named Joshua, who was born c. 1673. Personal references are sparse in Collins’ writings. He does, however, allow a veiled glimpse into some family members in his comments in a work titled *A Scribe Instructed into the Kingdom of Heaven*. In one particular section Collins argues the proposition that “God doth sometimes inlay his People with encouraging Words and Promises, to prepare them to meet God in the way of Affliction, before he sends his Waves and Billows over them.”<sup>16</sup> While discussing how various individuals have received comfort from Scripture during time of trials, Collins recalls: “That was a preparative Word against a Day of Trial of dear Relations, that was given a Child of eleven years and half old, about six months before he died, the Words of *Solomon*, Prov. 27.1. *Boast not thy self of to morrow, for who knows what a day may bring forth?*”<sup>17</sup> This

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<sup>13</sup>Hercules Collins, *Three Books* (London, 1696), iii.

<sup>14</sup>Sessions of the Peace Rolls for 27 June 1670–MJ/SR/1389 (file numbers P1010140–P1010150). This document lists the names of Hercules Collins and the thirteen others who were arrested and sent to the *Nova Prisons*, or New Prison on 29 June 1670. The key text reads, “Peter Sabbs for refusing to tell their m[ee]ting?] they being taken at a conventicle & other misdemeanours.” Collins and his fellow conventiclars must not have been in prison long, for there is no record of them in prison at the next court record for 29 August 1670.

<sup>15</sup>*Cambridgeshire Parish Registers*, vol. 4, *Marriages* (London: Phillimore & Co, 1907), 70.

<sup>16</sup>Collins, *Three Books*, 19.

<sup>17</sup>Collins, *Three Books*, 20-21.



is probably a reference to Hercules and Sara's own son whom they buried on September 19, 1685.<sup>18</sup> John Piggott's comments in his funeral sermon for Hercules regarding "how well he carried it under the affliction he had with a near relation, you cannot but know" may have been a tactful reference to this very difficult private tragedy. Adding weight to this assessment is the sentence following Collins' citation of Proverbs 27:1 in which he goes on to speak of his "dearest relation," presumably his wife: "The Substance of this last Proposition, is a small part of the Experience of my dearest Relation, under variety of Temptations."<sup>19</sup> This admittedly ambiguous statement probably indicates that Hercules' wife was a believer who had experienced encouragement from Scripture during numerous trials, including the death of a son. Sara would have had many occasions for needing the comfort of Scripture with her husband engaging in illegal activity by preaching the gospel as a dissenter. Seeing the way God had used his Word to comfort Collins' wife was undoubtedly a source of comfort for Collins also as he endured these trials himself.

Another possible relative of Collins appears in the Wapping Church Book. A "Thos: Collins" was accepted as a candidate for baptism in a church meeting held on March 14, 1700.<sup>20</sup> There is no indication in the entry that this was a relative of Hercules, but that information would not normally have been included. Curiously, however, this same individual signs the minute book on only two occasions.<sup>21</sup> The first time was on

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<sup>18</sup>Life in the Suburbs Project, Aldgate Parish Registers: Records of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1681–1709, 1st January 1685 - 31st December 1685, *London Lives*, lsdspar\_1414\_141441, <http://www.londonlives.org>, version 1.1 (accessed May 28, 2012).

<sup>19</sup>Collins, *Three Books*, 19.

<sup>20</sup>*WCB*, 14 March 1700.

<sup>21</sup>Several men of the church who attended the church meeting signed the book at each gathering. Perhaps not all the men who attended signed the book each time, but the fact that Thomas Collins signed the books on these two occasions, even if he were present at other meetings, perhaps indicates a special interest in these particular meetings' business.

October 15, 1702, the first church meeting following the death of Hercules Collins.<sup>22</sup> The second time was seven months later on May 9, 1703 when the church voted to send a letter to a “Brother Murch” inviting him to London so that the “Church Mite have A tast of his gifts.”<sup>23</sup> Thomas Collins’ confirmed presence at these two church meetings, which would certainly have been of interest to a family member, may indicate that this man was indeed a relative of Hercules, possibly a son who was converted under his father’s ministry.

In his funeral sermon for Collins, Piggott had exhorted the bereaved Wapping congregation to care for their deceased pastor’s widow. He reminded them that just as they as a church were “in a state of Widowhood,”<sup>24</sup> they should not neglect their pastor’s widow. “I hope you will not forget to sympathize with your Pastor’s distressed Widow, to defend her Right, and support her to the last.”<sup>25</sup> Sara would only outlive her husband by a few months, dying on April 6, 1703. They were interred beside one another in Bunhill Fields, the burial ground for dissenters.<sup>26</sup>

### **“Not a Learned Education”: Education and Occupation**

The education of ministers had become a topic of contention due to the rise of lay-preachers among Baptists and other separatist groups in the early seventeenth century. The English Puritans of the previous century had placed a high emphasis upon the education of ministers,<sup>27</sup> but it was their twin emphases upon the individual believer’s

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<sup>22</sup>WCB, 15 October 1702.

<sup>23</sup>WCB, 9 May 1703.

<sup>24</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 239.

<sup>25</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 239.

<sup>26</sup>See Appendix 2 for a transcription of the inscription on the tombstone.

<sup>27</sup>As Philip Benedict has noted of the post-Reformation period: “Formal training in an institution of higher learning became expected of future ministers.” Philip Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 439.

personal experience and the importance of a regenerate church membership which eventually led to an unexpected and unintended consequence.<sup>28</sup> Richard L. Greaves has observed that, for the lay-people steeped in that teaching environment, it was “a relatively short step from ascertaining the validity of the Puritan experience in others to judging the contents of sermons, and to proclaiming the message itself.”<sup>29</sup> By the early seventeenth century, many unordained and uneducated Baptists (as well as other separatists) were indeed proclaiming the message. Richard Land has noted in his Oxford dissertation on the doctrinal controversies among the seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists that: “By 1640 an aggressive, scripture-quoting laity had emerged, especially in London, exuding the assurance bred of the experimental work of grace within, and thus, increasingly intolerant of clerical restraint.”<sup>30</sup> This development brought about a severe reaction in print by certain educated Puritan and Separatist clergy. Many of the writings on this topic from the Baptist perspective then were their polemical responses to attacks upon their very existence from the elite clergy of their day.

One example will suffice to demonstrate the disdain with which these early Baptists were viewed. In 1647, within a year of Hercules Collins’ birth, an anonymous pamphlet was published in London titled *Tub-Preachers Overturn’d*.<sup>31</sup> This pamphlet derided the uneducated and unordained lay preachers of the period in no uncertain terms. This piece named the names of certain “illiterate, mechanic, nonsensical cobbled-fustian-

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<sup>28</sup>See Richard Dale Land, “Doctrinal Controversies of English Particular Baptists (1644–1691) as Illustrated by the Career and Writings of Thomas Collier” (Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1979), 153–60.

<sup>29</sup>Richard L. Greaves, “The Nature of the Puritan Tradition,” in *Reformation, Conformity and Dissent: Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Nuttall*, ed. R. Buick Knox (London: Epworth Press, 1977), 264.

<sup>30</sup>Land, “Doctrinal Controversies of English Particular Baptists,” 159.

<sup>31</sup>*Tub-preachers overturn’d or Independency to be abandon’d and abhor’d as destructive to the majestacy and ministry, of the church and common-wealth of England* (London: George Lindsey, 1647).

tubbers.”<sup>32</sup> These men were mocked because they worked at jobs on the side to supplement their income. Among those named in this pamphlet were prominent Baptists such as Praise-God Barebones “*Barebones* a Leatherseller,” Thomas Lamb “*Lamb* a Soapboiler,” Thomas Patient “*Patience* a Taylor,” and William Kiffin “*Kiffin* a Glover.”<sup>33</sup> A few years later, Collins could have been added to the list. Like Thomas Patient and his contemporary London Baptist pastor and friend Benjamin Keach,<sup>34</sup> Collins was a tailor by profession. He apparently continued in this occupation to supplement his ministerial income, at least in the early years of his ministry. In March of 1683, Collins was listed as “Hercules Collins taylor” when he was cited for his failure to attend his parish church during the previous month.<sup>35</sup> Men such as Collins who worked to provide for their families were derided as “Tub-preachers” throughout the seventeenth century. This is but one example of many that might be given to demonstrate the condescending attitude of the university-educated ministers toward their lay-preaching contemporaries.

Collins was himself described by the first English Baptist historian Thomas Crosby as one who “had not a learned education.”<sup>36</sup> This testimony, written within forty years of Collins’ death, should be taken seriously since Crosby, as a son-in-law of Collins’ fellow London pastor and friend Benjamin Keach, would have been in a position to know something of Collins’ background. The statement by Crosby that Collins “had

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<sup>32</sup>*Tub-preachers overturn’d*, 14.

<sup>33</sup>*Tub-preachers overturn’d*, 15. Only the last names are given because as the anonymous author indicates on the title page, “Reader, I cannot inform thee of their christen names because ‘tis questionable whether they have any.”

<sup>34</sup>Keach’s occupation is ascertained from a letter from Thomas Disney to Luke Wilkes in which Disney informed Wilkes of Keach’s “primer, of which 1,500 are printed, written by Benj. Keach of Winslow, a tailor, and teacher in their new-fangled way.” *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Charles II, 1663–1664, Preserved in Her Majesty’s Public Record Office*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1862), 595, entry 116.

<sup>35</sup>*Middlesex County Records*, vol. 4, *Indictments, Recognizances, Coroners’ Inquisitions-Post-Mortem, Orders, Memoranda and Certificates of Convictions of Conventiclers*, temp. 19 Charles II. to 4 James II (London: Middlesex County Records Society, 1892), 208-9.

<sup>36</sup>Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists, From the Reformation to the Beginning of the Reign of King George I* (London, 1740), 3:129.

not a learned education” simply meant that Collins had not been university-trained. His position as a dissenter outside of the Church of England made this a practical impossibility.<sup>37</sup> This expression, however, does not mean that Collins was ignorant. In his funeral sermon for Collins, John Piggott stated that “he was one that had a solid acquaintance with divine things, about which he always spoke with a becoming seriousness and a due relish; and I must say, I hardly ever knew a man that did more constantly promote religious discourse.”<sup>38</sup> Collins had himself lamented the fact that so many Congregational churches were choosing pastors based primarily on whether they had attained “human learning,” rather than their gifting by the Holy Spirit.

Now our Brethren of the Congregational-way being so sound in their Judgment about this Point, it is greatly desired that their Principle and Practice did better harmonize: For I do not think that three Instances of those Churches throughout London can be given, who have for these last thirty years past made choice of any for Pastors but such as have had Human Learning; and there hath been too great a slight put upon such as had it not, tho no way inferior in spiritual Gifts and Graces for the Churches Edification.<sup>39</sup>

Yet Collins could also warn churches of the danger of “calling to Office an ignorant, unlearned, unexperienc’d Person.”<sup>40</sup> He would go on, however, to explain exactly what he meant by such “unlearned Men.”

But when I say, beware of calling unlearned Men, I mean such unlearned as Peter speaks of, who wrest the Scriptures to their own Destruction. Peter did not mean by unlearned Men, Men who wanted human Learning; for then, as one saith, he must of necessity condemn himself; for he was a Man in the sense of the great Council that wanted this Learning, so that he must lie under that blame which he lays upon

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<sup>37</sup>In his history of the Bristol Baptist College, Norman Moon asserted that “with the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the doors of Oxford and Cambridge closed against everybody who refused to conform to the Established Church, and remained closed for nearly two hundred years.” Norman S. Moon, *Education for Ministry: Bristol Baptist College 1679–1979* (Bristol, England: Bristol Baptist College, 1979), 2.

<sup>38</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 235-36.

<sup>39</sup>Hercules Collins, *The Temple Repair’d: Or, An Essay to revive the long-neglected Ordinances, of exercising the spiritual Gift of Prophecy for the Edification of the Churches; and of ordaining Ministers duly qualified* (London: Willam and Joseph Marshal, 1702), 12.

<sup>40</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 52.

others.<sup>41</sup>

Collins meant by “unlearned Men” exactly what Peter meant—men who in their ignorance twisted the Scriptures to their own judgment. Likewise, the kind of learning that Collins desired to be prominent among the leaders of the churches of his day paralleled what he believed would be a Petrine understanding of true learning:

But to be learned in Peter’s sense was to be taught of God as the Truth is in Jesus, and by the Spirit to understand the deep things of God; and through a saving knowledg of Christ to be well establish’d, in opposition to those unstable Ones he speaks of: They must be Men zealous for the Glory of God, sensible of the Interest of Souls, exemplary to the Flock, able to speak experimentally of the Ways of God, of the Devices of Satan, and the Deceit of Lust, and the Issues and Events of Temptations, and to understand the Consolations of the holy Spirit:<sup>42</sup>

This description reflects the kind of learning both valued and possessed by Collins.

Piggott’s aforementioned comment that he “had a solid acquaintance with divine things”<sup>43</sup> confirms this assessment, as do his later comments that Collins “was faithful in every Relation, a Man of Truth and Integrity, one entirely devoted to the Service of the Temple, and zealously bent to promote the Interest of the Lord Redeemer.”<sup>44</sup> Although Crosby was surely right when he wrote that Collins “had not a learned education” from a university, he was nevertheless a learned man in the truths of Scripture. For Collins, as we have seen, this was all that truly mattered.

### **Beginning of Persecution**

Although Charles II had promised religious toleration when he returned to the throne following the Commonwealth Protectorate of the Cromwells, hopes for such were short-lived among the dissenters. One thing is certain, as Richard L. Greaves has observed in his treatment of dissent in the years 1660–1663: “The return of the monarch

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<sup>41</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 52.

<sup>42</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 52-53.

<sup>43</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 235.

<sup>44</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 237.

in 1660 brought no cessation of revolutionary thinking or acting.”<sup>45</sup> It is unknown for certain whether Charles II actually had any intention of keeping his promise of religious liberty. Tim Harris, in a recent study of Charles II, argues that the king was caught in the middle of a “no-win situation” where he was forced “to rule over a divided people”—some of whom desired more toleration and some of whom desired less.<sup>46</sup> Michael R. Watts believes that Charles II had a “real desire for religious toleration.”<sup>47</sup> His subsequent actions would seem to call this assessment into question. Between 1661 and 1665 Parliament passed a series of laws known as the Clarendon Code which were designed to enforce conformity to the worship of the Church of England. The Corporation Act of 1661 required that a person had to have received the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in the Church of England within the past year to be eligible for election to any government office. Eligible persons were also required to take the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy to the king of England. The Act of Uniformity of 1662 resulted in the ejection of approximately two thousand Puritan ministers from their pulpits since it required complete subscription to *The Book of Common Prayer*. Most Puritan ministers resigned rather than conform to these demands. The Conventicle Act of 1664 forbade the assembling of five or more persons for religious worship other than in the Church of England. This, in essence, outlawed dissenting churches. The Five-Mile Act of 1665 forbade any nonconforming preacher or teacher to come within five miles of a city where he had previously served as a minister or any incorporated town. Each of these acts were aimed at stamping out both dissenters and Catholics. Baptists were particularly hit hard

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<sup>45</sup>Richard L. Greaves, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Radical Underground in Britain, 1660–1663* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3.

<sup>46</sup>Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and His Kingdoms, 1660–1685* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 55-56.

<sup>47</sup>Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 221-22.

by these laws since they made their conscientious worship of God illegal.<sup>48</sup>

In May of 1670 a second Conventicle Act was enacted by Parliament to replace the recently expired Act of 1664. In this version of the law fines were reduced for worshippers to 5 shillings for the first offense and 10 shillings for each subsequent offense. The fines for the preachers and owners of the meeting places, however, were increased to 20 pounds for the first offense and 40 pounds for subsequent offences. To secure these funds the personal property of the guilty parties could be seized and sold, and if that did not satisfy the debt the attenders of the conventicle could be forced to pay the fines.<sup>49</sup> Motivation was provided to ensure that the Act would be enforced. Informers would be paid a full one-third of the fines collected and magistrates who failed to enforce the law could be fined 100 pounds.<sup>50</sup> Initially, nonconformists continued to meet in large numbers in London.<sup>51</sup> Soon, however, the Lord Mayor began to crack down by calling out trained bands to search out and suppress the illegal meetings. Sir Samuel Stirling, Lord Mayor of London in 1670, defended his use of force before Parliament in a case heard on November 21, 1671.<sup>52</sup> Stirling argued that his action was necessary to secure the peace in a time of great danger since on one Sunday in London there were “at least 12,000 people assembled at the several meeting places contrary to the act.”<sup>53</sup> Ironically, this crackdown by the government during this period resulted in driving more people to

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<sup>48</sup>For a fuller description of these Acts and their impact upon Baptists, see Ernest A. Payne and Norman S. Moon, *Baptists and 1662* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1962). A more recent study is Paul S. Fiddes, “Baptists and 1662: the Effect of the Act of Uniformity on Baptists and its Ecumenical Significance for Baptists today,” *Ecclesiology* 9, no. 2 (2013): 183-204. Also, see Harris, *Restoration*, 52-53.

<sup>49</sup>Watts, *The Dissenters*, 226-27.

<sup>50</sup>Watts, *The Dissenters*, 227.

<sup>51</sup>Richard L. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 268.

<sup>52</sup>*The Parliamentary Diary of Sir Edward Dering 1670–1673*, ed. Basil Duke Henning (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1940), 4-7.

<sup>53</sup>*The Parliamentary Diary of Sir Edward Dering*, 6. For a discussion of the disputed number of conventicles in London in 1676, see Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 314-15.



meeting in secret. This, in turn, had the effect of increasing suspicion by the government.<sup>54</sup> In response, the government widely employed its system of espionage developed during the British Civil Wars.<sup>55</sup> Several well-known London Puritan ministers were arrested in the weeks following the passage of the second Conventicle Act including Thomas Manton, Richard Baxter, John Owen and Thomas Goodwin, along with Particular Baptists such as William Kiffin, Hanserd Knollys and Edward Harrison.<sup>56</sup> Hercules Collins was also among those arrested at this time.

Collins was arrested with thirteen others, including Tobias Wells<sup>57</sup> and Richard Blunt<sup>58</sup> in June of 1670, for assembling unlawfully “at a conventicle & other misdemeanours.”<sup>59</sup> This was apparently a Baptist meeting, given that out of the fourteen total names, three of the four names that remain legible on the document are the names of known Baptists. Collins was sent to the Nova Prisons,<sup>60</sup> but apparently was held for less than two months since there is no record of him at the next court date on August 29,

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<sup>54</sup>For a brief discussion of this development, see Alan Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II, 1660–1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 10-11.

<sup>55</sup>Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, 18.

<sup>56</sup>Austin Walker, *The Excellent Benjamin Keach* (Dundas, ON: Joshua Press, 2004), 119.

<sup>57</sup>Tobias Wells, or Toby Willes, was the pastor of the Bridgewater Church in Somerset, England. He was active in the Western Association of Particular Baptists and signed the 1653 Somerset Confession of Faith. He would attend both the 1689 and 1692 meetings of the General Assembly of Baptists in London, signing the Second London Confession of Faith in 1689.

<sup>58</sup>Richard Blunt is an enigmatic figure in Baptist history. He figures prominently in the so-called Kiffin Manuscript that provides much of the details of the beginnings of Particular Baptists in England in the 1640s. For a detailed analysis of the evidence, see Stephen Wright, *The Early English Baptists, 1603–1649* (Woodbridge, England: The Boydell Press, 2006), 75-110. Blunt’s presence at this conventicle nearly thirty years after his historic involvement in the re-introduction of immersion in England is significant in demonstrating the young Collins’ connections with the previous generation of Baptist leaders.

<sup>59</sup>Sessions of the Peace Rolls for 27 June 1670 – MJ/SR/1389.

<sup>60</sup>New Prison. This prison, which was often used to prevent overcrowding at the Newgate Prison, was definitely in use in 1670 while the Newgate Prison was being rebuilt after the London fire of 1665. The new Newgate Prison was opened in 1672. Tim Hitchcock, Sharon Howard, and Robert Shoemaker, “Prisons and Lockups,” *London Lives, 1690–1800*, <http://www.londonlives.org>, version, 1.1 (accessed May 30, 2012).

1670.<sup>61</sup> During this brief experience with persecution, however, Collins would learn many valuable lessons. Nearly three decades later, Collins would declare that “Believers are taught in the School of Affliction, that something is to be learned there, which is not ordinarily learned by other ways.”<sup>62</sup> During these times of trials, truths read in books or heard in sermons are learned more thoroughly because “they have learned that by the Rod which they never learn’d before.”<sup>63</sup> In his funeral sermon for Collins, Piggott reminded his auditors of how exemplary their pastor had submitted to his trials, which would have included this first imprisonment, and how he “was always learning from the Discipline of the Rod.”<sup>64</sup> Collins was clearly undaunted by the early challenges which he experienced as a young man. His ministry over the next two decades would be marked by his faithful endurance of persecution.

### **London’s Oldest Baptist Church**

The first page of the Wapping Church Book records that Collins was installed as “an overseer or an Elder” on “the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 1676,” i.e., 1677.<sup>65</sup> This congregation, which was meeting at the time at Old Gravel Lane in the Wapping area of London, has an illustrious history as London’s oldest surviving Baptist church. John Spilsbury, John Norcott, and Hercules Collins were the first three pastors of this congregation, which was the first Calvinistic congregation to embrace believer’s baptism by immersion. Although sorting out the origins of the Particular Baptists is, as Wm. Loyd Allen states, “like trying

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<sup>61</sup>Sessions of the Peace Book for 27 June 1670 – MJ SB/B/0026.

<sup>62</sup>Collins, *Three Books*, 37.

<sup>63</sup>Collins, *Three Books*, 37.

<sup>64</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 237.

<sup>65</sup>*WCB*, first page. The dates given in the *WCB* are according to the Old Style of the Julian Calendar which had the new year beginning on March 25 instead of January 1.

to untangle a snarled fishing line in the dark,<sup>66</sup> it appears that the mode of immersion was adopted by the individuals that would become the Wapping congregation in January of 1642. This body of believers had left the Separatist congregation pastored by John Lathrop in 1633 to form their own Independent congregation after having become convinced that the New Testament taught the baptism of believers, although they remained unconvinced of the importance of the mode of immersion.<sup>67</sup> By 1638, John Spilsbury had become the pastor of this congregation and by 1641 they had become committed to the position that the baptism of believers by immersion was the only valid New Testament baptism.<sup>68</sup> This congregation would become the first Particular Baptist church, and is still in existence today as the oldest Baptist church in London.<sup>69</sup> Not surprisingly, given the church's commitment to the New Testament teaching on baptism, each of the first three pastors would write major treatises on the subject of believer's baptism.<sup>70</sup>

### **John Spilsbury (1593–c. 1662/1668)**

According to B.R. White, John Spilsbury<sup>71</sup> was the first of the Particular

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<sup>66</sup>Wm. Loyd Allen, "Baptist Baptism and the Turn toward Believer's Baptism by Immersion: 1642," in *Turning Points in Baptist History: A Festschrift in Honor of Harry Leon McBeth*, ed. Michael E. Williams, Sr., and Walter B. Shurden (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2008), 37. For a helpful resource sorting out the complicated beginnings of Particular Baptists, see Jason G. Duesing, "Counted Worthy: The Life and Thought of Henry Jessey, 1601–1663, Puritan Chaplain, Independent and Baptist Pastor, Millenarian Politician and Prophet" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 121-67.

<sup>67</sup>James Edward McGoldrick, *Baptist Successionism: A Crucial Question in Baptist History* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000), 130.

<sup>68</sup>McGoldrick, *Baptist Successionism*, 131-32.

<sup>69</sup>For the history of the church, see Ernest F. Kevan, *London's Oldest Baptist Church: Wapping 1633—Walthamstow 1933* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1933).

<sup>70</sup>J. S., *A Treatise Concerning the Lawful Subject of Baptism* (London, 1643); John Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly & Faithfully, According to the Word of God* (London, 1672); and Hercules Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven, and of Divine Institution. Infants-Baptism from Earth, and Human Invention* (London, 1691).

<sup>71</sup>For a biographical and theological sketch of Spilsbury, see James M. Renihan, "John Spilsbury (1593–c.1662/1668)," in *The British Particular Baptists: 1638–1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 1998), 1:21-37; and Thomas J. Nettles, *The Baptists: Key*

Baptists to “preach and practice believer’s baptism” and his *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme* (1643) was “the first known publication on the subject by a Calvinist.”<sup>72</sup> Spilsbury<sup>73</sup> was one of the original signers, and perhaps the author,<sup>74</sup> of the First London Confession of Faith (1644).<sup>75</sup> Spilsbury’s work on baptism was largely apologetic, the majority of it being a response to objections made by paedobaptists who saw believer’s baptism as a novel practice. Since Spilsbury himself affirmed covenant theology, his work interacted, as Thomas J. Nettles has noted, “of necessity” with the covenant theology of his paedobaptist contemporaries.<sup>76</sup> Spilsbury argued “that the spirituality of the new covenant in Christ eliminated the possibility of an infant’s participation in it.”<sup>77</sup> Spilsbury published a second edition of his treatise on baptism during his lifetime in 1652 which was “corrected and enlarged by the Author.”<sup>78</sup>

### **John Norcott (1621–1676)**

John Norcott was the second pastor of the Wapping congregation, having followed John Spilsbury upon his death in either 1662 or 1668.<sup>79</sup> By 1670 Norcott was in

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*People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity*, vol. 1, *Beginnings in Britain* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 1:113-27.

<sup>72</sup>B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1996), 72.

<sup>73</sup>Spilsbury is also sometimes spelled as “Spilsbery” or “Spilsberie.” Throughout this dissertation, Spilsbury has been used.

<sup>74</sup>James Renihan states that “several authors hypothesize” that Spilsbury was either the author or co-author of the First London Confession of Faith. He cites A. C. Underwood, R. L. Greaves, and W. L. Lumpkin as supporting this view. Renihan, “John Spilsbury (1593–c. 1662/1668),” 24.

<sup>75</sup>*The Confession of Faith, Of those Churches which are commonly (though falsly) called Anabaptists* (London: Matthew Simmons, 1644). Also available in William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 153-71.

<sup>76</sup>Nettles, *The Baptists*, 1:113.

<sup>77</sup>Nettles, *The Baptists*, 1:113.

<sup>78</sup>John Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptism* (London: Henry Hills, 1652), title page.

<sup>79</sup>The date of Spilsbury’s death is unknown. According to Renihan, it could have been “as early as 1662 or as late as 1668.” Renihan, “John Spilsbury (1593–c. 1662/1668),” 25.

the pulpit of the Wapping congregation since a spy report published in an official state paper indicates that he was preaching at Old Gravel Lane on July 1, 1670.<sup>80</sup> Little had been known about Norcott before his becoming pastor of the Wapping church. However, the English Dissent scholar Geoffrey Nuttall has suggested that this same John Norcott had previously held a post in the Church of England at St. Margaret's parish in Hertfordshire from 1657 until 1662 when he was ejected for his nonconformity.<sup>81</sup> Norcott continued in the pastorate of the Wapping Congregation until his death in 1676. Benjamin Keach, who was apparently a close friend, preached Norcott's funeral sermon and wrote both an elegy and an epitaph in honor of his friend whom he called "a sweet and Godly Preacher."<sup>82</sup> Norcott contributed to the seventeenth-century literature on baptism with his *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully, According to the Word of God* (1672). This was the only work which he ever published, but it had a long life, being reprinted ten times.<sup>83</sup> The last edition was published over two hundred years after the first printing and was "Corrected and Somewhat Altered" by Charles Haddon Spurgeon.<sup>84</sup> Whereas Spilsbury's work was largely a response to paedobaptist critiques, Norcott's work was a much more positive biblical treatment of the subject of baptism.

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<sup>80</sup>Kevan, *London's Oldest Baptist Church*, 37-38.

<sup>81</sup>Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Another Baptist Ejection (1662): The Case of John Norcott," in *Pilgrim Pathways: Essays in Baptist History in Honour of B.R. White*, ed. William H. Brackney and Paul S. Fiddes with John H.Y. Briggs (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1999), 185-88.

<sup>82</sup>Benjamin Keach, *A Summons to the Grave, or the Necessity of a Timely Preparation for Death. Demonstrated in a Sermon Preached at the Funeral of that most Eminent and Faithful Servant of Jesus Christ Mr. John Norcot. Who Departed this Life March 24, 1676* (London: Ben. Harris, 1676), "An Epitath" unnumbered p. 15 of prefatory material. This sermon is significant as it is apparently Keach's first published sermon. For a description of this sermon, see Walker, *The Excellent Benjamin Keach*, 176-80.

<sup>83</sup>1675, 1694, 1700, 1709, 1721, 1722, 1723, 1740, 1801, and 1878.

### **Hercules Collins: Pastor**

Collins became pastor almost one year to the day after Norcott died in 1676.<sup>85</sup> Apparently, before coming to minister at the Church meeting on Gravel Lane, Collins was a member of the Petty France congregation pastored by William Collins. There is no recorded kinship between Hercules and William, but the Petty France church book contains a reference to Hercules Collins in an entry for a meeting held on February 29, 1680, in which the church agreed to enter into association with the Wapping congregation, which they said “our Bro: Collins is pastor of.”<sup>86</sup> The unnecessary and unusual addition of “our” most likely indicates that the church had held a previous relationship with this pastor. If Hercules was indeed a member of the Petty France congregation in the years just prior to March of 1677, he would have been sitting under the ministry of elders William Collins and Nehemiah Coxe. According to the Petty France church minute book these two esteemed pastors were together “solemnly ordained pastors or elders in this Church” on September 21, 1675.<sup>87</sup> Five months after Hercules Collins’ installation in Wapping, an obscure reference is made in the minutes of the Petty France church on August 26, 1677, to the publication of a confession of faith.<sup>88</sup> This is commonly believed to be the same Confession that was first published in 1677, but later adopted by the General Assembly of over one hundred churches in 1689 and that would become known

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<sup>84</sup>John Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully, According to the Word of God* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1878), title page.

<sup>85</sup>Norcott died on March 24, 1675, and Collins became pastor on March 23, 1677.

<sup>86</sup>*Petty France Church Minute Book 1675–1727*, The Guildhall Library, London, 14.

<sup>87</sup>*Petty France Church Minute Book*, 1. The date should probably be September 21, 1675, since the Old Calendar year counted months beginning in March. This also fits chronologically with the other entries around this reference found on the same page.

<sup>88</sup>*Petty France Church Minute Book*, 6. The original confession was published as *A Confession of Faith Put Forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country* (London: Benjamin Harris, 1677). Also available in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 241-95.

as the Second London Confession of Faith.<sup>89</sup> If this is the case, there is little doubt that William Collins and Nehemiah Coxe were the chief architects of this historic document to which Hercules Collins would affix his signature along with thirty-six other pastors and ministers in “the Name of and on behalf of the whole Assembly.”<sup>90</sup> Collins, then, would have been thoroughly acquainted with the theology of this magisterial confessional statement long before 1689. In his first publication in 1680, a revision of the Heidelberg Catechism,<sup>91</sup> Collins used language that he clearly borrowed from the Confession likely written by his former elders. In answer to the question “What is Baptism?”—which is conspicuous by its absence in the Heidelberg Catechism—Collins essentially reproduced the description of baptism from the Second London Confession of Faith, which had first appeared three years earlier in 1677: “Immersion or dipping of the person in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by such who are duly qualified by Christ.”<sup>92</sup> Having answered the question of mode with this definition, this answer begged the question: “Who are the proper subjects of this ordinance?” The response came almost word for word from the Second London Confession: “Those who do actually profess repentance towards God, faith in, and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>93</sup> The only difference between Collins’ catechism and the Confession is that the *Orthodox Catechism*

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<sup>89</sup>See Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists* (London, 1823), 3:332. For an excellent analysis of the historical and theological context of the Second London Confession, see James M. Renihan, *Edification and Beauty: The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675–1705*, *Studies in Baptist History and Thought* 17 (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2008), 17–29.

<sup>90</sup>*A Confession of Faith, Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations Of Christians (Baptized upon Profession of their Faith) In London and the Countrey*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: S. Bridge, 1699), front cover verso; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 239.

<sup>91</sup>H[ercules] Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism: Being the Sum of Christian Religion, Contained in the Law and the Gospel* (London, 1680). The text of this catechism, alongside the text of the Heidelberg Catechism, is also provided in James M. Renihan, *True Confessions: Baptist Documents in the Reformed Family* (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2004).

<sup>92</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 26; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 255. Cf. the Second London Confession of Faith 29.3–4. There is nothing in the Second London Confession about a properly qualified administrator. This clause in Collins’ catechism speaks of his high view of an ordained ministry.

<sup>93</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 26; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 255. See the Second London Confession of Faith 29.2.

adds the word “Christ.” Clearly, Collins was well-served by his pastors at Petty France and assumed his pastoral ministry with, as John Piggott would say in his funeral sermon twenty-five years later, “a solid Acquaintance with Divine Things.”<sup>94</sup> Perhaps a sense of Collins’ indebtedness to his former pastor is seen in that when the latter’s character was attacked in print by Isaac Marlow,<sup>95</sup> Collins sprang to his defense with a publication intended to vindicate William Collins from the “unjust” attack of Marlow.<sup>96</sup>

### **Wapping: The Early Years**

Wapping has been infamously described by the sixteenth-century historian John Stow as “a continual street, or filthy strait passage, with alleys of small tenements, or cottages, built, inhabited by sailors’ victuallers, along by the river Thames.”<sup>97</sup> London, which by 1660 had a population estimated as being between 300,000 and 400,000,<sup>98</sup> was the world’s second largest city by 1700 and had expanded eastward along the Thames due to “the thousands dependent on the ship-building and carrying trades.”<sup>99</sup> Wapping lay on the north bank of the River Thames and just to the east of the Tower of London. During the seventeenth century, it was definitely one of the poorer areas of London. This

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<sup>94</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 235.

<sup>95</sup>Isaac Marlow, *An Account of the Unjust Proceedings, in Some Matters of Difference, Between Mr. William Collins and Isaac Marlow* (London, 1697).

<sup>96</sup>Hercules Collins, et al. *A Just Vindication of Mr. William Collins, and of several other Elders and Ministers, from the unjust Reflections of Mr. Isaac Marlow* (London, 1697). Although no author is given on the title page, this work was signed by ten London Baptist pastors. Hercules Collins’ name was first on the list of signatories, which also included Benjamin Keach, Richard Adams, Leonard Harrison, Joseph Stennett, Richard Allen, John Piggott, Jeremiah Basse, Benjamin Dennis, and Thomas Harrison. Marlow responded to this work the next year with Isaac Marlow, *An Answer to a Deceitful Book, entituled, A Just Vindication of Mr. William Collins* (London, 1698).

<sup>97</sup>John Stow, *A Survey of London, Written in the Year 1598, by John Stow* (London: Whittaker and Co., 1842), 157.

<sup>98</sup>Estimates vary. Picard (see below) estimates the population in 1660 to be 300,000. The number 390,000 was suggested in J. G. Muddiman, *The King’s Journalist 1659–1689: Studies in the Reign of Charles II* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1971), 2.

<sup>99</sup>Liza Picard, *Restoration London: From Poverty to Pets, From Medicine to Magic, From Slang to Sex, From Wallpaper to Women’s Rights* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 3-4.



is the community in which Collins lived and ministered for a quarter of a century.<sup>100</sup>

During the earliest years of Collins' ministry, the Wapping congregation apparently had a regular meeting place on Old Gravel Lane. The earliest entries in the church minute book (between the years 1676 and 1683) record their meetings as occurring on "old Gravell lane."<sup>101</sup> Likewise, Collins' first publication in 1680 was addressed to "the Church of Christ, who upon Confession of Faith have bin Baptised, Meeting in Old-Gravil-Lane London."<sup>102</sup> By 1684, however, the congregation is addressed in one of Collins' two treatises from prison as "the Church of God, formerly Meeting in Old-Gravel-Lane Wapping."<sup>103</sup> For the next several years, no physical address for the congregation is recorded as they had to meet secretly for fear of persecution. In fact, apart from a reference in the minutes for the January 25, 1687 "Church meatinge" as occurring at the home of a certain "Sist<sup>r</sup>: Hammon,"<sup>104</sup> there never again appears a physical location for the church in the minute book. This practice continued even after they began to meet in a new meeting house on James Street in August of 1687.<sup>105</sup> Apparently this habit, which developed in the era of persecution, proved difficult to break.

Not only was there trouble from the state church during the early days of Collins' ministry in Wapping, he was facing significant challenges from within his

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<sup>100</sup>A 1693/4 tax list records Collins as then living on Old Gravel Lane, in the Hamlet of Wapping Stepney, in Middlesex County. Derek Keene, Peter Earle, Craig Spence and Janet Barnes, eds, *Four Shillings In The Pound Aid 1693/4* (1992), listings for Middlesex, St Dunstan Stepney, The Hamlet of Wapping Stepney, Old Gravel Lane.

<sup>101</sup>*WCB*, all entries from 1676–1683.

<sup>102</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, "Preface;" Renihan, *True Confessions*, 236.

<sup>103</sup>Hercules Collins, *A Voice from Prison, Or, Meditations on Revelations III.XI. Tending to the Establishment of God's Little Flock, in An Hour of Temptation* (London: George Larkin, 1684), 1.

<sup>104</sup>*WCB*, 25 January 1686/7.

<sup>105</sup>The new meeting house was located on James Street, Wapping. The deed reveals, however, that James Street had not yet been made when the property was leased. According to Ernest Kevan, the deed states that the "parcel of ground" was located on "the South Side of a certain new intended Streete called James Streete neare unto Old Gravillane in the aforesaid parish of Stepney." Kevan, *London's Oldest Baptist Church*, 47-48.

congregation. There were a variety of church discipline cases recorded in the minute book during these early years. Church members were withdrawn from the fellowship of the church for issues ranging from moral offenses such as incest,<sup>106</sup> adultery,<sup>107</sup> drunkenness,<sup>108</sup> and swearing/cursing<sup>109</sup> to theological aberrations such as infant baptism<sup>110</sup> and denying the resurrection.<sup>111</sup> But perhaps the most difficult challenge which Collins faced during the beginning years of his ministry was the curious case of John Okey. Just three months after Collins began his pastoral ministry, Okey was “withdrawne from for the sinne of Lying & Revileing.”<sup>112</sup> There was apparently some continued dialogue between the church and Okey since two months later on August 7, 1677 messengers were sent to call him to appear before the church in two weeks.<sup>113</sup> Matters must have deteriorated because by December 25 of the same year Okey was “Cut off and Excommunicated from all the priviledges of the gospel” for, among other things, “Invocating the God of Heaven to cut off and destroy Bro: Collings and saying also that he would be Revenged.”<sup>114</sup> Okey must have appealed to the nearby Horsleydown Church for arbitration because in February of 1678 the Wapping Church agreed to refer “the

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<sup>106</sup>*WCB*, 23 September 1678.

<sup>107</sup>*WCB*, 23 September 1678 and 13 April 1680.

<sup>108</sup>*WCB*, 3 December 1677.

<sup>109</sup>*WCB*, 13 November 1677, 28 October 1679 and 30 September 1684.

<sup>110</sup>*WCB*, 2 October 1677. Charles Cheney was excommunicated for “the grand Error of the Baptisme of Infants.” *WCB*, 13 November 1677. “Elizabeth Durbon was sharply Reproved for the Sin of Sprinkling her Infant Contrary to the Rules of Christ and the Gospel which evill she did Repent of and fell under it before them for doing that which was Contrary to the Command of Christ and the practice of the Apostles and the Constitution of this Church and her own Covenant”

<sup>111</sup>*WCB*, 2 October 1677. Elizabeth Leill was excommunicated for “Denying the Resurrection of the Dead.” It is also indicated that she had “turned quaker.”

<sup>112</sup>*WCB*, 12 June 1677.

<sup>113</sup>*WCB*, 7<sup>th</sup> of the 6<sup>th</sup> month 1677. Since the new year began on March 25<sup>th</sup> before the adoption of the Gregorian Calendar in 1752, the sixth month would have been August.

<sup>114</sup>*WCB*, 25 December 1677. Although in his first publication in 1680 he was listed as “H. Collins,” his last name was consistently spelled in the *WCB* as “Collings” prior to his return from prison in 1684. Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, title page. Cf. *WCB*, 23 May 1683 and 26 August 1684.

matter in difference Betweene them and the Church at Horsey downe concerning our dealing w[i]th Jn. Okey” to a panel of local London Baptist ministers including such prominent ministers as William Kiffin, Daniel Dyke, Thomas Wilcox, Hanserd Knollys, and Henry Forty.<sup>115</sup> There is no record of how this matter was resolved as there is no further reference to Okey in the Wapping Church Book and the Horsleydown minutes from the period are not extant. Nevertheless, it can be considered certain that having a church member pray that God would kill him would have been extremely troubling to this young pastor. Okey’s name does not appear again in the Wapping Church Book.

### **The Era of Persecution**

In his chapter on the period in *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, B. R. White, the *doyen* of seventeenth-century English Baptist studies, has labeled the years 1660–1688 as “The Era of the Great Persecution.”<sup>116</sup> During this period all dissenters, including the Baptists, were severely persecuted.<sup>117</sup> In October of 1677, John Owen voiced his own expectation of a coming period of persecution in a sermon on Psalm 90:11: “I am persuaded, Brethren, the day is coming, the day is nowe at hand, wherein you will stand in need of all the Experiences that ever you had of the Presence of God with you, and his Protection of you.”<sup>118</sup> Indeed, in 1677 the Lord Mayor of London had received instructions to crackdown on illegal conventicles.<sup>119</sup> By 1681 this effort to suppress the illegal religious gatherings of dissenters intensified.<sup>120</sup> Spies and informers

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<sup>115</sup>WCB, 5 February 1677.

<sup>116</sup>B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1996), 95-133.

<sup>117</sup>For an excellent study of this era, see Gerald R. Cragg, *Puritanism in the Period of the Great Persecution 1660–1688* (Cambridge: University Press, 1957). See also Watts, *The Dissenters*, 221-62.

<sup>118</sup>Cited in Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 347.

<sup>119</sup>Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 347.

<sup>120</sup>Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 406.

were regularly employed by the government and given large sums of money for the discovery of dissenting congregations.<sup>121</sup> A group of thugs known as the “Hilton Gang” repeatedly “harassed . . . the Baptists in Gravel Lane.”<sup>122</sup> During this period, which encompassed the larger part of the first half of Collins’ ministry in Wapping, the congregation had to meet in secret for fear of persecution. Thomas Crosby recorded that during this period “seven justices, (among whom were Sir *William Smith*, and justice *Bury* and *Brown*) came in their coaches, with a *posse* of people to break up the meeting, pulpit, pews and windows” of Collins’ meeting house.<sup>123</sup> Around this same time, on November 8, 1682, Collins’ own home was apparently broken into and his possessions seized to pay some alleged fine.<sup>124</sup> Four months later, on March 10, 1683, Collins was indicted for his failure to attend the local parish church.<sup>125</sup> The court record indicates that Collins failed to appear in court on that day to answer for the charges. Just over two months later, however, Roger Morrice, the Puritan chronicler of London happenings in the late-seventeenth century, recorded that a “Mr. Collins Junior the Anabaptist” was taken during a Lord’s Day meeting and committed to prison.<sup>126</sup> The official charges filed

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<sup>121</sup>Kevan, *London’s Oldest Baptist Church*, 43.

<sup>122</sup>Mark Goldie, “The Hilton Gang: Terrorising Dissent in 1680s London,” *History Today* 47 (1998), 28. This gang of over 40, including at least 15 women, were responsible for breaking up more than forty meeting houses. See also, John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558–1689* (Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education, 2000), 173.

<sup>123</sup>Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, 3:103. Also see Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists* (London, 1814), 2:448-49.

<sup>124</sup>Roger Morrice wrote in his journal on November 16, 1682 that “Mr. Collins an Annabaptists goods were distrained on on Wednesday last They broke his doore and entred in at it.” *The Entering Book of Roger Morrice 1677–1691*, vol. 2, *The Reign of Charles II 1677–1685*, ed. John Spurr (Woodbridge, England: The Boydell Press, 2007), 332. In his recent study on the persecution of dissenters, Raymond Brown identifies this Collins as Hercules. Raymond Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity: English Nonconformity in a Period of Repression, 1660–1689* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2012), 57n73.

<sup>125</sup>*Middlesex County Records*, 4:208-9.

<sup>126</sup>*The Entering Book of Roger Morrice*, 369. This would have occurred on May 27, 1683. John Spurr, the volume editor, indicates in a footnote that this was William Collins, pastor of the Petty France Church. *The Entering Book of Roger Morrice*, 369n3. No rationale is given. It is known that the Petty France congregation was disturbed in their worship on March 18, 1683. *Petty France Church Minute Book*, 20. However, there is an entry in the *Petty France Church Minute Book* for May 27, 1683 indicating that they

against Collins were for his violation of the Five Mile Act (1665), or Oxford Act.<sup>127</sup> For his principled commitment to the idea of a regenerate church, he would remain imprisoned for over a year in the Newgate Prison.<sup>128</sup> Collins had directly addressed the Church of England in 1682 in a writing provocatively titled *Some Reasons for Separation From the Communion of the Church of England* by declaring, “If you do persecute us for our Conscience, I hope God will give us that Grace which may inable us patiently to suffer for Christ’s sake.”<sup>129</sup> Apparently God granted this desire for Piggott, in his funeral sermon for Collins, affirmed that he “continued faithful to the last. He was not shock’d by the Fury of Persecutors, tho he suffer’d Imprisonment for the Name of Christ.”<sup>130</sup>

Ironically, it might have been the 1682 volume, in which Collins argued for separatism from the Church of England and in which he expressed his willingness to suffer for his convictions, which may have made Collins a target for persecution in 1683. In this work, which was framed in terms of a hypothetical conversation between a Conformist and a Non-Conformist, Collins asserted the historic Baptist distinctive of religious liberty by stating that “none should be compelled to worship God by a temporal Sword, but such as come willingly, and none can worship God to acceptance but

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had by this date already been deprived of their meeting place in Petty France with no mention of their pastor being arrested. *Petty France Church Minute Book*, 21. On the other hand, the Wapping Church’s last entry for 1683 in their minute book is on May 23<sup>rd</sup> (the Wednesday before the alleged incident) and there is not another entry until August 26, 1684 shortly after Hercules Collins would have been released from prison. *WCB*, 23 May 1683 and 26 August 1684. Given the above data, it is the assumption of this author that the Collins referred to by Morrice was Hercules, not William.

<sup>127</sup>Referred to as such in *WCB*, 14 September 1684.

<sup>128</sup>For a description of the horrors of the Newgate Prison during the seventeenth century, see Michael A. G. Haykin, “The Piety of Hercules Collins (1646/7–1702),” in *Devoted to the Service of the Temple: Piety, Persecution, and Ministry in the Writings of Hercules Collins*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Steve Weaver (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007), 14. For a fuller history of the prison, see Kelly Grovier, *The Gaol: The Story of Newgate—London’s Most Notorious Prison* (London: John Murray, 2008).

<sup>129</sup>H[ercules] C[ollins], *Some Reasons for Separation From the Communion of the Church of England, and the Unreasonableness of Persecution Upon that Account* (London: John How, 1682), 20.

<sup>130</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 235.

such.”<sup>131</sup> For this principle, which preserves the idea of freedom of worship, Baptists like Hercules Collins were willing to risk their health, safety, and freedom.

Within a year of having published *Some Reasons for Separation*, Collins was arrested and by the next year imprisoned for exercising his stand for religious liberty. The official charge against him was “for not going to church, chapel, or any other usual place of common prayer.”<sup>132</sup> In other words, he was arrested for not attending the parish church. According to Tim Harris, during the 1680s nearly 4,000 different dissenters were arrested for attending conventicles in and around London, including several leading Baptists such as Thomas Plant, Hanserd Knollys, and Vavasor Powell.<sup>133</sup> To illustrate how pervasive the persecution of dissenters was in this period, even the publisher George Larkin, who published Collins’ *A Voice from Prison* and a man known for his publication of dissenting literature,<sup>134</sup> was arrested in April of 1684 “for Printing a seditious Paper, called, *Shall I, Shall I, No, No.*” For his crime, Larkin was “sentenced to pay a Fine of 20 l. stand in the Pillory, and find Sureties for his Good Behaviour a Twelve Month.”<sup>135</sup> Likewise, the Irish Baptist Thomas Delaune was imprisoned for his publication of *A Plea for the Nonconformists* in November of 1683.<sup>136</sup> According to a handwritten note in the margin of the first page of his *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune*, Delaune, along with his wife and two young children, died in the Newgate Prison fifteen months

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<sup>131</sup>Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation*, 20.

<sup>132</sup>*Middlesex County Records*, 4:208-9.

<sup>133</sup>Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 66.

<sup>134</sup>For example, Larkin published the first edition of John Bunyan’s autobiographical *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* in 1666. He would go on to publish six other works by Bunyan in 1688 and 1689.

<sup>135</sup>April 1684, trial of George Larkin (t16840409–37), *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org>, version 7.0 (accessed July 20, 2012).

<sup>136</sup>Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists, From the Reformation to the Beginning of the Reign of King George I* (London, 1739), 2:366-79.

later, probably in February of 1685.<sup>137</sup>

### **Prison Writings**

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the challenges of the period, this time bore rich fruit for it was while Collins was in the infamous Newgate Prison that he penned two of the most devotional of his twelve writings: *A Voice from the Prison* and *Counsel for the Living, Occasioned from the Dead*.<sup>138</sup> In *A Voice from the Prison*, Collins addressed his discourse “To the Church of God, formerly Meeting in Old-Gravel-Lane Wapping, and all who were Strangers and Foreigners, but now Fellow Citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God.” He rejoiced that, although he was prevented by his imprisonment from “the Liberty of Preaching,” he had “the Advantage of Printing.”<sup>139</sup> This printed sermon was an extended meditation on Revelation 3:11 where Christ admonishes the church of Philadelphia with the words, “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (AV). Collins drew from at least 213 passages of Scripture in this work in order to encourage his congregation to stand firm in the face of persecution.<sup>140</sup> Collins urged his besieged flock to not abandon the cause of Christ: “Hold fast what thou hast, when Satan would pull thy souls good from thee; when Relations, Husband, Wife, Children call upon you, and perswade you because of danger to cease from the work of the Lord, then hold fast.”<sup>141</sup> Collins’ clear concern for his congregation,

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<sup>137</sup>Thomas Delaune, *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune, For Writing, Printing and Publishing a late Book, Called, A Plea for the Nonconformists, With some modest Reflections thereon* (London, 1684), 1. See also Watts, *The Dissenters*, 254.

<sup>138</sup>*A Voice from the Prison. Or, Meditations on Revelations III.XI. Tending To the Establishment of Gods Little Flock, In an Hour of Temptation* (London, 1684), and *Counsel for the Living, Occasioned from the Dead: Or, A Discourse on Job III. 17, 18. Arising from the Deaths of Mr. Fran. Bampffield and Mr. Zach. Ralphson* (London: George Larkin, 1684).

<sup>139</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 1.

<sup>140</sup>Keith Durso, *No Armor for the Back: Baptist Prison Writings, 1600s–1700s* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 169.

<sup>141</sup>Collins, *Voice from the Prison*, 4.

even while he was imprisoned, is seen in his communication with his church on the propriety of having an unordained lay-preacher administer the Lord's Supper in his absence. Both Collins' and the churches' response to this small controversy provides insight into the relationship between the authority of the pastor and the congregational government of the church. The dynamic which is exposed by this incident will be explored further in the chapter on Collins' ecclesiology.

*Counsel for the Living*, whose primary audience was Collins' fellow prisoners, was primarily a discourse on Job 3:17-18. This piece was written as a response to the deaths of two of Collins' fellow prisoners at Newgate: Francis Bampfield<sup>142</sup> and Zachariah Ralphson.<sup>143</sup> Both apparently died in early 1684 while Collins was also imprisoned.<sup>144</sup> Before turning to offer comfort for the persecuted, Collins first indicted their persecutors as godless men. Collins characterized the persecutors of Christians as wicked men who "are troublers of the *Church*." As such they are "Strangers to Gospel Principles, to a Gospel Spirit, and Gospel Teachings."<sup>145</sup> Collins concluded that "a persecuting spirit is not of a Gospel-complexion."<sup>146</sup> Judgment is coming for these evil-doers who "shall be made to confess their wickedness in not setting Gods People at liberty to Worship him; they shall fall into mischief, and be silent in darkness, and turned

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<sup>142</sup>For biographical details on Bampfield, see Richard L. Greaves, "Making the Laws of Christ His Only Rule": Francis Bampfield, Sabbatarian Reformer," in *Saints and Rebels: Seven Nonconformists in Stuart England* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), 179-210.

<sup>143</sup>Ralphson was the alias of Jeremiah Mardsen. For biographical details on Ralphson, see R. L. Greaves, "Marsden, (*alias* Ralphson), Jeremiah (1624–1684)," in *BDBR*, ed. Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller (Brighton, England: Harvester Press, 1984), 2:214-15.

<sup>144</sup>Keith Durso dates the death of Bampfield as February 16, 1684. See *No Armor for the Back: Baptist Prison Writings, 1600s–1700s* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 105. For a transcript of the proceedings of the trials of Ralphson and Bampfield, see January 1684, trials of Zachariah Ralphson (t16840116–18) and Francis Bampfield (t16840116–20), *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org> (accessed May 20, 2010).

<sup>145</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 6-7.

<sup>146</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 8.



into Hell, with Nations which forget *God*.”<sup>147</sup> Note that the “liberty to Worship” God seems to be the main issue at stake for Collins. Further, Collins excoriated the persecutors elsewhere for arresting elderly men, “Men of threescore, fourscore Years of Age, hurried to Prison for nothing else but for worshipping their *God*.”<sup>148</sup> This seems to have especially raised the ire of Collins since Bampfield, one of the men whose death occasioned this sermon, was almost seventy when arrested for what would prove to be the final time.<sup>149</sup> Collins, however, anticipated the day when God’s saints would be given rest. “The time is coming,” Collins asserted, when “God hath promised we shall no more hear the voice of the Oppressor.”<sup>150</sup> The saints “shall know no more Apprehendings . . . nor hear no more of, Take him Jaylor, keep him until he be cleared by due course of Law; we shall have no more Bolts nor Bars then on us, no more looking for the Keeper then, nor speaking to Friends through Iron-grates.”<sup>151</sup> Trusting God’s providence, Collins could confidently declare, “let men and Devils do their worst, God will in his own time loose the Prisoners.”<sup>152</sup> Despite his sorrow over their ill treatment, Collins knew that his fellow prisoners had now attained through death the ultimate rest promised to God’s people.

### **Counseling *The English Spira*: John Child**

Collins faced another difficulty during this period of persecution. Around the same time as his imprisonment, he was involved in counseling John Child,<sup>153</sup> a former

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<sup>147</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 9.

<sup>148</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 15.

<sup>149</sup>Haykin, “The Piety of Hercules Collins (1646/7–1702),” 15.

<sup>150</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 21, 31.

<sup>151</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 23.

<sup>152</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 26.

<sup>153</sup>Child’s story, including a record of his dialogue with Collins, Thomas Plant, Benjamin Dennis, and Benjamin Keach, is contained in *The English Spira: Being a Fearful Example of An Apostate, Who Had Been a Preacher Many Years, and Then Apostatized from His Religion; Miserably Hanged Himself, October the 13<sup>th</sup> 1684* (London: Tho. Fabian, 1693). The title *The English Spira* was a reference to Francis Spira (1502–1548), an Italian lawyer who had converted to Protestantism before recanting under

Particular Baptist minister who had publicly recanted of his Baptist convictions and returned to the Church of England. Child had published a tract in 1683 recanting his former convictions and maligning his former colleagues as foolish, penurious and covetous. This work was especially troubling to his former friends because of its harsh rhetoric.

But to put the Matter further out of Doubt, if it can be, that the Sectaries cannot be a Church in the best sense, because they are so giddy and foolish, as that they want Wit and Policy for Church Government, and so penurious and covetous, that they will not allow what is requisite to the keeping of a Church State: And can any man imagine that ever the most Wise and Good God would trust a Church State in the hands of such Men?<sup>154</sup>

He would go on to deride the nonconformists as holding such views as would lead to the upheaval of an orderly society.<sup>155</sup>

Shortly after publishing this scathing piece, Child became convinced that he had committed the unpardonable sin because he had published the work against his own conscience. He believed himself to be beyond God's grace and destined for death and judgment. Collins met with Child on at least three separate occasions, and each time he urged him to repent by recanting his former publication and throw himself upon the mercies of Christ.<sup>156</sup> Child claimed to be unable to do so, declaring that God's "wrath is come upon me to the uttermost."<sup>157</sup> Collins urged Child to believe the promises of

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pressure of the Inquisition. After abandoning Protestantism, Spira became convinced that he was reprobate, and some believe that he committed suicide in this state. Spira's story was well-known in seventeenth-century England, and the similarities between the experience of Spira and Child caused many to compare them. See Jonathan Hall Barlow, "'Read this that others read not thee': Francis Spira and Apostasy in the English Reformed Tradition (1618–1652)" (Ph.D. diss., Saint Louis University, 2010).

<sup>154</sup>John Child, *A Second Argument For a More Full and Firm Union Amongst All Good Protestants; Wherein the Nonconformists Taking the Sacrament After the Manner of the Church of England, is Justified* (London: John How, 1683), 11.

<sup>155</sup>*A Second Argument*, 12-14.

<sup>156</sup>A dialogue between Mr. Child and a Mr. C. is recorded in *The English Spira*, 18-22. In this dialogue, a previous meeting between Collins and Child is referenced. In *The English Spira*, 28-30, a third meeting between Child and Collins, along with others, is recorded as "collected by Mr. H. C."

<sup>157</sup>*The English Spira*, 21.

Scripture as much as the curses, but Child said the “Promises are Bread for Children.”<sup>158</sup> On another visit to Child with several others, Child declared to the company: “I am an hundred times greater sinner than *Spira*, a thousand times ten thousand times, yea, a hundred thousand times a greater sinner than he.”<sup>159</sup> In response to this Collins attempted to appeal to Child’s affection by asking, “Do you love me?” Child hauntingly responded, “I love you. (And taking Mr. C. by the hand, said) I conjure thee by the eternal God, that thou take care of my Wife and Children: I would give ten thousand worlds for a God, and often — Oh, what an ungodly Family have I! Husband cannot pray, Wife cannot pray, Children cannot pray, Servants cannot pray; while others are serving their God, we do nothing.”<sup>160</sup> This is the last recorded dialogue between Collins and Child.

On October 13, 1684, Child “hanged himself with his own Girdle fastned to a wooden Pin in the Wall on the Seller-stairs in his own House, on Monday . . . , about five a Clock in the Afternoon: Leaving behind him a Disconsolate Widow and four small Children.”<sup>161</sup> John Child’s suicide caused reverberations throughout the Particular Baptist community. Baptist authors often used Child as a negative example and warning against apostasy as a previous generation had used Francis Spira.<sup>162</sup> Seven years after Child’s death, Collins would warn Thomas Wall, who had written against the Baptists: “that thou mayest not run the hazard of thy Soul (as *John Child* did) so thou mayest but reproach the Innocent People of God.”<sup>163</sup> Five years later, Collins would cite both Spira and Child as

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<sup>158</sup>*The English Spira*, 21.

<sup>159</sup>*The English Spira*, 28.

<sup>160</sup>*The English Spira*, 28-29.

<sup>161</sup>*Mr. John Child’s Book, Entituled A Second Argument, For a More Full and Firm Union Amongst All Good Protestants; Wherein the Nonconformists Taking the Sacrament After the Manner of the Church of England, is Justified* (London: J. How, 1684). This work republished Child’s *A Second Argument* after his death and included a postscript providing the details of Child’s demise.

<sup>162</sup>For a summary of Keach’s interactions with and use of Child in his writings, see Walker, *The Excellent Benjamin Keach*, 193-96.

<sup>163</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 114.

examples of those who gave in to the temptations of Satan. “O how did the Devil set the heart of *Spira* and *John Child* against God, under their Trouble, to wish that they were above him to overcome him! He tempts to Atheism, that God may not have the Honour to be prayed to or trusted in.”<sup>164</sup> Collins clearly viewed Child as one who had given into the temptation of Satan and maligned an innocent people. Although he had pleaded with him to repent and receive God’s mercy, Collins apparently viewed Child’s end as the judgment of God upon his malicious attack of the Baptists and subsequent failure to repent.

### **The Rise of Toleration**

Richard L. Greaves notes that the rate of persecution began to decline in 1686, with the number of Quakers prosecuted dropping from 209 in 1685 to 83 in 1686.<sup>165</sup> Although there were exceptions to this general trend, by the end of 1686 nonconformists could conduct public meetings after having applied for licenses.<sup>166</sup> In April of 1687, James II issued a Declaration of Indulgence which suspended both the penal laws and the Test Acts.<sup>167</sup> Official toleration, however, would come only with the so-called Glorious Revolution that is linked with the accession of William of Orange (r. 1688–1702) and his wife Mary II (r. 1688–1692) to the throne of England in 1688 and the subsequent Act of Toleration passed by Parliament in 1689. This act would officially end religious persecution by the state.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>164</sup>Collins, *Three Books*, 45.

<sup>165</sup>Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 549.

<sup>166</sup>Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 549-50.

<sup>167</sup>Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England*, 188.

<sup>168</sup>For a brief summary of the impact of the Act of Toleration, see James E. Bradley, “Toleration, Nonconformity, and the Unity of the Spirit: Popular Religion in Eighteenth-Century England,” in *Church, Word, and Spirit: Historical and Theological Essays in Honor of Geoffrey W. Bromiley*, ed. James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 183-85.

## **A New Meeting House**

Certainly the Wapping congregation felt more secure around this time since by June of 1687 they were attempting to raise one hundred pounds to complete an already begun “new meeting house.”<sup>169</sup> By the next month they had agreed to add a seven- by eight-foot brick porch on the north side of the meeting house that was still under construction.<sup>170</sup> Two weeks later the church scheduled their first meeting in the new building to be held on August 7, 1687.<sup>171</sup> The novelty of the new building coupled with the lessened risk of persecution must have resulted in much larger crowds than initially anticipated when the building was built. Less than two months after the church began meeting in their new facility an effort was made to raise additional funds “towards the building of Gallerys & a withdrawinge roome.”<sup>172</sup> The building must have eventually proven to be sufficient as the later pastor and author of the church’s three-hundred anniversary history Ernest Kevan observed that the church “worshipped in this sanctuary for forty-three years.”<sup>173</sup> It is important to note that all this activity came before the official toleration achieved by the Glorious Revolution.

## **The London General Assemblies (1689–1692)**

After the Act of Toleration, dissenters began to exercise their new-found freedom to assemble publicly to great avail. In 1689, the Baptists gathered in London for their first national assembly. This group of “divers Pastors, Messengers and Ministring

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<sup>169</sup>*WCB*, 14 June 1687. According to Murdina MacDonald, the new meeting house was registered with the Chancellor of London on February 8, 1690. Murdina MacDonald, “London Calvinistic Baptists 1689–1727: Tensions Within a Dissenting Community Under Toleration” (D.Phil. thesis, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University, 1982), 316.

<sup>170</sup>*WCB*, 11 July 1687.

<sup>171</sup>*WCB*, 26 July 1687.

<sup>172</sup>*WCB*, 29 September 1687.

<sup>173</sup>Kevan, *London’s Oldest Baptist Church*, 48.

Brethren of the Baptized Churches” met in London from September 3-12, 1689, and claimed to represent “more than one hundred Congregations of the same Faith with Themselves.”<sup>174</sup> The common faith which distinguished this group of churches is specified on the cover page as “the Doctrine of Personal Election, and final Perseverance.”<sup>175</sup> This group would further identify themselves in their first meeting by adopting what would become known as the Second London Confession of Faith. As mentioned previously, this confession was originally composed and published in 1677 having originated in the Petty France congregation. The confession was republished in 1688<sup>176</sup> and subsequently adopted by the General Assembly in 1689. The members of the assembly declared that this confession contained “the Doctrine of our Faith and Practice” and expressed their desire that “the Members of our Churches respectively do furnish themselves therewith.”<sup>177</sup> When the confession was published for the third time in 1699, it included the signatures of thirty-seven ministers and messengers of the Assembly who had allowed their names to be affixed “In the name and behalf of the whole Assembly.”<sup>178</sup> Among the signatories is the name Hercules Collins who attended each of the four assemblies held annually in London between 1689 and 1692.

The primary purpose of the general assemblies was stated in a letter to the churches printed in the published minutes of the inaugural meeting. The messengers gathered,

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<sup>174</sup>*A Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly Of divers Pastors, Messengers and Ministering Brethren of the Baptized Churches, met together in London, from Septemb. 3. To 12. 1689, from divers parts of England and Wales: Owning the Doctrine of Personal Election, and final Perseverance* (London, 1689), 1.

<sup>175</sup>*Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly* 1689, 1.

<sup>176</sup>*A Confession of Faith, Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations of Christians, (Baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country* (London: John Harris, 1688).

<sup>177</sup>*Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly* 1689, 18.

chiefly to consider of the present state and condition of all the Congregations respectively under our Care and Charge; and what might be the causes of that Spiritual Decay and loss of Strength, Beauty and Glory in our Churches; and to see (if we might be helped by the Lord herein), what might be done to attain to a better and more prosperous State and Condition.<sup>179</sup>

Accordingly, they spent the first day “in humbling ourselves before the Lord, and to seek of him a right way to direct into the best Means and Method to repair our Breaches, and to recover our selves into our former Order, Beauty, and Glory.”<sup>180</sup> The assembly also issued a call for a day of humiliation and fasting for the churches they represented, to be held on October 10, 1689.<sup>181</sup> The primary function of the assemblies was to provide advice and counsel to the churches. The messengers clearly wanted to disavow themselves from any sense that they were an authoritative body. Indeed, their first declaration was to “disclaim all manner of Superiority, Superintendency over the Churches; and that we have no Authority or Power, to prescribe or impose any thing upon the Faith or Practice of any of the Churches of Christ.” They would go on to state their intention merely “to be helpers together of one another, by way of Counsel and Advice, in the right understanding of that Perfect Rule which our Lord Jesus, the only Bishop of our Souls, hath prescribed, and given to his Churches in his Word.”<sup>182</sup> Thus, much of their time meeting together was spent responding to queries posed by the messengers on behalf of their respective congregations.

### **Financial Provision for Ministers**

Among the matters addressed by the 1689 Assembly was the provision of

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<sup>178</sup> *A Confession of Faith, Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations of Christians (Baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Countrey*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: S. Bridge, 1699), back cover; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 239.

<sup>179</sup> *Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly* 1689, 3.

<sup>180</sup> *Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly* 1689, 9.

<sup>181</sup> *Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly* 1689, 7.

<sup>182</sup> *Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly* 1689, 10.

financial support for ministers of the gospel. On September 5, the Assembly agreed to establish “a publick Fund” to be raised by an immediate free-will offering from the churches and an ongoing regular subscription by members in the churches.<sup>183</sup> The fund would have a three-fold purpose. First, it would be used to supplement churches unable to provide for their ministers in order that they might “be encouraged wholly to devote themselves to the great Work of Preaching the Gospel.”<sup>184</sup> Second, the monies collected would be used to send out ministers “to preach, both in City and Country, where the Gospel hath, or hath not yet been preached.”<sup>185</sup> Third, the fund would be used to sponsor any doctrinally sound, studious, and gifted brethren<sup>186</sup> in their learning of “the Languages, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.”<sup>187</sup> Along the same lines, the Assembly recommended to the churches a recently published book titled *The Gospel Minister’s Maintenance Vindicated*.<sup>188</sup> This work, attributed to Benjamin Keach by Thomas Crosby,<sup>189</sup> was actually published anonymously with a recommendatory epistle signed by eleven London Baptist ministers, including Hercules Collins.<sup>190</sup> As the title indicates, the work was a vindication of the need for the care of ministers by their congregations.

Collins was clearly sensitive to the physical needs of the pastor’s wife and children. In his work on studying and preaching published in 1702, he admonished the

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<sup>183</sup>*Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly* 1689, 11.

<sup>184</sup>*Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly* 1689, 12.

<sup>185</sup>*Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly* 1689, 12.

<sup>186</sup>The “Gifted Brethren” were unordained lay preachers who had been formally recognized by their churches as having giftedness for public preaching and teaching. For a detailed discussion of this phenomenon in seventeenth-century Baptist life, see Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 107-14.

<sup>187</sup>*Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly* 1689, 12.

<sup>188</sup>[Benjamin Keach], *The Gospel Minister’s Maintenance Vindicated* (London: John Harris, 1689).

<sup>189</sup>See Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, 4:294-98. See also, A. J. Klaiber, “The Gospel Minister’s Maintenance Vindicated,” *BQ* 2, no. 5 (January 1925): 224-31.

<sup>190</sup>The other names listed are Hanserd Knollys, William Kiffin, William Collins, John Harris, George Barret, Richard Adams, Benjamin Keach, Isaac Lamb, Edward Man, and Leonard Harrison.



community of Particular Baptist churches of which he was a part to be zealous in caring for the needs of their pastor for the sake of his family.

Moreover, you know not what Temptations a Man and his Family, his Wife and Children may be under, in the neglect of your Duty; It may cause the Children to have hard thoughts of the Ways and People of God, and set them against the Truth if great care be not taken. Lay them not under Temptation by suffering them to run into Debt, that will be no Honour to you, nor Comfort to him. It is the most dishonourable thing in the World to let ministers run into Debt, because of this the Gospel may want that success that otherwise it might have; it takes Men of tender Consciences off from that holy Boldness which they ought to have in pressing Moral Duties: Perhaps he may have Abilities to get the things of the World as well as others, and so might lay up for his Children; but his hands being bound, and his Time taken up in better things, it is a pity the Children of Ministers should be slighted, when their Father lays out his Time and Strength for the good of the Congregation. Thus I have thought meet to stir you up by putting you in remembrance of those Duties you are oblig'd unto as you are the Churches of Christ.<sup>191</sup>

The Wapping church seems to have been diligent in providing for their minister. On at least two separate occasions messengers were sent to those church members “neglegent” in regard to “Bro Collins Maintainance.”<sup>192</sup> Apparently individual members had committed to provide regularly for their pastor’s salary.<sup>193</sup> Although Collins did not live extravagantly by any measure, the care provided by this congregation for their pastor had enabled Collins to leave behind his profession as a tailor and focus whole-heartedly on the work of the ministry.<sup>194</sup>

### **Relationship with Other Pastors**

The new-found toleration which allowed for the general assemblies to meet

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<sup>191</sup>Hercules Collins, *The Temple Repair'd. Or, An Essay to revive the long neglected Ordinances, of exercising the Spiritual Gift of Prophecy for the Edification of the Churches; and of ordaining Ministers duly qualified. With proper Directions as to Study and Preaching, for such as are inclin'd to the Ministry* (London: William and Joseph Marshal, 1702), 63.

<sup>192</sup>WCB, 9 February 1692 and 11 December 1694.

<sup>193</sup>Often, the members of Baptist churches would pledge support to the minister on a quarterly basis and would give the money to the deacons.

<sup>194</sup>A 1693/4 tax record for Collins indicates that he lived in a home with an appraised annual rental value of £7.00, which probably indicates Collins was lower middle class. Derek Keene, Peter Earle, Craig Spence and Janet Barnes, eds, *Four Shillings In The Pound Aid 1693/4* (1992), listings for Middlesex, St Dunstan Stepney, The Hamlet of Wapping Stepney, Old Gravel Lane.

would have provided the opportunity for strengthening of relationships between an undoubtedly already close-knit group. As already seen in the discussion of Collins' church-life prior to his beginning to pastor, Collins would have already had a long-standing relationship with William Collins due to his probable membership in the Petty France church prior to becoming the pastor at Wapping. However, Collins' relationship with three of the most prominent London Baptists deserves further attention. Benjamin Keach, William Kiffin and Hanserd Knollys are undoubtedly the most well-known of the seventeenth-century London Particular Baptist pastors.<sup>195</sup> As a result of our examination below, we will see how well-networked Collins was with the leading Baptists of his day.

**Benjamin Keach.** As noted above, Collins cooperated together with Benjamin Keach and nine other London area pastors in recommending Keach's *The Gospel Minister's Maintenance Vindicated* to the wider Baptist community. His relationship with Keach would have been established early on in his ministry since he had assumed the pastorate of Keach's close friend John Norcott.<sup>196</sup> This relationship would have been cemented when Collins delivered a collection to Keach from the Wapping church in the amount of three pounds and eight shillings after Keach had been robbed.<sup>197</sup> During the 1690s, both Collins and Keach were part of a fraternity of at least ten ministers which met regularly at James Jones' coffee house.<sup>198</sup> The flourishing coffee house society was

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<sup>195</sup>For an excellent introduction to these three men and their times, see Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach: Rediscovering Our English Baptist Heritage* (Leeds, England: Reformation Today Trust, 1996).

<sup>196</sup>As noted earlier, Keach preached the funeral sermon for Norcott and published an elegy in his honor.

<sup>197</sup>*WCB*, 30 December 1679. The church had collected three pounds and five shillings on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December.

<sup>198</sup>Isaac Marlow, *An Answer to a Deceitful Book, entitled, A Just Vindication of Mr. William Collins* (London, 1698), 6. See also "James Jones's Coffee-House," *BQ* 6, no. 7 (July 1933): 324-26.

one of London's most distinctive features in the late seventeenth century.<sup>199</sup> The coffee house provided for unprecedented opportunities for interaction and uncensored debate without regard to differences between social statuses.<sup>200</sup> This group of ministers, which also included Richard Adams and Joseph Stennett, apparently gave advice to those who presented themselves to the group.<sup>201</sup>

During this same period, Keach and Collins would each engage in debate with paedo-baptists in the pages of the *Athenian Mercury*.<sup>202</sup> This periodical was published by a group of scholars known as the Athenian Society which sought to interact with various questions of interest in a public forum.<sup>203</sup> It was edited and published by the London bookseller John Dunton from 1691 to 1697.<sup>204</sup> In 1694, Keach would come to Collins' defense in print against Gyles Shute in an extended debate about baptism.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>199</sup>Helen Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England: The Cultural World of the Athenian Mercury* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003), 13.

<sup>200</sup>Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture*, 14. For a brief synopsis of "Coffee House Society" in the 1690s, see Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture*, 13-16.

<sup>201</sup>R. L. Greaves, "Keach, Benjamin (1640–1704)," in *BDBR*, ed. Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller (Brighton, England: Harvester Press, 1984), 2:151.

<sup>202</sup>In the November 14, 1691, edition of *The Athenian Mercury*, the editors replied to questions related to infant baptism, arguing for its validity. Sometime between November 14 and November 28, 1691, Collins responded in print in H. C., *Animadversions Upon the Responses of the Athenian Mercury, To the Questions about Infant-Baptism* (London, 1691). This work is often listed as having been published in 1692, probably because it has an advertisement for Collins' *Believer's Baptism from Heaven* "lately printed," which is known to have been published in 1691. However, since Collins is responding in his *Animadversions* to the November 14<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Athenian Mercury* and the November 28<sup>th</sup> issue is a response to Collins' critique, it had to have been published during the two week window between those two issues.

Benjamin Keach responded to *The Athenian Mercury* in three separate publications: *Pedo-Baptism Disproved* (London: John Harris, 1691), *The Rector Rectified and Corrected; or, Infant-Baptism Unlawful* (London: John Harris, 1692), and *An Appendix to the Answer unto Two Athenian Mercuries, Concerning Pedo-Baptism* (London: John Harris, 1692).

<sup>203</sup>For a contemporary history of the society, see Charles Gildon, *The History of the Athenian Society: For the Resolving of all Nice and Curious Questions* (London: James Dowley, 1692).

<sup>204</sup>Berry, *Gender, Society and Print*, 6. For more on the publishing history of the *Athenian Mercury*, see Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture*, 18-25.

<sup>205</sup>Benjamin Keach, *A Counter-Antidote, To Purge Out the Malignant Effects Of a Late Counterfeit Prepared by Mr. Gyles Shute, An Unskilful Person in Polemical Cures* (London: H. Bernard, 1694). This work was published in response to Shute's own *Antidote To Prevent the Prevalency of Anabaptism Clearly Vindicated From that Foul Aspersion Of Being A Counterfeit, and the Aspersion Totally Confuted* (London: J.R., 1694), which was itself a reply to Collins' *The Antidote Proved A*

Perhaps the clearest sign of the depth of this relationship is seen in that Collins was selected to assist Keach in the ordination of his son, Elias Keach.<sup>206</sup> According to the younger Keach, Collins was the only other minister who assisted his father in the ordination service. In his letter to John Watts in March of 1694, Keach wrote, “We were constituted last April; and I was afterwards ordained by imposition of hands in presence of a great congregation by my honoured father and the Rev. brother Hercules Collins.”<sup>207</sup> The closeness of the relationship between Collins and Keach can perhaps be explained by their being on the same side on many of the controversial matters in seventeenth-century Baptist life.<sup>208</sup> As already noted above, they both defended the immersion of believers against the same paedo-baptist publications. More narrowly, both Keach and Collins argued in print for the necessity of hymn-singing by congregations.<sup>209</sup> Even more distinctively, Keach and Collins appear to have been alone among the Particular Baptists

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*Counterfeit: Or, Error Detected, and Believers Baptism Vindicated* (London: William Marshall, 1693). This 1693 work by Collins was, in turn, a response to Gyles Shute’s *An Antidote To Prevent the Prelavency of Anabaptism, Or Infants Baptism Vindicated By Way of Query and Answer* (London: J.R., 1693). This work by Shute, at first published anonymously, was directed against Collins’ *Believers-Baptism from Heaven, and of Divine Institution. Infants-Baptism from Earth, and Human Invention. Proved from the Commission of Christ, the great Law-giver to the Gospel Church* (London: J. Hancock, 1691). And this initial work by Collins on the subject was, in part, a rebuttal of Thomas Wall, *Baptism Anatomized* (London: G. Croom, 1691), and a catechism by Daniel Williams included in his *The Vanity of Childhood & Youth, Wherein The Depraved Nature of Young People is Represented, and Means for their Reformation Proposed* (London: John Dunton, 1691).

<sup>206</sup>Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, 2:470.

<sup>207</sup>Cited in “Appendix V” of Morgan Edwards, *Materials Towards a History of the American Baptists* (Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank and Isaac Collins, 1770), 1:110-11. The ordination was likely in April of 1693 as the letter is dated “the 12<sup>th</sup> month, 20<sup>th</sup> day, 1693-4” which would have been February 20, 1694 according to the old-style calendar.

<sup>208</sup>For a fuller discussion of two of the foremost controversies among the Particular Baptists during this period, see Michael A. G. Haykin and C. Jeffrey Robinson, “Particular Baptist Debates about Communion and Hymn-Singing,” in *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates Within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 284-308.

<sup>209</sup>See Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 75-86; and Benjamin Keach, *The Breach Repaired in God’s Worship: or, Singing of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, proved to be an Holy Ordinance of Jesus Christ* (London, 1691). On the hymn-singing controversy, see MacDonald, “London Calvinistic Baptists, 1689–1727,” 49-82; Walker, *The Excellent Benjamin Keach*, 275-303; and Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 146-53.

in defending the practice of the laying on of hands upon newly baptized believers.<sup>210</sup> The solidarity produced by their common commitments and public defense of relatively minority positions no doubt resulted in a closer relationship than might otherwise have existed.

**William Kiffin.** Collins must have garnered the respect of another of the most prominent of the seventeenth-century Baptists at the 1689 General Assembly. Just over a month after the Assembly ended on September 11, 1689, Collins was invited to deliver a Tuesday evening lecture on October 29 at the Devonshire Square Church pastored by William Kiffin.<sup>211</sup> The lecture, which was concluded the following Tuesday at the Wapping meeting house, was published in 1690 with “An Epistle Recommendatory” by Kiffin.<sup>212</sup> Of the published work, Kiffin would say that it served as a useful condensation of larger treatises on the decrees of God “forasmuch as it comprehends those large Treatises with great clearness, proving from the Scriptures of Truth, That all we have and hope for, is the Fruit of the Counsel of God’s own Will, our Calling being a Fruit of Election; and where he effectually calls, doth endow the Soul with all saving Grace, which can never die.”<sup>213</sup> Another evidence of the esteem with which Collins was viewed by Kiffin is that when Richard Adams was chosen to serve alongside him as a co-elder in the Devonshire Square congregation, Collins, along with Hanserd Knollys and William Collins, was involved in the ordination service.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>210</sup>See Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 33-38; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 260-63; and Benjamin Keach, *Laying on of Hands upon Baptized Believers, as such, Proved an Ordinance of Christ*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Benj. Harris, 1698). The laying of hands upon the newly baptized was commonly practiced among the General Baptists. See Article XXXII in *An Orthodox Creed: or, A Protestant Confession of Faith* (London, 1679), 44; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 320-21.

<sup>211</sup>Hercules Collins, *Mountains of Brass: Or, A Discourse upon the Decrees of God* (London: John Harris, 1690), title page.

<sup>212</sup>Collins, *Mountains of Brass*, An Epistle Recommendatory.

<sup>213</sup>Collins, *Mountains of Brass*, An Epistle Recommendatory.

<sup>214</sup>*Devonshire Square Church Book*, 1690 October.

Collins was likely referring in part to Kiffin when in 1691 he refuted the claim that the English Baptists had received their baptism from John Smyth. Thomas Wall had claimed in his book *Baptism Anatomized* that the current “English Anabaptists” had “successively received” their baptism from Smyth who had baptized himself.<sup>215</sup> In *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, Collins asserted that the Baptist community of which he was a part had not, in fact, had their baptism passed down to them from Smyth. In refuting this charge, he referenced then living sources who knew better. In so doing, he charged Wall with falsehood in his derogatory accusation regarding the origin of Baptists.

How many Leaves hast thou spent in thy Book, in asserting and maintaining a Lie, and to cast Filth upon the holy Ways of the Lord? Could not the Ordinance of Christ, which was lost in the Apostacy, be revived, (as the Feast of Tabernacles was, tho lost a great while) unless in such a filthy way as you falsly assert, viz. that *the English Baptists received their Baptism from Mr. John Smith*? It is absolutely untrue, it being well known, by some yet alive, how false this Assertion is; and if *J.W.*<sup>216</sup> will but give a meeting to any of us, and bring whom he pleaseth with him, we shall sufficiently shew the Falsity of what is affirmed by him in this Matter, and in many other things he hath unchristianly asserted.<sup>217</sup>

Those “yet alive” would certainly have included Kiffin and possibly Hanserd Knollys, who did not die until September of 1691, the same year in which these words were published.<sup>218</sup>

**Hanserd Knollys.** Almost exactly a year before Knollys died, he and Collins

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<sup>215</sup>Wall, *Baptism Anatomized*, 106-8.

<sup>216</sup>For some reason, Collins calls Thomas Wall “John Wall” in his response. Cf. Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 108 and 114. Thus, the initials “J. W.” in this quote. This is all the more curious since the cover page and table of contents both use Thomas Walls. Perhaps it was an intentional slight to liken Walls with the infamous John Child with whom he compares him on p. 114.

<sup>217</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 114-15. Italics in the original.

<sup>218</sup>Knollys had attended the 1691 General Assembly held 2–8 June 1691. He died on September 17, 1691, in his ninety-third year. For more on Knollys, see Barry H. Howson, *Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions: The Question of Orthodoxy Regarding the Theology of Hanserd Knollys (c. 1599–1691)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

had participated together in the ordination of Richard Adams.<sup>219</sup> There is not as much documentation of a relationship between Collins and Knollys as there is between Collins and Keach and Kiffin. This is likely due to Knollys' advanced age when Collins came into prominence in Particular Baptist life.<sup>220</sup> Nevertheless, Collins and Knollys both attended each of the three annual meetings held between 1689 and 1691. Both of their names were among the thirty-seven signatures recommending the Second London Confession of Faith. They are also linked together as two of the eleven ministers who endorsed *The Gospel Minister's Maintenance Vindicated* and recommended it to the London Particular Baptist churches. Though an intimate relationship cannot be established, it is clear that these two men were moving in the same circles and would have known each other personally.

### **Falsely Accused**

In the first part of the 1690s, Collins faced a challenge from another minister in Wapping. Francis Mence, formerly a student at Pembroke College in Oxford, was a Congregationalist minister at a church nearby where Collins ministered. Mence took exception to Collins' rejection of infant baptism as a means of washing away the effects of original sin in his 1691 book on baptism.<sup>221</sup> Apparently Mence's son also heard Collins preach three sermons from the end of Acts 2, which he wrote out "in Short-hand very curious and speedy."<sup>222</sup> Mence denounced Collins from his pulpit, a sermon that Collins heard about from one of Mence's most faithful auditors who had taken down the

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<sup>219</sup>*Devonshire Square Church Book*, 1690 October. Collins and Knollys were assisted in the ordination of William Kiffin's co-elder by William Collins.

<sup>220</sup>When Collins became pastor of the Wapping church in 1677, Knollys would have already been approximately seventy-eight years old.

<sup>221</sup>See Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 70 and 113-14.

<sup>222</sup>Hercules Collins, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated* (London, 1695), 7.

derogatory statements and given the notes to Collins.<sup>223</sup> Additionally, Mence published a book in 1694 which lay out some of these accusations in print.<sup>224</sup> At the heart of Mence's grievance with Collins was the latter's assertion that he knew "a better way to wash off Original Sin from dying Infants, namely, the blood of Christ, and the imputation of his Righteousness."<sup>225</sup> Since infants cannot have faith in the righteousness of Christ, Mence and other paedobaptist opponents accused Collins of believing that all infants must be damned. Furthermore, because Collins stated that the physical descendents of believers were not a part of the covenant of grace, Mence said to his congregation that Collins believed, "That the Seed of Believers are absolutely shut out of the Covenant of God; and . . . then Infants must be Damned."<sup>226</sup> Collins was clearly shocked at how easily Mence twisted his words in ways that Collins had never intended. He would have hoped for better treatment from unbelievers. "I suppose some *Turks* and *Pagans* would have abhorred thus to deal with Innocent and true Principles, and from true Premises draw such false and ridiculous Conclusions."<sup>227</sup>

As a result of Mence's false accusations, Collins' life was apparently threatened and he regularly heard insults thrown at him as he walked the streets of Wapping. Collins summarized the most vitriolic of Mence's rhetoric against him as follows:

That my Principle inevitably excludes dear Infants out of the Kingdom of God, and that I am audaciously cruel to them, sending them by swarms into Hell, calling my Principle *Infant-destroying-matter*; and that the Darts I would strike into their

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<sup>223</sup>Collins, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, 5.

<sup>224</sup>Francis Mence, *Vindiciae Foederis: Or A Vindication of the Interest that the Children of Believers, as such have in the Covenant of Grace, with their Parents; under the Gospel-Dispensation Being The Substance of Two Sermons, with Addition, Preached to a Congregation in Wapping* (London, 1694).

<sup>225</sup>Collins, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, 3.

<sup>226</sup>Collins, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, 4.

<sup>227</sup>Collins, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, 4.



Hearts and the Hearts of their Children.<sup>228</sup>

With such invectives directed at him by a public personage, it is no wonder that Collins had cause to fear for his life. One at least one occasion, Collins life was threatened “so that if the good Providence of God had not prevented, my Throat might not only have been cut with a Feather, which was his own saying, but might have been more effectually done another way.”<sup>229</sup> During this period, whenever Collins would walk the streets, he would hear, “*There goeth Mr. Collins, who holds the Damnation of Infants.*”<sup>230</sup>

Collins responded to Mence’s accusations in two formats. First, with the short booklet, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, which was quickly dispatched in early 1695. Second, with a full-length book, which included the complete text of *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, published later that year which responded to Mence’s work in a more systematic manner.<sup>231</sup> In these books, Collins called “*for as publick Satisfaction as I have had an Aspersion.*”<sup>232</sup> His concern was not, however, for his own honor, but for the sake of the testimony of Christ. If Mence continued to deny his false accusations against him, Collins warned that he would “*take the best measures I can to clear my Innocency, because my Function doth oblige me to maintain a good Name in the World, and good Principles, in order to a success in my Work; and I hope I can truly say, it is more for the Honour of God and the Gospel than mine own, I am thus concerned.*” Ironically, in

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<sup>228</sup>Collins, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, 5.

<sup>229</sup>Collins, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, 5.

<sup>230</sup>Collins, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, 5.

<sup>231</sup>Hercules Collins, *The Sandy Foundation of Infant Baptism Shaken* (London, 1695). This work responded to Mence’s *Vindiciae Foederis* by means of an exposition of Acts 2:39, which dismantled the paedobaptist argument for the inclusion of the physical seed of believers in the covenant of grace. For a recent study of how seventeenth-century Baptists interacted with the paedobaptist federalism of their contemporaries, see Pascal Denault, *The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology: A Comparison Between Seventeenth-Century Particular Baptist and Paedobaptist Federalism* (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2013).

<sup>232</sup>Collins, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, 11.

actuality, Collins was more generous in his views toward the salvation of infants than was Mence. While recognizing that “tho’ secret things belong to God,” Collins admitted that he was “inclined to believe all dying Infants in the Election and Covenant of Grace.”<sup>233</sup>

### **Concern for the Coming Generation**

Collins was a part of a group of ministers who recognized a very real problem among their congregations: namely, the absence of capable young men who would carry on the work of the ministry into the next generation. At the 1689 General Assembly the pastors listed as one of the four reasons for mourning and fasting on the part of their congregations was in the failure to ordain and provide for ministers. In their “General Epistle to the Churches” they wrote,

We cannot but bewail that great Evil, and neglect of Duty in many Churches concerning the ministry.

1. In that some though they have Brethren competently qualified for the Office of Pastors and Deacons, yet omit that sacred Ordinance of Ordination, whereby they are rendred incapable of preaching and administring the Ordinances of the Gospel, so regularly, and with that Authority which otherwise they might do. Those who have failed herein, we desire would in the fear of God lay it to Heart, and reform.

2. In neglecting to make Gospel Provision for their Maintenance, according to their Abilities, by which means many of them are so incumbred with Worldly Affairs, that they are not able to perform the Duties of their holy Calling, in preaching the Gospel, and watching over their respective Flocks.<sup>234</sup>

Several of these ministers had responded to the second concern of the maintenance of ministers with their endorsement and publication of *The Gospel Minister’s Maintenance Vindicated*. They believed that many churches were not taking seriously enough their responsibility to care for their ministers and therefore the congregations themselves were being under-cared for due to the other demands upon the time of their ministers. Collins, however, would address the first concern of the Assembly in his last published work, *The*

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<sup>233</sup>Collins, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated*, 5.

<sup>234</sup>*Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly 1689*, 5.

*Temple Repair'd*. In this work, which may well be his *magnum opus*, Collins calls for an ordained ministry at once rebuking churches both for their refusal to ordain gifted men as well as for failing to train the young men within their own congregations for the work of the ministry.

Written in what would prove to be the last year of his life, in *The Temple Repair'd* Collins outlined a vision of the church as a place of theological training for future ministers. Michael A. G. Haykin has described *The Temple Repair'd* as “an eloquent plea for Calvinistic Baptist churches to serve as seminaries for aspiring pastors and preachers.”<sup>235</sup> As such, it is filled with practical advice on both hermeneutics and homiletics. This work attempted to fill a void in seventeenth-century Particular Baptist life in relation to the training of a new generation of ministers within the local church. As a remedy to this deficiency, Collins proposed,

Therefore it is greatly desired, and would be a very glorious work, if all the elders of the church in every city in England would not only be concerned in their own particular congregation for a future ministry, but that the several elders would set apart some time every week for the instructing young men, members of churches, inclined to divine studies. And so in the country where two or three churches are not far asunder, that all their elders would agree to meet once a month, or oftener, to hear the gifts that God hath given their churches. And that their gifts might be discovered, they ought first of all to be put upon prayer, and then to see what gifts they have for opening the Word of God; and this to be done to the end that some may be able to teach others also, when we put off this earthly tabernacle.<sup>236</sup>

Collins knew that some would object to his proposal by saying, “God will take care of his churches, and give them pastors after his own heart.” But this, he said, will be “no thanks to the churches who are negligent in their duty in this respect.”<sup>237</sup> Instead of waiting for a miracle to supply their lack of provision for a future ministry, Collins exhorted his fellow pastors to a better logic:

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<sup>235</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, *A Cloud of Witnesses: Calvinistic Baptists in the 18th Century* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Times, 2006), 24.

<sup>236</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 13.

<sup>237</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 13.

We argue with a great deal more judgment about the concerns of our bodies, we say it is our duty to trust in God to provide for our selves and families. That is true, but we do not ordinarily neglect the lawful means conducing to that end. The husbandman hopes for a good crop in Summer, but still it is in the use of means, he ought to plough and sow his seed, and not look for a miracle, but do his endeavor, and leave the blessing with God. Thus should we do in the concerns of our souls, and the churches of Christ.<sup>238</sup>

In other words, pastors should do their duty in preparing for a future ministry, but remain dependent upon God for his blessing upon their efforts. In his own practice, Collins certainly does not appear to have neglected the use of “the lawful means” in calling out and equipping gifted men from within his own congregation to use their gifts in the service of the church.

Murdina MacDonald has noted the “relatively large number of men called to ministry” during the last decade of Collins’ pastorate.<sup>239</sup> She opined that this may have been a response to Collins’ failing health in the final decade of his life. Collins certainly did suffer from “Indispositions . . . frequent and great”<sup>240</sup> throughout his ministry, perhaps as a result of illnesses developed from the harsh conditions of his imprisonments in 1670 and 1684. His own ill health, therefore, may have given him a special urgency to prepare a new generation of ministers. It is clear that Collins was frequently involved in the ordination of ministers at other churches and the Wapping Church Book records a number of men who were allowed to exercise their preaching gifts. Even in Collins’ early years as pastor, opportunity was given in both the March and April church meetings in 1679 for certain “younger Brethren” to “exercise their gifts” at the following month’s respective fast day.<sup>241</sup> On September 24, 1682, a brother Chaplin was allowed to exercise

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<sup>238</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 13-14.

<sup>239</sup>MacDonald, “London Calvinistic Baptists 1689–1727,” 325.

<sup>240</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 237.

<sup>241</sup>*WCB*, 11 March 1679 and 21 April 1679.

his gifts for the approbation of the church.<sup>242</sup> Throughout the rest of the 1680s the church minute book contains few entries due to the intense persecution of the period. In the 1690s, however, there is a flood of brothers allowed to exercise their gifts before the church. An entry in the church book from September of 1690 demonstrates the openness of Collins and the Wapping church to the recognition of new preachers of the gospel: “It was further agreed that any bro: whome god hath drawn forth to exercise their gifts may have ther liberty of a first day in the morning before the publike exercise.”<sup>243</sup> Over the next several years a number of specific individuals were allowed to exercise their gifts in similar manner.<sup>244</sup> On some occasions there is record of the church voting to approve of their gifts.<sup>245</sup> At other times the church gives instruction to their members who might already be preaching publicly to cease such activity until the church might approve their gifts.<sup>246</sup> In all cases, those brothers whose gifts were approved by the church were left to the direction of Collins as to how and when their gifts would be used in the church and beyond.<sup>247</sup>

Collins believed in the importance of study for the preacher. As he had argued for his fellow pastors to use “lawful meanes” in the equipping of future ministers of the gospel, he would use a very similar argument for the use of means in his call for

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<sup>242</sup>*WCB*, 22 August 1682.

<sup>243</sup>*WCB*, 25 September 1690.

<sup>244</sup>Lindsey, November 18, 1690; Liney, June 30, 1691; Gander, January 24, 1693; Hartman, August 9, 1693; Pooly, April 30, 1695; Gillett, September 17, 1695; Hall, August 4, 1697; and Mosely, August 4, 1697.

<sup>245</sup>See *WCB*, 28 April 1698. “Att the same time Br Towey an Br Coleson be sent as messengers to Br Hall to acquaint him that the Church hath approved of his gifts & that the further maneing of his gift to left to the prudence of our Br Collins.”

<sup>246</sup>In their church meeting of February 5, 1695, messengers were sent to a “Brother Pooly” to inform him to “forbear publick preaching untill the Church shall approve of his Gifts.” In the 30 April 1695 meeting, “Pooly was before the congregation and hath promesed to desest further publick preaching without the approbation of the Church & it was agreed that he have liberty to exercise his gifts once a fortnight in the morning beginning at 8 a clock to 9.”

<sup>247</sup>For example, the entry from the church book on January 18, 1700 states, “Att the same time Bro Coopers gift was approved off & it is Left to Br Collins to imply it as he shall see occasion.”

laborious study while at the same time affirming both the necessity and sufficiency of the Holy Spirit.

We may say in this case, as we use to speak about Salvation, that we ought to live so holily as if we were to be sav'd by our living, and yet when we have done all, to rely upon Christ and his Righteousness; so we should labor in Study, as if we should have no immediate Assistance in the Pulpit, and yet when we have done all, to go about our Work depending upon God for further Assistance.<sup>248</sup>

In *The Temple Repair'd*, Collins would provide a list of recommend books to “those inclined to the ministry.”

*Pool's*, the *Dutch* and *Diodate's* Annotations, *Caryl on Job*, Mr. *Charnock's* two Volumes, Mr. *Perkin's* Works, *Roberts's* Key, *Leigh's* Body of Divinity, *Wilson's* Dictionary, Mr. *Burroughs's* Works, Dr. *Sibbs's* Works, Dr. *Raynolds's* Works, Dr. *Preston's* Works, Book of Martyrs, *Ames* Marrow of Divinity, *Grosse's* Fiery Pillar of Heavenly Truth, Dr. *Owen* on the Trinity, *Bates's* Harmony, *Cole* on Sovereignty; Books of the *Scotch* Divines, *Durham* on the *Canticles*, Ten Commandments, *Revelations*, *Isa. 53.* and of Scandal; *Dickson* on the *Psalms*, *Matthew*, and I think on the Epistles; *Hutcheson* on the *minor* Prophets, and *John's* Gospel, &c. *Calvin's* Institutions, *Ursinus* Catechism, *Burgess's* Works, *Ainsworth* on the Pentateuch, *Psalms*, and *Canticles*, *Erasmus* on the New Testament, *Tomb's* Works, Dr. *Willet's* Works, Bp *Usher's* Body of Divinity, *Newman's* Concordance, *Roberts's* Mystery and Marrow of the Bible, the Ark of the Covenant opened, Dr. *Du-veil* his literal Explanation of the *Acts*, *Clark's* Examples, *Plutarch's* Morals, *Seneca's* Morals, *Pliny's* Natural History, *Eusebius*, *Josephus*, *Hoylin's* Cosmography, *Boyle's* Stile of Scripture, *Blundervil's* Logick, *Smith's* and *Delaune's* Rhetorick. And those who are not skilled in the Latin tongue, for the understanding of Words make use of Mr. *Cole's* Latin and English Dictionaries. What Books you buy, get the best Tables to them you can, which may be used in some respects as a Common-place Book: And a good Common-place Book of a Man's own making will be necessary in a Study.<sup>249</sup>

The Wapping Church backed up Collins' call to “labor in Study” by providing the gifted brethren in their congregation with theological libraries. In the Wapping Church Book there are itemized lists of books provided at the combined cost of £9 to at least seven different men.<sup>250</sup> Among the books provided to these young preachers were English dictionaries, Bibles, copies of the London confession of faith, the Dutch and Diodate

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<sup>248</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 36-37.

<sup>249</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 49-50.

<sup>250</sup>WCB, on two undated and unnumbered pages just after the roll of church members. See Appendix 3 for a transcription of these two lists.

Annotations, Stephen Charnock on the Attributes of God, William Ames' and Edward Leigh's Bodies of Divinity, works on logic and rhetoric, and John Bunyan's *The Holy War*.

The seventeenth century was a time of rapid development for English Particular Baptists. One of their "growing pains" was in the matter of the education of ministers. Most Baptists in the seventeenth century grew up without the opportunity to pursue education in the great universities of England.<sup>251</sup> Those who were educated often looked down upon those who were not. In defending themselves against the attacks of the learned, perhaps some Baptists went too far in devaluing the importance of education for the minister. Most, however, simply asserted that "human learning" was not absolutely necessary for a ministry of the Word. The qualification of absolute necessity applied only to the aid of the Holy Spirit. Some apparently used this emphasis as an excuse to not study. But by the turn of the eighteenth century, Baptist views seem to have moderated as is seen in the writings of Hercules Collins. Collins' call for a ministry well-equipped in the study of the Word was the result of a lifetime of seeing Baptist churches failing to produce capable leaders. *The Temple Repair'd* represented a shift in emphasis among Baptists on the education of ministers. Accordingly, H. Leon McBeth has declared in his standard work of Baptist history that *The Temple Repair'd* was one of the early works which "set the tone of Baptist emphasis upon education."<sup>252</sup>

### **Death and Character of Collins**

#### **Circumstances of Death**

Collins died on October 4, 1702. He apparently died unexpectedly since Piggott noted in the dedication of his funeral sermon to the Wapping church that their

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<sup>251</sup>One notable exception was Hanserd Knollys who was educated at Cambridge.

<sup>252</sup>H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 192.

pastor had been “suddenly snatch’d” from them.<sup>253</sup> Although he had long been plagued by illness, his death in his fifty-sixth year still came too soon since as Piggott observed “according to the Course of Nature, he might have been useful for many Years to come.”<sup>254</sup> The suddenness of Collins’ passing can be seen in that he had been present for the last church meeting held only ten days prior to his death.<sup>255</sup> Even more remarkably, he had apparently been healthy enough the day before his death to preach a funeral service. Piggott recalled that Collins “did discourse but the Morning before he died after a very moving manner, being greatly affected with those Words, *They overcame by the Blood of the Lamb.*”<sup>256</sup>

### **A Faithful Pastor**

In their first church meeting after the death and burial of their pastor, they commissioned Brothers Gardner and Gandar “to return Mr Piggott thanks for his care in preaching the funeral sermone and that they desire him to print the same.”<sup>257</sup> Thankfully Piggott complied with this request since it provides virtually all of the first-hand assessment of Collins’ ministry. In his funeral sermon that was preached five days after Collins’ passing, Piggott extolled Collins as a faithful minister of the gospel. Piggott said that Hercules Collins “lived what he preached.”<sup>258</sup> Piggott later summarized exactly what it meant for Hercules so to live: “In a word, he was faithful in every Relation, a Man of Truth and Integrity, one entirely devoted to the Service of the Temple, and zealously bent

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<sup>253</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 203.

<sup>254</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 203.

<sup>255</sup>*WCB*, 24 September 1702.

<sup>256</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 237. A footnote adds, “This was the last Text that he preached on, it being a Funeral Occasion.”

<sup>257</sup>*WCB*, 15 October 1702.

<sup>258</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 236.



to promote the Interest of the Lord Redeemer.”<sup>259</sup> Due to the way Hercules Collins had lived his life among his congregation, Piggott said that he did not need to say much about his deceased friend. Therefore he merely said “his *Doctrine* you have heard, and his *Example* you have seen for so many Years: the former was agreeable to the Sentiments of the Reformed Churches in all Fundamental Articles of Faith, and the latter such as did *adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour*.”<sup>260</sup> The life and doctrine of this “late Worthy Pastor”<sup>261</sup> were in clear agreement.

Piggott described Hercules Collins as possessing Luther’s three qualifications for a minister of the gospel. Collins “was much given to Meditation and Prayer, and hardly any Man was more grievously tempted of the Devil.”<sup>262</sup> Of Collins’ temptation Piggott is no doubt referring to how Collins endured the trial of imprisonment in the Newgate jail for his nonconformity.<sup>263</sup> The former qualifications of meditation and prayer were lived out in his daily ministry as a pastor. Such was the reputation of this man’s commitment to Bible study and prayer that Piggott could use the occasion of his death to charge the younger ministers present “to apply your selves to close Study and constant Prayer, that you may shew yourselves *Workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth*.”<sup>264</sup> Piggott likewise exhorted the church to train young men for the ministry who would be “able to defend the Truths they preach.”<sup>265</sup> This, Piggott was sure, was the sense of Hercules Collins’ own mind which he would have spoken to

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<sup>259</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 237.

<sup>260</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 235.

<sup>261</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 235.

<sup>262</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 236.

<sup>263</sup>Haykin, “Collins, Hercules,” in *DNB*, 709.

<sup>264</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 238-39.

<sup>265</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 239.

them if able.<sup>266</sup>

Not only was Collins a faithful pastor in his life and doctrine, he also faithfully fulfilled his pastoral role of the oversight of souls. Of the discharge of this duty Piggott called the Wapping congregation to bear testimony: “And how well he discharged the other Branches of his *Pastoral Function*, this Church is a Witness, whom he has watched over and visited above five and twenty Years.”<sup>267</sup> One part of his pastoral faithfulness was his evangelistic fervor. Piggott described the evangelistic zeal of Hercules Collins by saying that “no Man could preach with a more affectionate Regard to the Salvation of Souls.”<sup>268</sup> He later called upon the regular attenders of the Wapping Church who remained unsaved as witnesses to the gospel fervor of Hercules Collins: “You are Witnesses with what Zeal and Fervour, with what Constancy and Seriousness he us’d to warn and persuade you.”<sup>269</sup> At this point Piggott began to plead with those present who were present by crying out, “Tho you have been deaf to his former Preaching, yet listen to the Voice of this Providence, lest you continue in your Slumber till you sleep the Sleep of Death.” He then closed his sermon with a strong evangelistic appeal which must have been intensified by the presence of Collins’ lifeless body which lay before them.

You cannot but see, unless you will close your Eyes, *that this World and the Fashion of it is passing away*. O what a Change will a few Months or Years make in this numerous Assembly! Yea, what a sad Change has little more than a Fortnight made in this Congregation! He that was so lately preaching in this Pulpit, is now wrapt in his Shroud, and confin’d to his Coffin; and the Lips that so often dispers’d Knowledg amongst you, are seal’d up till the Resurrection.

Here’s the Body of your late Minister; but his Soul is enter’d *into the Joy of his Lord*. O that those of you that would not be persuaded by him living, might be wrought upon by his Death! for tho he is dead, he yet speaketh; and what doth he

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<sup>266</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 239. He actually said, “You must not expect that Preachers will drop down from Heaven, or spring out of Earth; but due Care must be taken for the incouragement of humble men that have *real gifts*, and let such be train’d up in *useful Learning*, that they may be able to defend the Truths they preach. Your Pastor’s Mouth is stop’d, and cannot speak to you; but this I am sure was the Sense of his Mind.” Cf. Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 13-14.

<sup>267</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 236.

<sup>268</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 236.

<sup>269</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 240.

say both to Ministers and People, but *Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh?*<sup>270</sup>

In a sense, these final words by Piggott allowed Collins to preach one final time to the unconverted who had sat under his ministry.

After the funeral sermon at the Wapping meeting house on October 9, 1702, Collins' body was taken the approximately two miles to Bunhill Fields where he was interred in this burial ground of dissenters. His wife Sarah's body joined his there only a few months later on April 6, 1703.

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<sup>270</sup>Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 240.

## CHAPTER 3

### “ORTHODOX”: HERCULES COLLINS AND HISTORIC CHRISTIANITY

In his three-volume history of *The Baptists*, Thomas J. Nettles offers a quadrilateral of Baptist identity that he labels the “coherent-truth model.”<sup>1</sup> Nettles identifies four categories of Baptist identity: “orthodoxy, evangelicalism, separate-ness (that is, a theologically integrated ecclesiology), and conscientious confessionality.”<sup>2</sup> First among the markers of Baptist identity for Nettles is orthodoxy. “Orthodoxy,” he writes, “includes knowledge of God as the triune God and knowledge of Christ as Son of God and Son of Man.”<sup>3</sup> Nettles cites the article on the Trinity from the Second London Confession, stating that its “language derives from the vocabulary and concepts of the early church councils and reflects the decisions expressed in the creeds of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon.”<sup>4</sup> Given that Hercules Collins signed this historic document provides some indication of his commitment to historic Christian orthodoxy. This commitment, however, was not without its challenges during his lifetime.

Both the General and Particular branches of the seventeenth-century Baptists faced challenges in key areas of historic Christianity. Each group had prominent leaders in their movements embrace substandard positions on both the Trinity and Christology.

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas J. Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity*, vol. 1, *Beginnings in Britain* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 1:35-50.

<sup>2</sup>Nettles, *The Baptists*, 1:36.

<sup>3</sup>Nettles, *The Baptists*, 1:37.

<sup>4</sup>Nettles, *The Baptists*, 1:37. For an excellent treatment of the way in which Baptist confessions in the seventeenth century interacted with the patristic tradition, see Steven R. Harmon, *Towards Baptist Catholicity: Essays on Tradition and the Baptist Vision*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought 27 (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster Press, 2006), 71-81.

For the General Baptists, Matthew Caffyn (1628–1714)<sup>5</sup> would lead many astray with his heretical teachings concerning the nature of the humanity of Jesus. Caffyn denied that Jesus had received his human flesh from the Virgin Mary. Among the Particular Baptists, Thomas Collier (*fl.* 1634–1691)<sup>6</sup> proved to be a moving target in regard to his orthodoxy. Collier denied the historic understanding of the Trinity during the 1640s, passing through a period of orthodoxy in the 1650s and 1660s, before finally rejecting original sin, limited atonement and the incarnation in the 1670s. Both Caffyn and Collier would receive responses from capable pastor-theologians within their own respective traditions.

### Caffyn and the General Baptist Response

Matthew Caffyn apparently held orthodox Christological views in 1660 when he signed what would become known as The Standard Confession<sup>7</sup> which affirmed the full deity and humanity of Christ.<sup>8</sup> Although the language lacked specificity,<sup>9</sup> this document nevertheless affirmed that “there is one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, who is the only begotten Son of God, born of the Virgin *Mary*; yet as truly  *Davids* Lord, and  *Davids* root, as  *Davids* Son, and  *Davids* Off-spring.”<sup>10</sup> Caffyn, however, would apparently come to teach that Christ did not receive his human flesh from his mother Mary, but rather brought it down from heaven passing “through the Virgins womb as

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<sup>5</sup>For a brief biographical sketch, see Jim Spivey, “Caffyn, Matthew,” in *DNB*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>6</sup>For a brief biographical sketch, see Stephen Wright, “Collier, Thomas,” in *DNB*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>7</sup>Originally published as *A Brief Confession Or Declaration Of Faith* (London: G. D., 1660); William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 224-35. The confession did not become known as The Standard Confession until 1663. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 221.

<sup>8</sup>B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (Didcot, England: The Baptist Historical Society, 1996), 52.

<sup>9</sup>Lumpkin notes that the “Article on Christology is brief, vague, and in the words of Scripture: it was to be a bone of future contention.” Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 221.

<sup>10</sup>*A Brief Confession Or Declaration Of Faith*, 3-4; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 225.

Water through a Conduit.”<sup>11</sup> Although Stephen R. Holmes has recently asserted that the charges of heresy against Caffyn by later historians are “demonstrably wrong,”<sup>12</sup> he nevertheless admits that Caffyn “at least denied the worth (indeed, the logical coherence) of the Athanasian Creed.”<sup>13</sup>

If recent historians have wrongly labeled Caffyn, they are merely following the precedent of Caffyn’s contemporary General Baptist messenger—Thomas Monck. Monck was certainly in a position to know what Caffyn believed and taught. Both Monck and Caffyn had signed the Standard Confession of Faith in 1660. Both men were local farmers of the Midlands of England and General Baptist pastors.<sup>14</sup> Monck’s concern over Caffyn’s doctrinal aberrations led him to publish *A Cure for the Cankering Error of the New Eutychians* in 1673. In addition to the Christological errors of the “English Eutychians,” Monck discovered through private conversations what A. H. Baines called “worse heresies.”<sup>15</sup> Specifically, Monck asserted that “they deny (or at least doubt of) God’s Omnipresence; and with the *Anthropomorphites*, think of God as if he were some old Man sitting in some one place on a Throne.”<sup>16</sup> Although not mentioned by name in Monck’s treatise, Caffyn apparently knew that he was the target of this publication since according to Caffyn’s *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* biographer James Spivey, Caffyn sought (albeit unsuccessfully) to have the general assembly censure

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<sup>11</sup>Thomas Monck, *A Cure for the Cankering Error of the New Eutychians: Who (concerning the Truth) have erred, SAYING, That our blessed Mediator did not take his Flesh of the Virgin Mary, neither was he made of the Seed of David according to the Flesh; and thereby have overthrown the Faith of some* (London, 1673), 104.

<sup>12</sup>Stephen R. Holmes, *Baptist Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 165n1. Holmes claims to “have an essay in preparation on Caffyn” since he does not “think any published source does justice to his views.”

<sup>13</sup>Holmes, *Baptist Theology*, 71.

<sup>14</sup>W. Madison Grace II, “Transcriber’s Preface to An Orthodox Creed: An Unabridged 17th Century General Baptist Confession,” *SWJT* 48, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 129.

<sup>15</sup>A. H. Baines, “Signatories to the Orthodox Confession,” *BQ* 27, no. 1 (January 1957): 39. See also Grace II, “Transcriber’s Preface to An Orthodox Creed,” 129-30.

<sup>16</sup>Monck, *A Cure for the Cankering Error of the New Eutychians*, 116.

Monck in June of 1673.<sup>17</sup> Even though Monck was acquitted by a large majority of the assembly, Caffyn's teaching was not condemned either.<sup>18</sup>

In the year 1678, Monck followed up his unsuccessful attempts to censure Caffyn's teaching by drawing up fifty articles of faith which he entitled *An Orthodox Creed*.<sup>19</sup> This document was signed by fifty-four General Baptists on January 30, 1679.<sup>20</sup> In the fifth article, titled "Of the Second Person in the Holy Trinity, taking our Flesh," Monck repudiated Caffyn's alleged teaching in no uncertain terms:

We believe that the only Begotten Son of God, the Second Person in the *Sacred Trinity*, took to himself a true, real, and *fleshly Body*, and *reasonable Soul*, being Conceived in the fullness of Time, by the Holy Ghost, and Born of the *Virgin Mary*, and become very and *true Man*, like unto us in all things, even in our Infirmities, Sin only excepted; as appeareth by his Conception, Birth, Life, and Death. He was of a Woman, and by the Power of the Holy Ghost, in a Supernatural and Miraculous manner, was Formed of the only Seed, or *substance* of the *Virgin Mary*, in which respect he hath the Name of the Son of Man, and is the true Son of *David*, the Fruit of the Virgins Womb, to that end he might die for *Adam*.<sup>21</sup>

The *Orthodox Creed* also took the unusual step of reproducing three creeds from the early church in Article XXXVIII. "The Three Creeds, (*viz.*) The *Nicene Creed*, *Athanasius* his Creed, and the Apostles Creed, . . . ought thoroughly to be received, and believed. For we believe they may be proved by most undoubted Authority of holy Scripture, and are necessary to be understood of all Christians."<sup>22</sup> The inclusion of these three creeds from the patristic era qualifies the *Orthodox Creed* as, in the words of Steven R. Harmon, the "most explicit and thoroughgoing referencing of the patristic tradition

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<sup>17</sup>Spivey, "Caffyn, Matthew."

<sup>18</sup>Baines, "Signatories to the Orthodox Confession," 40.

<sup>19</sup>*An Orthodox Creed: Or, A Protestant Confession of Faith. Being An Essay to Unite, and Confirm all true Protestants in the Fundamental Articles of the Christian Religion, against the Errors and Heresies of the Church of Rome* (London, 1679). Complete text also found in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 297-334.

<sup>20</sup>Baines, "Signatories to the Orthodox Confession," 35.

<sup>21</sup>*An Orthodox Creed*, 5-6; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 300.

<sup>22</sup>*An Orthodox Creed*, 56; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 326. Text of the three creeds found in *An Orthodox Creed*, 57-62; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 326-27.

among Baptist confessions of faith.”<sup>23</sup>

In the end, however, Caffyn’s influence was too pervasive. After repeated failed attempts to censure Caffyn by the General Assembly of General Baptists during the 1680s and 1690s, by 1719 only one out of fifteen General Baptists present at the Salter’s Hall meeting of nonconformist ministers in London would subscribe to a confessional statement of the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>24</sup> Within a century, as the eminent scholar of dissent Michael Watts has noted, “many of the General Baptist churches connected with the General Assembly had become Unitarian.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Collier and the Particular Baptist Response**

Among the Particular Baptists, Thomas Collier was much less effective.<sup>26</sup> Collier was a native of Somerset and a key leader in the Western Association’s adoption of the Somerset Confession in 1656.<sup>27</sup> His career, however, was riddled with doctrinal instability.<sup>28</sup> In his Oxford dissertation on Collier, Richard Dale Land states “that there were only relatively brief periods of Collier’s career when he was unquestionably orthodox by what the Particular Baptists themselves published as their theological

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<sup>23</sup>Harmon, *Towards Baptist Catholicity*, 77.

<sup>24</sup>James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 44-46.

<sup>25</sup>Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 376.

<sup>26</sup>Collier’s name is sometimes spelled “Collyer” in his published works. Throughout this dissertation I have used the spelling “Collier.”

<sup>27</sup>*A Confession Of The Faith of several Churches of Christ, In the Country of Somerset, and of some Churches in the Counties neer adjacent* (London: Henry Hills, 1656).

<sup>28</sup>For more on the career of Thomas Collier, see Richard Dale Land, “Doctrinal Controversies of English Particular Baptists (1644–1691) as Illustrated by the Career and Writings of Thomas Collier” (D.Phil. thesis, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University, 1979). For detailed documentation of Collier’s departure from Calvinist orthodoxy, see James M. Renihan, “Thomas Collier’s Descent into Error: Collier, Calvinism, and the Second London Confession,” *Reformed Baptist Theological Review* 1, no. 1 (January 2004): 67-83.



standards, namely *Confession* (1644) and *Confession* (1677).”<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Michael A. G. Haykin has labeled the doctrinal defection of Collier as perhaps the most pressing reason for a new confession of faith in 1677.<sup>30</sup> In his 1674 *Body of Divinity*, Collier had denied the Calvinistic doctrine of particular redemption while asserting the eternity of the human nature of Christ.<sup>31</sup> In 1676, in a work titled *An Additional Word to the Body of Divinity*, Collier clarified his stance by strengthening his statements regarding the universal provision of the atonement, the eternity of the human nature of the Son and his refusal to use the term “person” as in the historic Christian orthodox formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>32</sup> The latter rejection reflects Collier’s teaching on the subject three decades prior. In 1648, for example, Collier had denied the historic orthodox understanding of the Trinity. Collier wrote that God

is not, first, as some imagine, *Three Persons yet one God*, or three subsistings, distinguished though not divided; Its altogether impossible to distinguish God in this manner, and not divide him; thus to distinguish is to divide; for three persons are three not only distinguished, but divided: Some say there is, *God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, yet not three, but one God*; Let any one judge if here be not three Gods, if three then not one.<sup>33</sup>

In the words of Thomas Hall, an opponent of the Baptists, Collier was “a most dangerous and blasphemous Heretick,” nothing less than an Arian, because he “denied the

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<sup>29</sup>Land, “Doctrinal Controversies of English Particular Baptists,” 332.

<sup>30</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach: Rediscovering our English Baptist Heritage* (Leeds, England: Reformation Today Trust, 1996), 68. Collier’s defection was emblematic of a larger movement in seventeenth-century England, which included men such as John Biddle (1616–1662), that denied the deity of Christ and the Trinity. For a recent detailed study of this doctrinal controversy, see Paul C. H. Lim, *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). The 1690s saw the rise of English Deism through the writings of such men as Anthony Collins (1676–1729), Matthew Tindal (1655–1733), and John Toland (1670–1722). For a brief synopsis of this development, see Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 113-14.

<sup>31</sup>Thomas Collier, *The Body of Divinity, Or, a Confession of Faith, Being the substance of CHRISTIANITY: Containing the most Material things relating to Matters both of Faith and Practise* (London: Nath. Crouch, 1674), 117 and 31.

<sup>32</sup>Thomas Collier, *An Additional Word To The Body of Divinity, Or Confession Of Faith: Being the substance of Christianity* (London, 1676), 1-18.

<sup>33</sup>Thomas Collier, *A General Epistle, To The Universal Church of the First Born: Whose Names are written in Heaven* (London: Giles Calvert, 1648), 4.

Trinity.”<sup>34</sup> Although Hall was aware that Collier’s beliefs were not shared by the generality of the Calvinistic Baptists,<sup>35</sup> others were not so discerning and took Collier’s views as representative of the whole of his one-time co-religionists. A response from the Particular Baptist community was therefore necessary. Nehemiah Coxe<sup>36</sup> offered one such response in his 1677 *Vindicae Veritas*.<sup>37</sup> Another response came the same year in the form of the Second London Confession of Faith,<sup>38</sup> which was likely composed by Coxe and his fellow Petty France co-pastor William Collins.<sup>39</sup> A largely overlooked response, however, came in the year 1680 from the pen of Hercules Collins.

### **Collins and *An Orthodox Catechism***

In 1680, Hercules Collins published his *An Orthodox Catechism*. This modified version of the historic Protestant Heidelberg Catechism was published, as stated on the title page: “For Preventing the Canker and Poison of Heresy and Error.”<sup>40</sup> Collins was concerned with defending his fellow Baptists against charges of heresy while at the same time providing an instrument of instruction in order to prevent the spread of further false teaching among their number. Thus, the catechism had both polemical and pastoral

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<sup>34</sup>[Thomas Hall], *The Collier in his Colours: or, The Picture of a Collier* (London, 1652), in Hall’s *The Font Guarded With XX Arguments* (London, 1652), 123, 125.

<sup>35</sup>Hall, *The Collier in his Colours in The Font Guarded*, 121, 125.

<sup>36</sup>For a brief biographical sketch of Coxe, see James M. Renihan, “An Excellent and Judicious Divine: Nehemiah Coxe,” *Reformed Baptist Theological Review* 4, no. 2 (July 2007): 61-78.

<sup>37</sup>Nehemiah Coxe, *Vindicae Veritas, Or A Confutation Of The Heresies and Gross Errors Asserted by Thomas Collier In His Additional Word To His Body of Divinity* (London: Nath. Ponder, 1677).

<sup>38</sup>*A Confession Of Faith Put Forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations Of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country* (London: Benjamin Harris, 1677).

<sup>39</sup>An obscure reference is made in the minutes of the Petty France church on August 26, 1677, to the publication of a confession of faith. *Petty France Church Minute Book*, 6. This confession would be formally adopted by the General Assembly of Particular Baptists in 1689.

<sup>40</sup>H[ercules] Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism: Being the Sum of Christian Religion, Contained in the Law and Gospel* (London, 1680), title page. The text of this catechism, alongside the text of the Heidelberg Catechism, is also provided in James M. Renihan, *True Confessions: Baptist Documents in the Reformed Family* (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2004).

functions. As seen above, the polemical focus of the catechism was necessary due to the fact that one of the leading church planters of the Calvinistic Baptist community in the early decades of their movement, Thomas Collier, had brought the Baptists into disrepute. Collins wrote primarily, however, as a pastor to safeguard the congregation entrusted to him. The catechism was addressed very specifically to “the Church of Christ, who upon Confession of Faith have bin baptized, Meeting in *Old-Gravil-Lane London*.”<sup>41</sup> Having become the pastor of the Wapping congregation only four years earlier, Collins modified the Heidelberg so as to use as a tool in fulfilling his pastoral duties. A comparison of the two documents reveals a number of edits, a good number of which are best explained as Collins’ attempts to make the catechism more accessible to his local congregation. One example of this type of editing is found in Collins’ rearrangement of the section dealing with the Ten Commandments. Whereas the Heidelberg listed the Ten Commandments all together then later explained them individually, Collins rearranged this section to allow for each commandment to be listed separately along with its explanation and application. This rearrangement has an obvious pedagogical benefit. Collins explicitly stated this concern for the spiritual nurture of the local congregation to which he ministered in the following benediction that concluded his “Preface” to the catechism: “And for those whom the Lord hath committed to my Charge, that the Eternal God may be your Refuge, and underneath you everlasting Arms; that Grace may be opened to your Hearts, and your hearts to Grace; that the blessing of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob may be upon you, and the eternal Spirit may be with you, shall be the Prayer of your unworthy Brother, but more unworthy Pastor.”<sup>42</sup> For Collins, orthodoxy was not just doctrine to be believed, it was truth to be defended and taught to those under his responsibility as pastor.

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<sup>41</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, “The Preface;” Renihan, *True Confessions*, 236.

<sup>42</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, “The Preface;” Renihan, *True Confessions*, 238.

## Use of the Creeds

The Heidelberg Catechism originally contained the Apostles Creed. Collins, however, would follow the General Baptists' *An Orthodox Creed* in adding the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds.<sup>43</sup> Thus, what Harmon has said of the *Orthodox Creed* as a confession of faith can equally be said of the *Orthodox Catechism* as a catechism, namely that “most explicit and thoroughgoing referencing of the patristic tradition” among Baptist catechisms.<sup>44</sup> In his preface to *An Orthodox Catechism*, Collins would explain his rationale for including the three creeds from the patristic tradition:

*I have proposed three Creeds to your consideration, which ought thoroughly to be believed and embraced by all those that would be accounted Christians, viz. The Nicene Creed, Athanasius his Creed, and the Creed commonly called the Apostles; The last of which contains the sum of the Gospels; which is industriously opened and explained; and I beseech you do not slight it because of its Form, nor Antiquity, nor because supposed to be composed by Men; neither because some that hold it, maintain some Errors, or whose Conversation may not be correspondent to such fundamental Principles of Salvation; but take this for a perpetual Rule, That whatever is good in any, owned by any, whatever Error or Vice it may be mixed withal, the Good must not be rejected for the Error or Vice sake, but owned; commended, and accepted.*<sup>45</sup>

Here we see that Collins assumed that the classic Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy contained in the Apostles, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds would “*be believed and embraced by all those that would be accounted Christians.*” Their content, he argued, should not be rejected simply because of their form, antiquity or because composed by humans. Collins also issued a preemptive strike against one of the main reasons many Baptists might have been averse to the creeds—their link to the Roman Catholic Church.

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<sup>43</sup>Four pieces of evidence indicate that Collin was inspired by the *Orthodox Creed* in the formation of his *Orthodox Catechism*. First, most obviously, both documents contain the word “orthodox” in their titles. Second, Collins matches the three creeds of the *Orthodox Creed* by adding the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds to the already present Apostles Creed. Third, the wording of the final sentence of the Athanasian Creed in the *Orthodox Catechism* follows the unique wording found in the *Orthodox Creed* exactly: “This is the Catholick Faith, &c. Which, *every one should believe faithfully.*” Cf. *Orthodox Creed*, 62; and *Orthodox Catechism*, 74; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 287. Fourth, Collins replicates word-for-word a marginal note on Christ’s descent into hell in the Apostles Creed. Cf. *Orthodox Creed*, 57; and *Orthodox Catechism*, 16.

<sup>44</sup>Harmon, *Towards Baptist Catholicity*, 77.

<sup>45</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, “The Preface;” Renihan, *True Confessions*, 238.

Collins avers that truth must be recognized wherever it may be found, even if mixed with error. This insightful statement by Collins reveals not only how he utilized the creeds, but may also reveal how he would read the church fathers, and even the Puritans with whom he might have significant disagreements.

Both the Heidelberg Catechism and its Baptist counterpart are desirous of affirming core elements of the historic catholic teaching of the Ancient Church, of which the central one is the Trinity.<sup>46</sup> Thus, matching the Heidelberg word for word, the *Orthodox Catechism* asks: “Into how many parts is this Creed divided?” The answer: “Into three: the first of the eternal Father, and our creation: the second, of the Son and our redemption: the third, of the Holy Ghost, and our sanctification.”<sup>47</sup> In clear contrast to the heterodoxy expressed by Thomas Collier with regard to the Trinity, the *Orthodox Catechism* then asserted the biblical doctrine in these words,

Q. Seeing there is but one only substance of God, why namest thou those three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?

A. Because God hath so manifested himself in his Word, that these three distinct persons are that one true everlasting God.<sup>48</sup>

Collins, thus, clearly affirmed the historic orthodox understanding of the Trinity as *tres Personae, una Substantia*. Although, as Harmon has noted, this continuity with the patristic tradition may not be due to a “conscious engagement with the patristic tradition as a source of religious authority,” but rather reflects continuities “retained from the ecclesiastical bodies out of which the confessing Baptist communities came or by which they were influenced.”<sup>49</sup> This means that Collins likely received his creedal commitments

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<sup>46</sup>Collins actually included the Nicene Creed of 325—interestingly enough, not the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381—and the Athanasian Creed at the close of his catechism: Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 71-74; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 284-87. As noted above in n. 41, Collins was following the *Orthodox Creed* in this decision.

<sup>47</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 9; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 244.

<sup>48</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 9; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 244. Collins has added an “and” between “true” and “everlasting.”

<sup>49</sup>Harmon, *Towards Baptist Catholicity*, 77.

to the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ, not directly from the patristic tradition, but rather through Reformed statements such as the Heidelberg Catechism and the Westminster Confession of Faith, along with the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the three creeds from the patristic era in the *Orthodox Creed* and *Orthodox Catechism* argues for a more direct influence, even though these creeds had likely been received by the Baptist community from their inclusion in the Thirty-Nine Articles.<sup>50</sup>

Although following the Heidelberg fully in its exposition of the Apostles' Creed, Collins did see fit to make a couple of minor, albeit not unimportant, changes. In the margin alongside the text of the Apostles' Creed, Collins provided two caveats.<sup>51</sup> On the phrase "He descended into Hell," Collins adds, "Not that he, (to wit, Christ) went into the place of the damned, but that he went absolutely into the state of the dead. See Dr. Usher of Christ, in his body of divinity, pag. 174. and Mr. Perkins on the Creed."<sup>52</sup> In this note, Collins referred first to the 1670 London edition of James Ussher's (1581–1656)<sup>53</sup> well-known *A Body of Divinity*, which is structured like a catechism and where the Irish Puritan asked at one point, "What is meant by his [i.e., Christ's] descending into hell?" He answered, "Not that he went to the place of the damned, but that he went absolutely

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<sup>50</sup>The language introducing the three creeds used in both article 38 of the *Orthodox Creed* and "The Preface" to the *Orthodox Catechism* is almost identical to the language of article 8 of the Thirty-Nine Articles. "The three Credes, Nicene Crede, Athanasian Crede, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Crede, ought throughlye to be receaved and beleaued: for they may be proued by moste certayne warrauntes of holye scripture." Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*, vol. 3, *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds, with Translations* (1931; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 3:492.

<sup>51</sup>As noted above in n. 41, Collins is reproducing the marginal note first included in the *Orthodox Creed*.

<sup>52</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 8; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 244 and 290nxxxv.

<sup>53</sup>For a recent scholarly treatment of Archbishop Ussher, see Alan Ford, *James Ussher: Theology, History, and Politics in Early-Modern Ireland and England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For an excellent popular introduction to Ussher and the Irish Puritan movement, see Crawford Gribben, *The Irish Puritans: James Ussher and the Reformation of the Church* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2003).

unto the estate of the dead.”<sup>54</sup> In the next question, Ussher further explained what he understands by Christ’s going to the “estate of the dead.” It entails him going “in his soul into heaven” while he “was in his body under the very power and dominion of death for a season.”<sup>55</sup> Ussher thus gave Collins a way to understand this element of Christian theology. Puritan theologian William Perkins (1558–1602), on the other hand, in the work that Collins referred to, had doubts about the phrase “he descended into hell” being part of the original Apostles’ Creed.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, he did provide four possible interpretations<sup>57</sup> and opted for the view that Christ’s descent into hell was simply his being “held captive in the grave” and lying “in bondage under death for the space of three days.”<sup>58</sup> In other words, Perkins and Ussher were in essential agreement about the interpretation of this clause, an interpretation that Collins wished to endorse in view of any possible ambiguity on this issue in the Heidelberg.

Collins also added a marginal note alongside the statement, “I believe in . . . the holy catholic church”: “Not that we are to believe in, but that there is a Catholic church, and by Catholic, we mean no more than the universal church, which is a company chosen out of whole mankind unto everlasting life, by the Word & Spirit of God.”<sup>59</sup> In this sentence Collins merges two streams of seventeenth-century British ecclesial reflection: the commitment to catholicity, a fundamental mark of the church asserted by Ancient Christianity, as well as the upholding of the Congregationalist principle of the

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<sup>54</sup>James Ussher, *A Body of Divinity: Or The Sum and Substance of Christian Religion* (London: Nath. Ranew and J. Robinson, 1670), 174.

<sup>55</sup>Ussher, *Body of Divinity*, 174.

<sup>56</sup>William Perkins, *An Exposition of the Symbole or Creede of the Apostles, according to the Tenour of the Scriptures, and the Consent of Orthodoxe Fathers of the Church* (London: John Legatt, 1631), 260-61.

<sup>57</sup>Perkins, *Exposition of the Symbole or Creede*, 261-67.

<sup>58</sup>Perkins, *Exposition of the Symbole or Creede*, 265.

<sup>59</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 8; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 244 and 290xxxvii.

gathered church. In fact, this statement distinctly recalled a classic statement of Baptist ecclesiology in the First London Confession of Faith (1644/1646). There it was stated that Christ has “a spiritual Kingdom, which is the Church, which he hath purchased and redeemed to himself” and that this Church is visibly manifest in the local “company of visible Saints, called and separated from the world, by the word and Spirit of God.”<sup>60</sup>

### Use of the Fathers

Collins made use of the patristic tradition in similar fashion as he did the creeds. He was selective, using the fathers largely as proof texts to buttress his own arguments. There is no evidence that Collins ever accessed the fathers in their original languages. Instead, he relied heavily upon citations of the fathers which he gleaned from secondary sources.

One of the sources which Collins mined for his quotations from the church fathers was Henry Danvers’ *A Treatise of Baptism*.<sup>61</sup> If Michael A. Smith is correct in identifying Danvers’ own citations of the fathers as representing “a decline in the quality of scholarship among Baptists” because of his heavy dependence upon secondary sources, this indictment goes double for Collins.<sup>62</sup> However, it should be remembered that Collins’ purpose was not to provide a critical edition of the writings of the fathers, but to strengthen his own arguments by citing from accessible sources that he considered reliable. Danvers’ work on baptism was an influential work in the last quarter of the

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<sup>60</sup>*The Confession of Faith, Of those Churches which are commonly (though falsly) called Anabaptists* (London: Matthew Simmons, 1644), XXXIII; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 165.

<sup>61</sup>Henry Danvers, *A Treatise of Baptism: Wherein, That of Believers, and That of Infants, is Examined by the Scriptures*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Fran. Smith, 1674). For a summary and analysis of the argument of this work, see James M. Renihan, “Henry Danvers’ *A Treatise of Baptism*: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Historiography,” *Baptist Review of Theology* 7, no. 1-2 (Spring/Fall 1997): 27-48. For a biographical sketch of Danvers, see Richard L. Greaves, “Gentleman Revolutionary: Henry Danvers and the Radical Underground,” in *Saints and Rebels: Seven Nonconformists in Stuart England, 157-77* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985).

<sup>62</sup>Michael A. Smith, “The Early English Baptists and the Church Fathers” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982), 85-86. For a thorough treatment of Danvers’ use of the fathers, see Smith, “The Early English Baptists and the Church Fathers,” 84-101.



seventeenth century and sparked intense debate resulting in no less than 23 books by 12 different authors over the next three years following its publication.<sup>63</sup> Collins' citations of the fathers in his writings on baptism were drawn principally from Danvers. For example, in *Some Reasons for Separation from the Communion of the Church of England*, Collins followed Danvers in his chronology of Augustine's introduction of infant baptism and its subsequent endorsement at the Milevitan Council "in the year from our Saviour 402."<sup>64</sup> This was an important piece in Collins' argument that infant baptism was an innovation and not the original practice of the early church. In *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, Collins cited a string of authors from the patristic and Reformation era who affirmed "that there is a necessity for Scripture-Authority to warrant every Ordinance and Practice in Divine Worship."<sup>65</sup> Along with the Reformers Luther and Calvin, Collins listed the church fathers Augustine, Basil, and Tertullian. Though not cited as such, this was a very brief summary of over five pages of quotations from Danvers.<sup>66</sup> Collins' point was to show that Christians have historically required scriptural evidence for any component of public worship. Since infant baptism cannot be found in Scripture, Collins concluded, it should be rejected by this ancient principle. Although it was not a standard practice at the time to cite one's sources, Collins would sometimes add a note in the text indicating his dependence on Danvers. One such instance occurs when Collins argued against infant baptism as an apostolic tradition. "The pretended Proof for Infant-Baptism, being an Apostolical Tradition, from *Dionysius the Areopagite, Justin Martyr's Responses,*

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<sup>63</sup>James M. Renihan, *Edification and Beauty: The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675–1705*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought 17 (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2008), 134. For the complete list of books and authors, see Greaves, "Gentleman Revolutionary," 170-71.

<sup>64</sup>Hercules Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation from the Communion of the Church of England, and the Unreasonableness of Persecution Upon that Account* (London: John How, 1682), 7-8; cf. Danvers, *A Treatise of Baptism*, 105-9.

<sup>65</sup>Hercules Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven, and of Divine Institution. Infants-Baptism from Earth, and Human Invention* (London: J. Hancock, 1691), 20.

<sup>66</sup>Danvers, *A Treatise of Baptism*, 89-94.

*Origen's Responses*, *Cyprian* in an Epistle to one *Fidas* a Priest, have been examined, refuted, and found fabulous and forged. *Danvers on Baptism*, pag. 133, to 150.”<sup>67</sup> At other times, Collins would reference *Danvers* in a marginal note. When stating that “Infant-Baptism was hardly heard of till about three hundred Years after Christ” and that “*Augustine* was the first that preached it necessary” in his debates with *Pelagius*, Collins added the following marginal note. “*Baptism of Infants*, was not practised for near 300 Years after Christ; nor enjoined, as necessary, till 400 Years after Christ. *Magdeburgh Hist. Cent. 5. p.835. Danvers on Baptim*, p. 105, 106, 107, 108, 109.”<sup>68</sup> Likewise, when arguing that *Cyprian* was the first to introduce the mode of sprinkling for the sick, he added the margin note: “*Danvers*, p. 204, 205, 206.”<sup>69</sup> Collins obviously considered *Danvers* to be a respected authority and reliable source for all things related to baptism in the history of the church.

Another key place where Collins cited the fathers was in his appendix on hymn singing included at the end of *An Orthodox Catechism*.<sup>70</sup> Among the arguments that Collins provided for singing was that “Primitive Christians were much in this Work.”<sup>71</sup> To this point, Collins quoted *Tertullian* saying, “*When we come to a Feast, we sit not down before there is Prayer; and after Meal is past, one cometh forth with a Psalm, either from the holy Scriptures, or else some spiritual Song of his own composure.*”<sup>72</sup> Collins also argued that Christians should sing hymns because “Eminent Fathers practised it.” Collins presented *Basil*, *Augustine*, *Ambrose*, and *Athanasius* as witnesses

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<sup>67</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 52. See *Danvers, A Treatise of Baptism*, 133-50.

<sup>68</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 64. See *Danvers, A Treatise of Baptism*, 105-9.

<sup>69</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 69. See *Danvers, A Treatise of Baptism*, 204-6.

<sup>70</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 75-86. *Renihan* does not include this appendix in his *True Confessions*.

<sup>71</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 77.

<sup>72</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 77.

to this assertion. “*Basil* calleth Singing, sweet Incense. *Augustin* was highly in commendation of this, and assures us, that *Ambrose* and *Athanasius* were coincident with him in this thing.”<sup>73</sup> In all of the above references to the fathers, Collins was clearly dependent upon a sermon based on Ephesians 5:19 preached by John Wells titled “How we may make Melody in our Hearts to God in Singing of Psalms.”<sup>74</sup> Collins made three other references to Augustine in this appendix which were likewise dependent upon the sermon by Wells. In a section arguing that “Singing is the Musick of Ordinances,” Collins recounted Augustine’s experience of first hearing the church in Milan sing. “Augustin reports of himself, that when he came to *Millain*, and heard the People sing, he wept for Joy.”<sup>75</sup> In presenting the case that singing must be with zeal and affection, Collins again cited Augustine. “We must sing with zeal and affection. Love is the fulfilling of the Law. ’Tis a notable saying of *Augustin*, ’Tis not Crying, but Loving sounds in the Ears of God, that makes the Musick.”<sup>76</sup> Collins also cited Augustine in his plea for singing with faith. Faith, Collins says, “puts a pleasantness upon every Duty.”<sup>77</sup> Therefore, we must always bring faith to Christ’s Table, “or else, as *Augustin* saith, if Faith be asleep, Christ is asleep.”<sup>78</sup>

Thus, while Collins utilized the fathers for his own purposes, he was heavily dependent on secondary sources. His citations of the fathers in his works on baptism can

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<sup>73</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 77.

<sup>74</sup>This sermon was published in Samuel Annesley, *A Supplement to the Morning-Exercise at Cripple-Gate: or, Several more Cases of Conscience Practically Resolved by sundry Ministers* (London: Thomas Cockerill, 1674), 124-41. The citations of the fathers used by Collins can be found in Annesley, *A Supplement to the Morning-Exercise at Cripple-Gate*, 130-31.

<sup>75</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 78; Annesley, *A Supplement to the Morning-Exercise at Cripple-Gate*, 129.

<sup>76</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 85; Annesley, *A Supplement to the Morning-Exercise at Cripple-Gate*, 134.

<sup>77</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 85.

<sup>78</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 85; Annesley, *A Supplement to the Morning-Exercise at Cripple-Gate*, 135.

almost always be traced directly to Danvers' *A Treatise of Baptism*, whether by direct reference or by comparison. In his appendix on hymn singing, Collins was clearly dependent upon John Wells' sermon on Ephesians 5:19. Just as he argued for his use of the creeds, Collins utilized the church fathers. They were not to be rejected merely for their antiquity nor because sometimes their writings were mixed with error. Collins cited them positively when he believed their words or examples reflected biblical truth. Nevertheless, whenever Collins found their doctrine or practice to contradict Scripture, he did not hesitate to point this out. His conscience was ultimately bound to Scripture.

### **Patristic Theology**

The patristic era is noted for hammering out the important theological formulations of Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Trinitarianism and Chalcedonian Christology. All of orthodox Christianity is indebted to the meticulous work of the careful Christian theologians of the first four centuries of church history. The confessions of faith of the seventeenth-century Baptists clearly reflect this tradition, though they likely received this tradition through the Reformed confessions of their forbears and contemporaries. The Second London Confession of Faith, which Collins signed along with thirty-six other representatives of Particular Baptist churches in and around London, contained clear affirmations of these foundational doctrines including language that can be traced back to their classic formulations in the patristic era. Collins further indicated his commitment to these historic orthodox doctrines by including the full texts of both the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds in his *An Orthodox Catechism*.<sup>79</sup>

### **Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Trinitarianism**

Regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, the Second London Confession states a

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<sup>79</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 71-74; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 284-87.

clear affirmation of Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan theology.

In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father the Word (or Son) and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and Eternity, each having the whole Divine Essence, yet the Essence undivided, the Father is of none neither begotten nor proceeding, the Son is Eternally begotten of the Father, the holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and Being; but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties, and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our Communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him.<sup>80</sup>

Although much of this language can be traced to the Westminster Confession and Savoy Declaration, there are some unique Baptist contributions.<sup>81</sup> For example, the Second London Confession added the following section to the language adapted from the Westminster and Savoy confessions: “all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and Being; but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties, and personal relations.” This selection came from the First London Confession, except the last phrase “and personal relations.”<sup>82</sup> This observation indicates that while the Baptists were desirous to use the orthodox language of their paedobaptist contemporaries, they were nevertheless both capable and willing to strengthen the language where they deemed necessary. To this point, when describing the three distinct persons of the Trinity, the framers of the Second London Confession parted from their esteemed Reformed contemporaries to use the term “subsistence,” a common English translation of *hypostasis*.<sup>83</sup> This no doubt reflects that, at the very least, these Baptists had a theological vocabulary that was informed by the Trinitarian debates of the patristic era. The use of “subsistence” also likely indicates that these Baptists were interested in

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<sup>80</sup>*A Confession Of Faith, Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations Of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country* (London: Benjamin Harris, 1677), 12; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 253.

<sup>81</sup>For a comparison of the Second London Confession with its three primary source documents (Westminster Confession, Savoy Declaration, and First London Confession), see Renihan, *True Confessions*, 63-189.

<sup>82</sup>Cf. First London Confession, chapter II.

<sup>83</sup>Harmon, *Towards Baptist Catholicity*, 75, 75n15.

specifically refuting the error of Thomas Collier who explicitly denied that God is “as some imagine, Three Persons yet one God, or three subsistings, distinguished though not divided.”<sup>84</sup>

Collins’ commitment to the classic formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity is not only seen in his approbation of the Second London Confession as one of its original signatories, he also positively asserted this doctrine in his *An Orthodox Catechism*. As noted above, the *Orthodox Catechism* follows wholly the structure of the Heidelberg Catechism upon which it is based. The structure of the catechism is Trinitarian, with three sections focusing respectively upon the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Collins explicitly states his commitment to the historic Christian doctrine by following the Heidelberg in including the following pointed catechetical question and response.

Q. Seeing there is but one only substance of God, why namest thou those three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?

A. Because God hath so manifested himself in his Word, that these three distinct persons are that one true everlasting God.<sup>85</sup>

This statement affirms both of the key aspects of Trinitarian theology: the one substance or essence of God (*Substantia* or *Ousia*) and the three distinct persons (*Personae* or *Hypostases*) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In Collins’ other writings, a clear commitment to the doctrine of the Trinity is also seen. In his manual on preaching, *The Temple Repair’d*, Collins recommended to prospective preachers “Dr. Owen on the Trinity.”<sup>86</sup> This was likely a reference to John Owen’s *A Brief Declaration and Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, first published

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<sup>84</sup>Collier, *A General Epistle, To The Universal Church of the First Born*, 4.

<sup>85</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 9; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 244. Collins has added an “and” between “true” and “everlasting.”

<sup>86</sup>Hercules Collins, *The Temple Repair’d: Or, An Essay to revive the long-neglected Ordinances, of exercising the spiritual Gift of Prophecy for the Edification of the Churches; and of ordaining Ministers duly qualified* (London: William and Joseph Marshal, 1702), 49.

in 1669.<sup>87</sup> This is yet another indication that Collins would have seen himself as sharing the Trinitarian theology of his Reformed contemporaries. Additionally, Collins clearly assumed the Triune God in his epic poem tracing the story of redemptive history, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*.<sup>88</sup> In the opening scene, which begins in the throne room of God before the creation of the universe, Collins extolled the “Everliving God” as existing:

In all his Will immutable,  
For Changes he knows none:  
How can that be, when perfect’s he,  
Three Persons yet but One?<sup>89</sup>

Again, in poetic manner, Collins affirms the one essence and three persons of the Trinity. Collins went on to speak of the angelic worship of the eternal Trinity.

Pure Angels fall, and honour all  
The Glorious Trinity,  
With Crowns down cast, their Praises last  
Unto Eternity.<sup>90</sup>

Elsewhere, Collins provided insight into his own thinking on the Trinity in his illustration to prospective preachers of how one might draw doctrines from a particular passage of Scripture. The eighth doctrine which Collins drew from Colossians 1:12 was a Trinitarian observation.

*That it is the Duty of all who are made meet for Heaven, to give Thanks to the Father. Mark one thing, tho it be said, that we should give Thanks to the Father, yet that doth not exclude the Son, nor the Holy Ghost, but it is to the Father as the Fountain of Grace, to the Son as the Procurer of Grace, to the Holy Spirit as the Applier of grace.*<sup>91</sup>

This reflection indicates that Collins was influenced by Puritan thinkers such as John

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<sup>87</sup>John Owen, *A Brief Declaration and Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: R. W., 1669).

<sup>88</sup>Hercules Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History: Or, A Diversion for Youth at their spare Hours* (London, 1696). Also published in Hercules Collins, *Three Books* (London, 1696).

<sup>89</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 4.

<sup>90</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 4.

<sup>91</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 49.

Owen who often spoke of the Trinity in precisely these terms. In his magisterial work on Puritan theology, Joel R. Beeke has explained Owens' use of this terminology.

Repeatedly Owen taught that there is a divine economy of operation where each person takes a role in the work of God, a role that reflects the personal relations in the Trinity. The Father acts as origin, authority, fountain, initiator, and sender; the Son acts as executor of the Father's will, treasury of His riches, foundation, worker, purchaser, and accomplisher; the Spirit acts as completer, finisher, immediate efficacy, fruit, and applier. This is not to divide God's works and distribute them among the three persons—the external works of the Trinity are undivided—but rather to recognize that in every work of God all three persons cooperate in distinct ways.<sup>92</sup>

Collins was clearly quite comfortable in expressing his orthodox convictions on the Trinity in terminology made familiar to him by his Puritan contemporaries. Although each member of the Godhead was considered as distinct persons, there was a unity of purpose and cooperation within the Trinity in the accomplishment of that purpose. Again, this was a truth earlier denied by Thomas Collier in the middle of the seventeenth century. Collier asserted that it was “altogether impossible to distinguish God in this manner, and not divide him; thus to distinguish is to divide; for three persons are three not only distinguished, but divided.”<sup>93</sup> For Collier, to distinguish the persons of the Trinity in this way made three Gods and this could not be reconciled with the oneness of God. Collins' ruminations upon the Trinity, however, reflected not only the orthodoxy of the patristic period, but also the mature thought of the Puritan divines regarding the relationship between the one essence and three persons of God.

### **Chalcedonian Christology**

As noted earlier in this chapter, the Second London Confession of Faith was issued, in part, to set the record straight with the general public that Thomas Collier's heterodox views on the Trinity and the eternality of Christ's human nature did not

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<sup>92</sup>Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 106.

<sup>93</sup>Collier, *A General Epistle, To The Universal Church of the First Born*, 4.



represent the Particular Baptist community as a whole. The former has already been explored above. The latter is addressed in the confession's strong statement on the full divinity and humanity of Christ united in his one person.

The *Son of God*, the second Person in the *Holy Trinity*, being very and eternal *God*, the brightness of the Fathers glory, of one substance and equal with *him*: who made the World, who upholdeth and governeth all things he hath made: did when the fullness of time was come take unto him mans nature, with all the Essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin: being conceived by the *Holy Spirit* in the *Womb* of the *Virgin Mary*, the *Holy Spirit* coming down upon her, and the power of the most *High* overshadowing her, and so was made of a *Woman*, of the Tribe of *Judah*, of the Seed of *Abraham*, and *David* according to the *Scriptures*: So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, were inseparably joined together in one *Person*: without *conversion*, *composition*, or *confusion*: which *Person* is very *God*, and very *Man*, yet one *Christ*, the only *Mediator* between *God* and *Man*.<sup>94</sup>

Contra Collier's position on the eternity of Christ's human nature,<sup>95</sup> the confession asserts that Christ "did when the fullness of time was come take unto him mans nature, with all the Essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin." The human nature was assumed at the incarnation and did not exist prior to this point in human history. At this point, the framers of the Second London Confession were following the wording found in the Westminster Confession and Savoy Declaration. Just after this section, however, the Second London adapts language from the First London Confession not included in either of these historic Protestant confessions. This wording further emphasized the full humanity assumed by the second person of the Trinity at Bethlehem. They added: "the *Holy Spirit* coming down upon her, and the power of the most *High* overshadowing her, and so was made of a *Woman*, of the Tribe of *Judah*, of the Seed of *Abraham*, and *David* according to the *Scriptures*."<sup>96</sup> This issue was important

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<sup>94</sup>*A Confession Of Faith, Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations Of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country* (London: Benjamin Harris, 1677), 28-29; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 260-61.

<sup>95</sup>Collier, *The Body of Divinity, Or, a Confession of Faith*, 31; Collier, *An Additional Word To The Body of Divinity*, 1-18.

<sup>96</sup>*A Confession of Faith* (1677), 29; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 261; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 96.

because these Baptists believed that the same human nature possessed by Eve, Judah, Abraham, and David was shared by the Christ. Only in this way could the prophecies concerning the Messiah's coming be fulfilled.

Collins highlighted another important reason for the real and full humanity of Christ in his *An Orthodox Catechism*. Namely, because “the Justice of God requireth that the same humane nature which hath sinned, do itself likewise make recompence for sin.”<sup>97</sup> In order for God's justice to be satisfied, the same human nature which sinned had to make payment for sin. Thus, the Christ had to assume a human nature from his human mother, which had been passed down to her by her human ancestors. But one who is only fully human could not provide atonement for sin, for “he that is himself a sinner, cannot make recompence for others.”<sup>98</sup> This required the deliverer of mankind to be a sinless human and one who has the power to “sustain in his flesh the burthen of God's wrath.”<sup>99</sup> Collins follows the Heidelberg Catechism in asserting that this mediator must be fully God and fully human: “Such a one verily as is very man, and perfectly just, and yet in power above all creatures, that is, who is also very God.”<sup>100</sup> This mediator is the Lord Jesus Christ who is “together both very God, and a very perfectly just man.”<sup>101</sup> This view of the unity of the two natures in the person of Christ reflects the historic formulation of the Creed of Chalcedon of 451 which stated that Christ was

to be acknowledged in two natures, *inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same

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<sup>97</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 6; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 242.

<sup>98</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 6; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 242.

<sup>99</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 6; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 242.

<sup>100</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 5; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 242.

<sup>101</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 6; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 242.

Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>102</sup>

This doctrine was affirmed by the Second London Confession's declaration that in Christ "two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, were inseparably jointed together in one *Person*: without *conversion*, *composition*, or *confusion*: which *Person* is very *God*, and very *Man*; yet one *Christ*, the only *Mediator* between *God* and *Man*."<sup>103</sup>

Collins made clear his own personal commitment to this union of two natures in Christ in his own writings. Among his 36 recommendations to preachers on how to rightly handle the Word of God in *The Temple Repair'd*, Collins included an explanation of how scriptural language often reflects this understanding of the union of the two natures.

In holy Scripture you will sometimes find that which properly belongs to one Nature in Christ is attributed to another by virtue of the personal Union; hence it is that the Church is said to be *purchased with the blood of God*,<sup>104</sup> not that God simply consider'd hath Blood, *for he is a Spirit*,<sup>105</sup> but it is attributed to God, because of the Union of the Human and Divine Nature. Moreover, it is said that the *Son of Man was in Heaven*, when he was discoursing upon Earth:<sup>106</sup> Here that which was proper to the Godhead and the Divine Nature, is attributed to the Human Nature, because of the Union of the Natures.<sup>107</sup>

Here Collins' commitment to the hypostatic union becomes an important hermeneutical principle. He indicated the importance of explaining this in one's preaching "with all the clearness imaginable," because this doctrine "is so necessary to Man's Salvation."<sup>108</sup> For Collins and his fellow Particular Baptists, doctrine mattered. Indeed, the salvation of individuals depended upon the proper explication of the key doctrines of the Christian

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<sup>102</sup>Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*, vol. 2, *The Greek and Latin Creeds, with Translations* (1931; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 2:62.

<sup>103</sup>*A Confession of Faith*, 29; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 96-97.

<sup>104</sup>See Acts 20:28.

<sup>105</sup>See John 4:24.

<sup>106</sup>John 3:13.

<sup>107</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 38-39.

<sup>108</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 39.

faith. Collins considered the doctrine of the hypostatic union of Christ's two natures to be at the very core of orthodox Christianity.

In his *Marrow of Gospel-History*, Collins extols the theological truth of the hypostatic union in poetic terms. While attempting to describe the unique identity of the virgin born God-man, Collins expressed wonder at the mystery of the incarnation.

But yet that King, and holy Thing,  
Which was in *Mary's* Womb,  
Was God indeed, of *Abr'am's* Seed,  
True God, and yet true Man.  
Who understands, how God and Man,  
Should in one Person dwell?  
One Person true, yet Natures two,  
But one *Immanuel*.<sup>109</sup>

Collins does not seem to know how to explain the mystery of the incarnation, but he is committed to affirming and rejoicing in this divinely-revealed truth. Later in the same work, Collins expressed a similar amazement at how God was able to preserve Jesus as a man from the effects of original sin.

And tho this Man from *David* sprang,  
He's pure without, within:  
And tho is made of *Abraham's* Seed,  
Hath no Orig'nal Sin.  
Pow'r Infinite can separate  
Between the Virgin's Sin,  
And Virgin's Seed, for there is need  
Christ be a holy Thing.<sup>110</sup>

The sinlessness of Christ was important to Collins because the God-man had to be fully human, yet sinless in order to atone for the sins of other humans. Collins knew that it was the mystery of the divine-human union which preserved Jesus from the effects of original sin. He expressed the connection between the union of the two natures and the sinless of Christ and mankind's salvation in the following verse.

A King of Peace, and Priest most high,

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<sup>109</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 15.

<sup>110</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 18.

Who offer'd once for all;  
Not for his own, but others Sins,  
Himself, not Beasts did fall.  
The Peoples Covenant thou art,  
In Substance, Person, Name;  
And hence art called *Immanuel*,  
Two Natures, Person one.<sup>111</sup>

Once again the important issue for Collins was how this doctrine relates to the doctrine of salvation. Humans need a savior who is simultaneously divine, human, and sinless. This is precisely the kind of savior which Collins saw set forth in Scripture. Therefore, this doctrine was of central importance. In the end, the never-ending union of the divine and human natures of Christ serve as an illustration of the eternal union between God and his elect because of the work of Christ.

That tho by Sin Man's separate  
From God, the chiefest Good,  
Yet now in Christ united are;  
Man shall live still with God.  
And if the Union cannot cease,  
Call'd *Hypostatical*;  
No more can that 'tween God and his,  
Because 'tis Eternal.<sup>112</sup>

### Conclusion

Although admittedly difficult to comprehend fully, the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ were not matters to be avoided by the seventeenth-century English Baptists. Rather, these doctrines were considered to be vital to orthodox Christianity. Both the General and Particular Baptist communities faced challenges to historic Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Trinitarianism and Chalcedonian Christology. The General Baptist response to Matthew Caffyn is found in the *Orthodox Creed*. Particular Baptists also responded to the doctrinal deviations of Thomas Collier with a new confession, the Second London Confession of Faith in 1677. Hercules Collins, though an

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<sup>111</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 93-94.

<sup>112</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 94.

original signer of the Second London Confession at the General Assembly in 1689, also utilized the General Baptist's *Orthodox Creed* in the formation of his *Orthodox Catechism* in 1680. His commitment to the Christian orthodoxy of the patristic period is shown in his inclusion of three definitive creeds from the era. Furthermore, his writings are filled with references that show both a familiarity with and a strong commitment to the classic definitions of the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ hammered out in these early periods.

## CHAPTER 4

### “PURITAN”: HERCULES COLLINS AND PROTESTANT EVANGELICALISM

In 1871, the Anglican George Herbert Curteis delivered the Bampton Lectures at the University of Oxford. These lectures were published the next year under the title *Dissent, in its Relation to the Church of England*.<sup>1</sup> In one of his eight lectures, Curteis specifically addressed the Baptists. As an Anglican in the latter part of the nineteenth century, he rejected the validity of both Puritanism in general and its Baptist manifestation in particular. In the lecture, Curteis expressed his own ardent desire that the separation between the Baptists and the National Church would be temporary.<sup>2</sup> Significantly though, while discussing the principles which led to the Baptists independence from the Church of England, he opined upon the essence of Baptist identity:

Now all these three principles are closely connected together; and indeed they are all, fundamentally, one. And that one fundamental principle is—Puritanism. Yes; the Baptists are essentially . . . ‘Puritans;’ and—I think it must be honestly confessed—they, and they only, are really consistent and logically unassailable Puritans. If Puritanism is true, the Baptist system is right. If Puritanism is a grand mistake, and the most singularly unchristian of all the (so to say) ‘orthodox’ misapprehensions of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, then the Baptist system falls to the ground of itself.<sup>3</sup>

This is not just a nineteenth-century Anglican assessment of the relationship between Baptists and Puritanism, it also reflects the way the Baptists of the period under

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<sup>1</sup>George Herbert Curteis, *Dissent, in its Relation to the Church of England* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1872).

<sup>2</sup>Curteis, *Dissent, in its Relation to the Church of England*, 211.

<sup>3</sup>Curteis, *Dissent, in its Relation to the Church of England*, 212-13.

consideration viewed themselves. Specifically, this chapter examines how Hercules Collins viewed himself as fitting comfortably within a Puritan framework.

### **Defining Puritanism**

Admittedly, the terms “Puritan” and “Puritanism” have been notoriously difficult to define.<sup>4</sup> As John Coffey has admitted, “Historians have agonized over its definition.”<sup>5</sup> Disagreements exist among scholars over almost every conceivable question related to the definition of Puritanism. For the purpose of this chapter, the term Puritan is being used in a general sense. I am using the term to refer to that basic Puritan characteristic or instinct to draw all their faith and practice from the Scriptures. In his definition of Puritanism in his *The Worship of the English Puritans*,<sup>6</sup> Horton Davies defined a Puritan as one “who longed for further reformation in England according to the Word of God.”<sup>7</sup> Similarly, John Brown referred to “the fundamental idea of puritanism in all its manifestations” as being “the supreme authority of Scripture brought to bear upon the conscience.”<sup>8</sup> It is to this “fundamental idea of puritanism” which sought to bring the authority of Scripture to bear upon every aspect of life that the Particular Baptists of the seventeenth century were firmly committed.

### **Baptists and Puritanism**

In at least four ways, seventeenth-century Baptists saw themselves as Puritans.

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<sup>4</sup>For example, see Brian H. Cosby, “Toward a Definition of ‘Puritan’ and ‘Puritanism’: A Study in Puritan Historiography,” *Churchman* 122, no. 4 (2008): 297-314; and Ian Hugh Clary, “Hot Protestants: A Taxonomy of English Puritanism,” *Puritan Reformed Journal* 2, no. 1 (2010): 41-66.

<sup>5</sup>John Coffey, “Puritanism, evangelicalism and the evangelical protestant tradition,” in *The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2008), 255.

<sup>6</sup>Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1997).

<sup>7</sup>Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, 11.

<sup>8</sup>John Brown, *The English Puritans: The Rise and Fall of the Puritan Movement* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1998), 17.



First, in regard to their origins, the Baptists of whom Hercules Collins was a part sprang from the rich soil of biblicism cultivated by Puritanism. Although sorting out the origins of the Particular Baptists, as Wm. Loyd Allen once wrote, is “like trying to untangle a snarled fishing line in the dark,”<sup>9</sup> it appears that the mode of immersion was adopted by members of a church formed from a Separatist congregation made up of believers previously working for reform within the Church of England. These former Puritans had left the Separatist congregation pastored by John Lathrop in 1633 to form their own Independent congregation after having become convinced that the New Testament taught the baptism of believers, although they remained unconvinced of the importance of the mode.<sup>10</sup> By 1638, John Spilsbury had become the pastor of this congregation which met on Old Gravel Lane in Wapping and by January of 1642 the congregation had become committed to the position that the baptism of believers by immersion was the only valid New Testament baptism.<sup>11</sup> Collins would become the third pastor of what would become known as the oldest Baptist church in London.<sup>12</sup>

Collins was forced to respond to an alternative version of Baptist origins that was tied to John Smyth’s self-baptism in Holland.<sup>13</sup> In his book *Baptism Anatomized*,<sup>14</sup> Thomas Wall had disparaged the Baptists by accusing them of having descended

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<sup>9</sup>Wm. Loyd Allen, “Baptist Baptism and the Turn toward Believer’s Baptism by Immersion: 1642,” in *Turning Points in Baptist History: A Festschrift in Honor of Harry Leon McBeth*, ed. Michael E. Williams, Sr., and Walter B. Shurden (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2008), 37. For a helpful resource sorting out the complicated beginnings of Particular Baptists, see Jason G. Duesing, “Counted Worthy: The Life and Thought of Henry Jessey, 1601–1663, Puritan Chaplain, Independent and Baptist Pastor, Millenarian Politician and Prophet” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 121-67.

<sup>10</sup>James Edward McGoldrick, *Baptist Successionism: A Crucial Question in Baptist History* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000), 130.

<sup>11</sup>McGoldrick, *Baptist Successionism*, 131-32.

<sup>12</sup>For the history of the church, see Ernest F. Kevan, *London’s Oldest Baptist Church: Wapping 1633—Walthamstow 1933* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1933).

<sup>13</sup>For an analysis of Smyth’s theological development, see Jason K. Lee, *The Theology of John Smyth* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003).

<sup>14</sup>Thomas Wall, *Baptism Anatomized* (London: G. Croom, 1691).

successively from Smyth's illegitimate baptism and linking them with the denial of original sin held by the European Anabaptists who had influenced Smyth.<sup>15</sup> Collins vehemently objected to Walls' mischaracterization of Baptist origins in his *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*.

How many Leaves hast thou spent in thy Book, in asserting and maintaining a Lie, and to cast Filth upon the holy Ways of the Lord? Could not the Ordinance of Christ, which was lost in the Apostacy, be revived, (as the Feast of Tabernacles was, tho lost a great while) unless in such a filthy way as you falsly assert, viz. that *the English Baptists received their Baptism from Mr. John Smith*? It is absolutely untrue, it being well known, by some yet alive, how false this Assertion is; and if *J.W.* will but give a meeting to any of us, and bring whom he pleaseth with him, we shall sufficiently shew the Falsity of what is affirmed by him in this Matter, and in many other things he hath unchristianly asserted.<sup>16</sup>

Collins asserted that the Baptist community of which he was a part had not, in fact, had their baptism passed down to them from Smyth. Their origins were even more recent and involved a recovery of the practice of immersing believers based on the teaching of Scripture.<sup>17</sup> In refuting Walls' charge, Collins was able to reference then living sources who knew better.<sup>18</sup>

Second, these early Baptists consistently identified themselves confessionally and catechetically with their Puritan counterparts in doctrine. Although there is no explicit reference to Puritan influence in the composition of the *First London Confession* in the confession itself, the framers used a Separatist confession as the main source along

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<sup>15</sup>Wall, *Baptism Anatomized*, 106-13.

<sup>16</sup>Hercules Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven, and of Divine Institution. Infants-Baptism from Earth, and Human Invention. Proved from the Commission of Christ, the great Law-giver to the Gospel Church* (London: J. Hancock, 1691), 114-15. For some reason, Collins calls Thomas Wall "John Wall" in his response. Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 108 and 114 (thus, the initials "J.W." in this quote). This is all the more curious since the cover page and table of contents both use Thomas Walls. Perhaps it was an intentional slight to liken Walls with the infamous John Child with whom he compares him on p. 114.

<sup>17</sup>Collins would make a similar argument in his preface to *An Orthodox Catechism*. H[ercules] Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism: Being the Sum of Christian Religion, Contained in the Law and Gospel* (London, 1680), "The Preface," James M. Renihan, *True Confessions: Baptist Documents in the Reformed Family* (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2004), 237-38.

<sup>18</sup>Those "yet alive" would certainly have included William Kiffin and possibly Hanserd Knollys, who did not die until September of 1691, the same year in which these words were published.

with other works authored by those of a Puritan mindset. James Renihan summarized the source material utilized by these early Baptists:

The broad framework for the *Confession* is drawn from the 1596 *True Confession* of an English Separatist church which was gathered in exile in The Netherlands, and it was probably composed by Henry Ainsworth. This was supplemented by many excerpts from *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, an important theological work penned by the leading theologian of the exiles and separatists (and well-respected by non-separating puritans as well), William Ames.<sup>19</sup>

These sources seem to have been supplemented somewhat by John Spilsbury's personal confession of faith of ten articles appended to the end of his book *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme* published in 1643.<sup>20</sup>

Like its predecessor, the Second London Confession of Faith (1677/1689) borrowed heavily from other Puritan/Separatist documents. This document was first published in 1677, but later adopted by the General Assembly of over 100 churches in 1689. This confession was largely based upon, what one historian called, "the most Puritan of documents, the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647."<sup>21</sup> In almost every case where the *Second London* differs from the Westminster, with the obvious notable exception of the explication of the mode of baptism, it follows the Savoy Declaration and Platform of Polity of 1658 crafted by Congregationalists including John Owen, whom one biographer called the "Prince of Puritans."<sup>22</sup> Unlike the *First London Confession*, however, the framers of this confession clearly identified their sources in their introductory letter to the reader. They specifically mention the work done both by "the

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<sup>19</sup>Renihan, *True Confessions*, 3. See also Jay Travis Collier, "The Sources Behind the First London Confession," *American Baptist Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (June 2002): 197-214.

<sup>20</sup>J[ohn] S[pilsbury], *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme* (London, 1643), 43-44.

<sup>21</sup>James M. Renihan, *Edification and Beauty: The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675-1705*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought 17 (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2008), 18.

<sup>22</sup>Andrew Thomson, *John Owen: Prince of Puritans* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2004).

assembly” (i.e., Westminster) and “by those of the Congregational way” (i.e., Savoy)<sup>23</sup> These Baptist pastors also quite helpfully provided an explanation of their rationale in using these sources. Namely, they expressed their desire “to manifest our consent with both, in all the fundamental articles of the Christian Religion”<sup>24</sup> and to declare “our hearty agreement with them, in that wholesome Protestant Doctrine, which with so clear evidence of Scriptures they have asserted.”<sup>25</sup> By constructing their confessions from existing Puritan/Separatist documents, the London Particular Baptists self-consciously identified themselves with the wider Puritan movement. Since Collins was one of the principal signatories of this document, he had added his own “hearty agreement” to the basic doctrines of Puritan theology.<sup>26</sup>

Nine years before he signed the Second London Confession, Collins followed a very similar tack in his appropriation of the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) as the basis for his *An Orthodox Catechism*. Collins affirmed that he was seeking to propagate “an old Gospel.”<sup>27</sup> He went on to state his agreement with Protestant orthodoxy in nearly identical terms as had the Second London Confession which was first published three years earlier in 1677:

In what I have written you will see I concenter with the most Orthodox Divines in the Fundamental Principles and Articles of the Christian Faith, and also have industriously expressed them in the same words, which have on the like occasion

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<sup>23</sup>*A Confession Of Faith, Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations Of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country* (London: Benjamin Harris, 1677), “To the Judicious and Impartial Reader;” William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 245.

<sup>24</sup>*A Confession of Faith* (1677), “To the Judicious and Impartial Reader;” Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 245.

<sup>25</sup>*A Confession of Faith* (1677), “To the Judicious and Impartial Reader;” Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 245.

<sup>26</sup>For a comprehensive treatment of the theology of the Puritans, see Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012).

<sup>27</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, “The Preface;” Renihan, *True Confessions*, 237.

bin spoken, only differing in some things about Church-constitution.<sup>28</sup>

The only changes which Collins made to the Protestant doctrine of the Heidelberg was in regard to matters of Baptist ecclesiology. Otherwise, Collins affirms his commitment to classic Reformation doctrine which was espoused and perpetuated through the Puritans.

Third, these Baptists read and quoted freely from the works of Puritans. Any reading of works written by William Kiffin, Hanserd Knollys, Benjamin Keach, or Hercules Collins reveals a vast familiarity with and general agreement with multiple Puritan authors. In his book on studying and preaching, Hercules Collins recommends “to the consideration especially of those inclined to the ministry” a list of books overwhelmingly composed of works by Puritan divines.<sup>29</sup> For example, he lists Matthew Poole’s commentaries, Joseph Caryl on Job, Stephen Charnock on the attributes of God, the works of William Perkins, Edward Leigh’s *Body of Divinity*, Jeremiah Burrough’s works, Richard Sibbes’ works, Edward Reynolds’ works, John Preston’s works, Foxes’ *Book of Martyrs*, William Ames’ *Marrow of Divinity*, John Owen on the Trinity and many more.<sup>30</sup> Near the front of the Wapping Church Book there are two lists of books containing many of these same titles which were purchased for men who were apparently gifted for ministry.<sup>31</sup>

While Baptists clearly identified themselves in the three ways listed, there is a fourth piece of evidence that should settle the question altogether. It is the simple observation that whenever these Baptists differed from their Puritan counterparts, they did so based upon the fundamental Reformed/Puritan principle of the authority of

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<sup>28</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, “The Preface;” Renihan, *True Confessions*, 237.

<sup>29</sup>Hercules Collins, *The Temple Repair’d: Or, An Essay to revive the long-neglected Ordinances, of exercising the spiritual Gift of Prophecy for the Edification of the Churches; and of ordaining Ministers duly qualified* (London: William and Joseph Marshal, 1702), 49.

<sup>30</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 49-50.

<sup>31</sup>See Appendix 3 for a transcription of the two lists.

Scripture over worship commonly referred to as the regulative principle of worship. This principle was first articulated by the Genevan Reformer John Calvin in a treatise presented to the Imperial Diet at Speyer in 1544.<sup>32</sup> In his tract on “The Necessity of Reforming the Church,” Calvin wrote that “God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word.”<sup>33</sup> Later in the same essay, Calvin drew the appropriate conclusion that “it ought to be sufficient for the rejection of any mode of worship, that it is not sanctioned by the command of God.”<sup>34</sup> By this standard, Calvin and the other Reformers rejected much of the accretions in the worship and practice of the Roman Catholic Church from the medieval period. But whatever forms of “fictitious worship” Calvin had in mind when he penned those words, it apparently did not include infant baptism which was retained in the Reformed church of Geneva. Likewise, when the Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs (1599–1646)<sup>35</sup> offered the definitive treatment of the regulative principle in his posthumously published volume titled *Gospel Worship*,<sup>36</sup> the practice of believer’s baptism by immersion seems to have been the farthest thing from his mind.<sup>37</sup> The English Baptist historian Thomas Crosby, however, used this paedobaptist’s own words to argue for just that in his Preface to the first volume of his *The*

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<sup>32</sup>For the historical context of Calvin’s writing of the tract, see Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 163–64.

<sup>33</sup>John Calvin, “The Necessity of Reforming the Church,” in *Tracts Related to the Reformation*, vol. 1, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1844), 128.

<sup>34</sup>Calvin, “The Necessity of Reforming the Church,” 133.

<sup>35</sup>For a recent biographical study of Burroughs, see Phillip L. Simpson, *A Life of Gospel Peace: A Biography of Jeremiah Burroughs* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011).

<sup>36</sup>Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel-worship: Or, The Right manner of Sanctifying the Name of God in general* (London: Peter Cole and R. W., 1647). This first edition was published the year after Burroughs’ death by a group of friends (Thomas Goodwin, William Greenhill, William Bridge, Sidrach Simpson, and Philip Nye) who contributed an epistle to the reader confirming that the work was indeed written by Burroughs. For an edited version of this work in modern English, see Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel Worship*, ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1990).

<sup>37</sup>One example of Burroughs’ statement of the regulative principle: “I say that all things in God’s worship must have a warrant out of God’s Word. It must be commanded; it’s not enough that it is not forbidden.” Burroughs, *Gospel Worship*, 11.

*History of the English Baptists*.<sup>38</sup> In so doing, Crosby, who was himself the son-in-law of the prominent seventeenth-century Particular Baptist pastor Benjamin Keach, was merely following the pattern of seventeenth-century Baptists in arguing for believer's baptism by immersion using this Puritan principle. The early Baptist use of the regulative principle to argue for the immersion of believers and other matters of public worship will be explored more fully in chapter 5 which focuses on Collins' ecclesiology.

### **Puritan Hermeneutics**

The first line of the Second London Confession of Faith which was publicly affirmed by the London General Assembly of Particular Baptists in 1689 added a line not included in either the Westminster Confession or Savoy Declaration that "The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving Knowledge, Faith and Obedience."<sup>39</sup> As Thomas J. Nettles and L. Russ Bush have argued in their monumental *Baptists and the Bible*, these words indicate that these seventeenth-century Baptists believed in the inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of Scripture.<sup>40</sup> But they, like their Puritan counterparts, were also concerned with matters of the interpretation of Scripture. Therefore they followed the Westminster and Savoy divines in including in the chapter "Of the Holy Scriptures" this statement, "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture it self: And therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold but one) it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly."<sup>41</sup> For these Baptists, it was not enough to say that they believed the Bible, it was also important to say how they believed the Bible should be

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<sup>38</sup>Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists* (London, 1738), 1:xi-xiii.

<sup>39</sup>*A Confession of Faith* (1677), 1; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 248. For comparison with the Westminster Confession and Savoy Declaration, see Renihan, *True Confessions*, 63.

<sup>40</sup>See L. Russ Bush and Thomas J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, rev. and exp. ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 39-51.

<sup>41</sup>*A Confession of Faith* (1677), 8; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 251-52.

interpreted.

In his classic work on the intellectual history of New England Puritanism, *The New England Mind*, Perry Miller observed, “The teacher from whom, above all others, Puritans learned the lesson of sermon form was William Perkins, who gave the classic exposition in his *The Art of Prophecyng*.”<sup>42</sup> Apparently, Puritans were not the only ones who learned from Perkins during the long seventeenth century. At the end of the seventeenth century, at least some Baptists were learning from Perkins as well. Nowhere is this more evident than in *The Temple Repair’d* by Hercules Collins. The most obvious point of contact between William Perkins and Hercules Collins is found near the end of *The Temple Repair’d* when Collins lists “Mr. Perkins’s Works” among a list of books recommended for “those inclin’d to the Ministry.”<sup>43</sup> Since *The Arte of Prophecyng* was included in these works,<sup>44</sup> it is safe to assume that Collins knew this work in particular and would include it in his general recommendation of *The Works*. In the following survey of Collins’ distinctly Puritan approach to interpreting and preaching the Bible, Perkins influence will be highlighted when apparent.

Clearly, there are many differences in the historical context in which *The Arte of Prophecyng* and *The Temple Repair’d* were written. For one thing, over a hundred years separate the writings of these two works. During that interval, the move from Tudor to Stuart monarchies, a Civil War, the execution of a King, the protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, the restoration of the monarchy, and the Glorious Revolution had occurred. This was one of the most eventful and significant centuries in English history. Such

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<sup>42</sup>Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 335. William Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng: Or A Treatise Concerning the Sacred and Onely True Manner and Methode of Preaching*, trans. Thomas Tuke (London: Felix Kyngston, 1607). For an edited version of this work in modern English, see William Perkins, *The Art of Prophecyng*, ed. Sinclair Ferguson (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996).

<sup>43</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 49.

<sup>44</sup>William Perkins, *The Works of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, M. William Perkins* (London : John Legatt, 1631), 2:643-73.



dramatic upheavals in English society present a caution to those who would seek to compare any two figures separated by such events. Another key difference in their historical context is that William Perkins wrote as a minister within the Church of England addressing concerns within the Church of England. Hercules Collins was writing as a Baptist minister addressing concerns within a Baptist community that had not even existed while Perkins was alive.

Yet, despite their different contexts, there was a remarkable similarity of purpose for Perkins and Collins in writing their works. Perkins was prompted to write his *The Arte of Prophecyng* due to “the dearth of able preachers in Elizabethan England” and “the inadequate provision for the training of ministers.”<sup>45</sup> Collins wrote *The Temple Repair’d* in an attempt to fill a void in seventeenth-century Particular Baptist life of the training of a new generation of ministers within the local churches. Thus, Michael A.G. Haykin has described *The Temple Repair’d* as “an eloquent plea for Calvinistic Baptist churches to serve as seminaries for aspiring pastors and preachers.”<sup>46</sup> Like the Puritan William Perkins in his classic work *The Arte of Prophecyng*, Collins is providing a handbook of both homiletics and hermeneutics. As the seventeenth-century Baptist scholar James M. Renihan has rightly noted, R. T. Kendall’s observation that *The Arte of Prophecyng* is “more concerned with hermeneutics than homiletics” can be equally applied to *The Temple Repair’d*.<sup>47</sup>

The observation that the primary concern of *The Temple Repair’d* is hermeneutics becomes evident when it is noted that the work is the expansion of a

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<sup>45</sup>Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007), 476.

<sup>46</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, *A Cloud of Witnesses: Calvinistic Baptists in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Times, 2006), 24.

<sup>47</sup>Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 128n47, citing R. T. Kendall, “Preaching in Early Puritanism with special reference to William Perkins’s *The Arte of Propheying*,” in *Preaching and Revival* (London: Westminster Conference, 1984), 23.

sermon upon the text 2 Timothy 2:15, which says, “Study to shew thy self approved unto God, a Workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.”<sup>48</sup> This sermon was originally preached “at a Meeting designed for the promoting Spiritual Gifts in the Churches of Christ” but was subsequently expanded to include “some considerable Additions to what was then preached.”<sup>49</sup> In the original sermon, Collins argued: “That it is the Duty of every Gospel-Minister so to study as they may approve themselves to God; and so divide the Word of Truth, that they may not be ashamed, but rather have the Honour that belongs to that calling.”<sup>50</sup> Collins infers from this duty “that it is their Sin that preach and neglect Study.”<sup>51</sup> Collins proceeds to give practical instructions on both the preparation and delivery of sermons. This work, then, proves to be a rich source for understanding the hermeneutics of Hercules Collins. By examining this source, combined with a perusal of Collins other works, four key hermeneutical principles can be ascertained. The principles of hermeneutics which are present in the writings of Hercules Collins are not unique to Collins. His method of interpreting Scripture is thoroughly consistent with the classic Protestant approach. The four key principles present are (1) The Necessity of the Holy Spirit; (2) The Grammatical-Historical Method; (3) The Analogy of Faith; and (4) Christocentrism.

### **The Necessity of the Holy Spirit**

Like his Puritan counterparts, Collins emphasized the necessity of the assistance of the Holy Spirit in interpreting Scripture. The early seventeenth-century Baptist Samuel How’s *The Sufficiency of the Spirit’s Teaching without Humane Learning*

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<sup>48</sup>This is Collins’ own citation of the text. Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 16.

<sup>49</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 3.

<sup>50</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 18.

<sup>51</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 23.

(1639)<sup>52</sup> is often seen, as Walter Wilson once described it, as “a grand apology for ignorance.”<sup>53</sup> This work, however, merely reflected the Reformers’ understanding “that biblical truth is inaccessible to human reason unless the interpreter’s mind first is informed by faith and illumined by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>54</sup> William Perkins would carry on this Protestant idea in his *The Arte of Prophecyng*, which is widely regarded to be the first manual of preaching published in the English language. “The principall interpreter of the Scriptures,” wrote Perkins, “is the holy Ghost.”<sup>55</sup> Without the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, the Puritans believed true understanding of the main message of Scripture was impossible. Collins argued very similarly, “That it’s God alone by the Inspiration of his holy Spirit can make Men able Ministers of the New Testament.”<sup>56</sup> Although humans can interpret the meaning of words and parse the component parts of a sentence, Collins argued for the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit in order to understand God’s Word properly:

And tho it be granted that human Literature is very useful for a Minister, yet it is not essentially necessary; but to have the Spirit of Christ to open the Word of Christ is essentially necessary: For altho it is possible to make an exact Translation, of the Scriptures out of many learned Languages, and give an exact Grammatical Construction of the same, yet if this Man be void of the Spirit of Christ, he cannot know or understand the Mysteries contain’d in God’s Word.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Samuel How, *The Sufficiency of the Spirit’s Teaching, without Human Learning. Or, A Treatise tending to prove Human Learning, to be no Help to the Spiritual Understanding of the Word of God*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: William and Joseph Marshall, 1704). As H. Leon McBeth has noted, the title is “so long that one might, by reading the title carefully, skip the treatise.” H. Leon McBeth, “Early Baptist Hermeneutics,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, ed. Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke, and Grant Lovejoy (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 92.

<sup>53</sup>Walter Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses, in London, Westminster, and Southwark: Including the Lives of Their Ministers, from the Rise of Nonconformity to the Present Time: with an Appendix on the Origin, Progress, and Present State of Christianity in Britain* (London, 1808), 4:137.

<sup>54</sup>James T. Spivey, “The Hermeneutics of the Medieval and Reformation Era,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke, and Grant Lovejoy (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2002), 113.

<sup>55</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 31.

<sup>56</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 19.

<sup>57</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 19.

Writing these words reminded Collins of something heard over twenty-four years earlier at an ordination service. Perhaps it was a remark made by one of the presiding ministers at his own ordination when he had assumed the pastorate of the Wapping church in 1677, approximately twenty-four years before this passage was written. Collins recalled the minister saying, “Tho I understood Latin and Greek, Philosophy, Logick and Rhetorick, &c., yet before Conversion I was as ignorant of Christ as a wild Ass’s Colt.”<sup>58</sup> This colorful statement stuck with Collins and served as a lifelong reminder of the insufficiency of human learning apart from the Holy Spirit.

It should be noted that Collins did not use his teaching on the necessity of the Holy Spirit as an excuse to avoid studying. He even included a list of recommended study books for ministers to use in their preparation.<sup>59</sup> Collins believed that ministers must labor in the Word because of the exalted nature of their work:

We should study to be good Workmen, because our Work is of the highest nature. Men that work among Jewels and precious Stones, ought to be very knowing of their business. A Minister’s Work is a great Work, a holy Work, a heavenly Work. Hence the Apostle saith, *Who is sufficient for these things?* O how great a Work is this! What Man, what Angel is sufficient to preach the Gospel as they ought to preach it! You work for the highest End, the Glory of God, and the good of immortal Souls; you are for the beating down of the Kingdom of the Devil, and enlarging and exalting Christ’s Kingdom.<sup>60</sup>

Collins believed that people could “easily perceive from the Pulpit whether the Man hath wrought hard at his Study the week before, or not.”<sup>61</sup> He believed that 2 Timothy 2:15 refuted those who thought it “unlawful to study to declare God’s Mind” and who “contemptuously speak against it, as if we were to preach by Inspiration, as the Prophets and Apostles of old did.”<sup>62</sup> Instead of this lazy approach to the minister’s duty, Collins

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<sup>58</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 19-20.

<sup>59</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 49-50.

<sup>60</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 22-23.

<sup>61</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 23.

<sup>62</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 24.

proposed an alternative that took seriously both the divine command to study and the necessity of reliance upon the Holy Spirit:

We may say in this case, as we use to speak about Salvation, that we ought to live so holily as if we were to be sav'd by our living, and yet when we have done all, to rely upon Christ and his Righteousness; so we should labour in Study, as if we should have no immediate Assistance in the Pulpit, and yet when we have done all, to go about our Work depending upon God for further Assistance.<sup>63</sup>

In this way, ministers could escape the shame that “will attend them that are lazy and idle in the things of God” and receive the implied alternative of honor that “will follow those that are true Labourers in the Lord’s Vineyard.”<sup>64</sup>

The recognition that the Holy Spirit alone can help us interpret Scripture was a great incentive to prayer. Collins asserted that since God alone can guide us to interpret Scripture correctly; therefore we must seek this understanding from God. Collins said that he knew of one man who had told him “that he had been ten times upon his Knees for one Sermon.” Collins commented, “Sometimes we have Sermons earlier, and sometimes with much difficulty: but this is our Comfort, that we have always a God upon the Throne of Grace, who will help us in a time of need that humbly lie before him.”<sup>65</sup>

### **The Grammatical-Historical Method**

Collins utilized what would come to be known as the grammatical-historical method of interpreting Scripture.<sup>66</sup> This was perhaps the most important principle of biblical interpretation recovered in the Protestant Reformation. This method of interpretation considers the historical circumstances of the text’s writing and seeks to interpret the text according to its author’s intended meaning. It was a repudiation of the

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<sup>63</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 36-37.

<sup>64</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 24.

<sup>65</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 27.

<sup>66</sup>For a helpful summary of the principles of biblical interpretation utilized by the Reformers, see Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), 51-59.

fourfold sense of interpretation employed by the Medieval exegetes. An abuse of that methodology sometimes came to see the “literal” sense of the text as less important than the “moral,” “allegorical,” and “anagogical” senses of Scripture.<sup>67</sup> The “classic Protestant approach”<sup>68</sup> has been defined by J. I. Packer as

the proper, natural sense of each passage (i.e., the intended sense of the writer) is to be taken as fundamental; the meaning of texts in their own contexts, and for their original readers, is the necessary starting-point for enquiry into their wider significance. In other words, Scripture statements must be interpreted in the light of the rules of grammar and discourse on the one hand, and of their own place in history on the other.<sup>69</sup>

With this definition in hand, it is easy to see that Collins interprets Scripture along these lines. Collins pays careful attention to both the historical and Scriptural context of the passages under observation. He also takes the meaning of words and the use of figures of speech seriously.

**Historical context.** First, Collins sought to interpret Scripture in light of its historical context. Accordingly, he urged his readers to pay attention to his own way of dealing with the historical context of his text: “Consider my whole Method in speaking, 1. To the Penman of the Epistle. 2. To the Time when written. 3. The Occasion. 4. The Scope.”<sup>70</sup> Indeed, Collins had followed this exact pattern in setting the historical context of 2 Timothy 2:15. He began by indicating that the “Penman of this Epistle . . . was the Apostle Paul” of whom he added, “He that once sought the Churches Destruction, is become a Labourer in order to the Churches Salvation.”<sup>71</sup> Next, he addressed “the time

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<sup>67</sup>See J. I. Packer, *“Fundamentalism” and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 103-104.

<sup>68</sup>Alister E. McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution—A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 221. Here McGrath cites Packer’s definition from *“Fundamentalism” and the Word of God*.

<sup>69</sup>Packer, *“Fundamentalism” and the Word of God*, 102.

<sup>70</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 25. H. Leon McBeth stated that this passage “could easily come from a modern work on hermeneutics.” McBeth, “Early Baptist Hermeneutics,” 94.

<sup>71</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 16.

when this Epistle was written” which he said “was but a little before *Paul*’s Death, who was beheaded under *Nero* Emperor of *Rome*.” This information was gathered from 2 Timothy 4:6 “where he saith, *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand*: and so it is thought to be one of his last Epistles.”<sup>72</sup> Collins then gave the occasion of the epistle’s writing:

The occasion of this Epistle is this. The Apostle having left *Timothy* at *Ephesus* to take care of the Church there, *Timothy* with the rest of the Elders wept very sore upon *Paul*’s departure; and *Paul* supposing that *Timothy* had heard of his Sufferings at *Rome*, which might prove an additional Sorrow to him, thought therefore by this Epistle to establish and comfort him both against the Apostle’s Sufferings and Martyrdom approaching, as also against all the Pressures and Persecutions of the Church.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, Collins gave the “scope of this Epistle” which was really a reference to the intended audience. The intended audience for this Epistle was “more immediate in reference to *Timothy*, whom *Paul* exhorts to Courage and Constancy in his Ministerial Office; but,” Collins added, “it concerns all Ministers in their Ministerial Calling to be faithful and diligent in their Work in the worst of times, and with *Archippus*, to take heed to their Ministry which they have received in the Lord, that they fulfil it, and to caution the Church against evil Men and Seducers.”<sup>74</sup>

In a similar manner, in *Mountains of Brass: Or, A Discourse upon the Decrees of God*,<sup>75</sup> Collins first set the historical context of the passage. This work was originally a Tuesday lecture which was begun in William Kiffin’s Devon-Shire Square congregation on October 29, 1689 and concluded the following Tuesday, November 5<sup>th</sup> in Collins’ own Wapping congregation.<sup>76</sup> Collins text for the sermon was Ephesians 1:11 and he began

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<sup>72</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 16.

<sup>73</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 16.

<sup>74</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 16-17.

<sup>75</sup>Hercules Collins, *Mountains of Brass: Or, A Discourse upon the Decrees of God* (London: John Harris, 1690).

<sup>76</sup>Collins, *Mountains of Brass*, title page.

his sermon by giving the historical context of the epistle to the church at Ephesus.

*Ephesus* was a great and rich City, but given much to Idolatry: Saint *Paul*, *Apollos* and *Aquila*, Preaching the Gospel among them, many were brought off from their Idolatrous Temples and Worship, for the Word of God grew mightily, and many believed and were Baptized. The Idol-worshippers seeing their Idolatry like to fall before the Gospel, as *Dagon* before the Ark, and their Craft in danger, the great Goddess *Diana* despised, and her Magnificence destroyed, whom all *Asia* and the World worshipped; a great uproar was among them: which when ceased, *Paul* called the Disciples together, embraced them, so went to *Macedonia*; but left *Timothy* there, to charge some they Preach no other Doctrine than Christ crucified, and not to give heed to Fables and endless Genealogies, which minister Questions rather than Godly-edifying, 1 *Tim.* 1.3,4.<sup>77</sup>

These selections demonstrate that Collins' pattern was to first seek to understand the historical background of the main texts of Scripture which were the basis for his discourses and to make sure that his hearers/readers were exposed to this information for their own better understanding of the text.

**Scriptural context.** Second, Collins also instructed aspiring ministers to pay attention to the immediate Scriptural context of a passage. He urged them to "Consider how your Text coheres and depends upon what goes before it."<sup>78</sup> Once again Collins illustrated this in the very same work by the way in which he set the immediate context of 2 Timothy 2:15.

As for the Coherence of the Text, it seems to have reference immediately to the Verse before, where the Apostle signifies that there were some in that day, *That strove about words to no profit, but to the subversion of the Hearers.* Now as if *Paul* should say to *Timothy*, That thou mayest be of advantage to thy Hearers, and delivered from that Error of subverting any, but establishing them in the Truth, *Do thou study to shew thy self a good Workmen, approv'd of God, &c.*<sup>79</sup>

Here the context of the passage under examination adds to the weightiness of the command given in the main text. Another example of how Collins used the surrounding context of his main text better to understand and explain the text's meaning is found in

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<sup>77</sup>Collins, *Mountains of Brass*, 1-2.

<sup>78</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 25.

<sup>79</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 17.



his *Mountains of Brass*. In the following extract, Collins very ably summarized the content of chapters 1 and 2 of Ephesians.

The Apostle in the Context treating of Election, Predestination, Redemption, Justification, Adoption, Sanctification, and an eternal Inheritance; he comes in our Text to resolve whence all flowed, which is from no other Fountain, then the Counsel of Gods own Will: that those who were by Nature Children of Wrath, walked according to the course of this World, and dictates of the Prince of the Power of the Air, fulfilling the delights of the Flesh and of the Mind, were without hope, and God, in the World, as to any saving knowledge of Him; that those that were afar off, are made nigh; of Strangers, fellow Cityzens with the Saints, and of the Household of Faith; that those who were once Idol-worshippers, are now Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, are gracious works in Time, flowing from his purposes in Eternity, as the Apostle in our text affirms.<sup>80</sup>

In this citation, Collins demonstrates exactly what are the “all things” which God works “after the Counsel of his own Will” in his text of Ephesians 1:11. Collins shows how the context clearly shows that it was the great work of the Ephesians’ salvation which flowed from God’s eternal purpose of grace.

**Meaning of words.** Third, Collins emphasized the importance of expounding upon the meaning of words. In *The Temple Repair’d*, Collins notes that ministers “are often led in Preaching to shew the Import of a word.”<sup>81</sup> In the address which was the occasion of this work, Collins had paraphrased the Puritan Matthew Poole’s comments on 2 Timothy 2:15 explaining the meaning of the phrase “rightly dividing the Word of Truth.”<sup>82</sup>

When the Apostle saith *rightly dividing the Word of Truth*, you must know it is a Metaphorical Expression, a borrowed Saying, whether it be from the Priest’s cutting the Sacrifices, so as all had their proper shares; or from the Parents dividing the

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<sup>80</sup>Collins, *Mountains of Brass*, 2.

<sup>81</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 36.

<sup>82</sup>Matthew Poole, *Annotations Upon The Holy Bible*, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Parkhurst, Jonathan Robinson, Brabazon Aylmer, John Lawrence, John Taylor and Thomas Cockerill, 1700). Matthew Poole’s two-volume commentary on the Bible was available to Hercules Collins, having been reprinted several times in London in the seventeenth century with an edition published in 1700, just two years before Collins published *The Temple Repair’d*. The work is currently in print in three volumes from Hendrickson Publishers. *Matthew Poole’s Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 3 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985).

Dish amongst several Children; or from the Carpenter who divides his Timber by a right Line: The word imports thus much, that Ministers should so divide the Word of Truth, as to give every one their due Portion.<sup>83</sup>

Collins paid special attention to the meaning of the words of Scripture and taught others to do so as well.

In *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, the first evidence which Collins gives that baptism means immersion is taken from the fact that “the word Baptize in the New Testament is taken from the word Dip in the Old.”<sup>84</sup> Collins further explained that the Hebrew equivalent (*tabal*) of the word translated “baptize” (*baptizō*) in the New Testament is always translated “dip” in the Old Testament. This Hebrew word is always translated as *baptizō* in the Septuagint. Thus, the very meaning of the word *baptizō* is vital to the correct interpretation of the biblical teaching on baptism.

**Figures of speech.** Fourth, Collins acknowledged the presence of figures of speech in his interpretation of Scripture. Some have accused those who attempt to interpret the Bible according to its “literal” sense of failing to recognize the figures of speech which Scripture frequently employs. This is an empty charge as Protestants have always acknowledged that the “literal” approach actually demands that figures of speech be recognized.<sup>85</sup> J. I. Packer quotes the English Reformer William Tyndale on this point:

Thou shalt understand, therefore, that the scripture hath but one sense, which is the

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<sup>83</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 18.

<sup>84</sup>Collins, *Believer's Baptism from Heaven*, 12.

<sup>85</sup>Benjamin Keach, a contemporary and friend of Collins, published a massive work of over 1,000 pages on the metaphors of Scripture. In this work, Keach opined on the reason for the abundance of metaphors in Scripture: “‘Tis obvious to every one's Observation, that the Holy Scripture abounds with *Metaphors, Allegories*, and other *Tropes and Figures* of Speech. Similitudes are borrowed from Visible Things, to set forth and illustrate the excellent Nature of Invisible Things; yea, heavenly Things are often called by the very Names that material or earthly Things are called, which is not to obscure or hide the meaning of them from us, but to accommodate them to our understanding; God by a gracious . . . Condescension, conveying the Knowledge of Himself, and spiritual Things, by preaching them by their respective earthly Similitudes, etc.” Benjamin Keach, *ΤΡΟΠΟΛΟΓΙΑ: A Key To Open Scripture Metaphors* (London: J. R. and J. D., 1682), bk. 4, “Epistle to the Reader.” For a recent study of Keach's use of metaphor in his preaching, see James Christopher Holmes, “The Role of Metaphor in the Sermons of Benjamin Keach, 1640–1704” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009).

literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth, whereunto if thou cleave, thou canst never err or go out of the way. And if thou leave the literal sense, thou canst not but go out of the way. Nevertheless, the scripture uses proverbs, similitudes, riddles, or allegories, as all other speeches do; but that which the proverb, similitude, riddle or allegory signifieth, is ever the literal sense, which thou must seek out diligently.<sup>86</sup>

Collins likewise recognized that Scripture uses many figures of speech such as metaphors, anthropomorphic language, and hyperbole.

Collins acknowledged the presence of what he called “Metaphor or Similitude.”<sup>87</sup> He provided several examples for the benefit of his readers:

Thus the Holy Ghost calls Christ a Rock, because he defends his Church against the Gates of Hell: So he is call’d a Lamb, that we may the better understand his Meekness and Usefulness: He is call’d a Vine, and his Members Branches, to shew that a Believer’s Life, Beauty, Strength, Growth, and Fruitfulness is in Christ the Vine, and that without him they can do nothing.<sup>88</sup>

Collins also recognized the use of anthropomorphic language to describe the actions and attributes of God. Again, he provided a helpful list of examples for his readers:

When the Holy Ghost descends to help Mens Capacities in attributing bodily Parts and human Affections to God, which are only proper to Men, you must open and display the Mind of God in it, to take Persons off from any mean and low thoughts of God, who is an Infinite Spirit. When God is said to have a Face, it signifies the Manifestation of himself to Angels and Men in a way of Favour or Anger: Eyes being ascrib’d to him holds forth his perfect knowledg of Persons and Things; his Hand and Arm signifies Omnipotency; Bowels signify his Mercy and most ardent Affection: When Feet are attributed to God, it signifies his Omnipresence, together with his Strength to crush his Enemies: And where the Church is call’d the place of his Feet, it is because there he exhibits his Grace and Glory as if he walked in it.<sup>89</sup>

But Collins not only provided instructions for interpreting anthropomorphic language, he also recognizes the anthropopathic language of Scripture. In his discussion of the biblical language of God’s repentance, Collins answered a seemingly modern question regarding

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<sup>86</sup>Packer, *“Fundamentalism” and the Word of God*, 103.

<sup>87</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 35.

<sup>88</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 35.

<sup>89</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 37.

whether God changes his mind.<sup>90</sup>

So when sadness, Grief of Mind, and Repentance are ascrib'd to God, it signifies his Displeasure: 'Tis Man only can properly be said to repent, who cannot know the Event of things; but it cannot appertain to him who *declares the end from the beginning*: God is said to repent when he doth such things as Men do when they repent. When Men repent, 1. They cease to do what they began to do: And, 2. They are ready to deface and destroy what they have done; God is said to repent, not because his Mind is changed. When he is said to *repent of making Saul King*, it is because he meant to remove him from the Throne. It is said he *repented that he made the World*; because his Purpose was to destroy and deface the present Beauty and Excellency of it.<sup>91</sup>

Similarly, in *Mountains of Brass*, Collins again addressed the question of God's repentance in a section on the immutability of the divine will. "When the Scripture speaks about Gods repenting he made Man, it is not to be understood properly, as if God were capable of repentance, as Man is; but it is spoken to our Capacity: God is said to repent, when he doth such things as Men do when they repent."<sup>92</sup>

Collins also recognized the presence of hyperbole and the limited presence of allegory in Scripture. Hyperbole, which Collins said "no Man had more of these than *Paul*," is used to emphasize the glory of "the Objects of the invisible World" and to magnify God's grace.<sup>93</sup> Like most Christians in the history of the church, Collins believed that "The Book of Solomon's Song is generally allegorical, and must be understood otherwise than as literally express'd."<sup>94</sup> The warrant for such an interpretation

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<sup>90</sup>See the "open theism" debate in which theologians such as Gregory A. Boyd and John Sanders argue that God does not fully know the future and takes risks by giving humans libertarian freedom. Open theists use passages, like those discussed by Collins in this passage, which speak of God's repenting or changing his mind as proof that God does not know the future and therefore must constantly be reacting to the free actions of humans. For the open theist perspective, see Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000); and John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998). For defenses of the traditional view of God's providence in response to open theism, see Bruce A. Ware, *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000); and idem, *God's Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004).

<sup>91</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 38.

<sup>92</sup>Collins, *Mountains of Brass*, 12.

<sup>93</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 46-47.

<sup>94</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 43.

is Paul's use of the term in describing the spiritual meaning of the Old and New Covenants in Galatians 4. However, this allegorical method of interpretation appears to be rarely employed and the only example given is that of the book of the Song of Solomon.

### **The Analogy of Faith**

Another important principle of interpretation from the Protestant Reformation is indicated by the Latin slogan *Scriptura ipsius interpres* or "Scripture is its own interpreter."<sup>95</sup> It was this sole method of interpretation which was included in the Second London Confession of Faith put forth by the Particular Baptist churches in 1689: "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture it self: And therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold but one) it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly."<sup>96</sup> Collins said very similarly, "Know ye that the Scriptures are the best Expositors of themselves; no Man, nor no Church can explain God's Word better than it doth it self."<sup>97</sup> Collins then gave a couple of examples of how this method can be used.

As for instance, the Psalmist saith, *There is a God that judgeth in the Earth*. Now if you would know what God is, another Scripture tells you that *God is a Spirit*. One text saith, *Stand in awe, and sin not*. If you would know what Sin is, another Scripture saith, *Sin is the transgression of the Law*.<sup>98</sup>

Collins further exhorted his readers that they should "never interpret one Text so as to thwart another . . . but to seek the understanding of it from God, who shews the meaning of the Word by the Word it self, as we said before; the more obscure places being

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<sup>95</sup>McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, 221.

<sup>96</sup>*A Confession of Faith* (1677), 8; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 251-52.

<sup>97</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 26.

<sup>98</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 26.

expounded by the more clear.”<sup>99</sup> This method of interpretation Collins called “the Analogy of Faith,”<sup>100</sup> and it reflects the approach of the Puritans as articulated by William Perkins. Perkins averred that the “perfect and equall object of preaching is the Word of God.”<sup>101</sup> Given the Word’s perfection for preaching, all that was needed in preaching to elucidate Scripture was Scripture itself: “The supream and absolute meane of interpretation is the Scripture it selfe.”<sup>102</sup>

Collins applied this method of interpreting Scripture by Scripture in his *Mountains of Brass*. In seeking to demonstrate that “all the gracious Acts and Providences in the Church, are the Products and Execution of his Eternal Will,” Collins marshaled a number of texts.<sup>103</sup> He appealed to several other of Paul’s letters in which the same doctrine is expounded that he sees in Ephesians 1:11.

The hope of Eternal Life in the Saints, is the product of that promise which was made by God that cannot ye before the World began. The Sanctification of the Church at *Thessalonica*, and their belief of the Truth, was in order to that Salvation they were chosen and appointed to from the beginning; in a Word, our Calling, Justification, and Glorification, are all the effects of Gods Eternal Purpose. This was the Doctrine St. *Paul* taught the Church of the *Romans*, *Ephesians*, *Thessalonians*, *Timothy* and *Titus*, &c.<sup>104</sup>

As if to indicate that this is not merely a Pauline doctrine, Collins further appealed to the Petrine literature as validating his interpretation of Ephesians 1:11. Collins was referring to 1 Peter 1:20 when he wrote, “Christ’s being manifested in time to the Church, was from his fore-ordination to it, before the Foundation of the World; his being slain in time Actually, was from the Decree in Eternity, hence called the Lamb slain from the

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<sup>99</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 27-28.

<sup>100</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 27.

<sup>101</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 4.

<sup>102</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 31.

<sup>103</sup>Collins, *Mountains of Brass*, 8.

<sup>104</sup>Collins, *Mountains of Brass*, 8-9.

Foundation of the World, not so actually, but in God's Decree."<sup>105</sup>

Elsewhere, Collins warned the readers of *The Temple Repair'd* not to take "other Mens Opinions without due trial," but rather to "compare them first with the Analogy of Faith and Rules of Holiness, the holy Scriptures, which are the proper tests of all Opinions and Doctrines."<sup>106</sup> Since Scripture was itself "the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving Knowledge, Faith, and Obedience,"<sup>107</sup> it stood to reason that the Scriptures are the only "infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture."<sup>108</sup> Given their common understanding of the necessity of the Holy Spirit and the use of Scripture to interpret Scripture, it should come as no surprise that both Perkins and Collins rejected the use of human testimonies as proofs for divine truth. Perkins wrote that "humane testimonies whether of the Philosophers or of the Fathers are not to be alleaged."<sup>109</sup> Collins clearly followed Perkins at this point, citing his surname as a source in the margin beside, "Human testimonies are not to be brought to prove divine things, unless they may the better convince the Conscience of the Hearer."<sup>110</sup> Collins proceeded to follow the exceptions given by Perkins from the biblical record found in Acts 17:28, 1 Corinthians 15:33, and Titus 1:12.<sup>111</sup> Since Collins directly cites Perkins on this point, this is one of the clearest evidences of Collins' dependence upon Perkins observed thus far.

## **Christocentrism**

The Christocentrism of the hermeneutics of Hercules Collins was closely

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<sup>105</sup>Collins, *Mountains of Brass*, 9.

<sup>106</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 34.

<sup>107</sup>*A Confession of Faith* (1677), 1; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 248.

<sup>108</sup>*A Confession of Faith* (1677), 8; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 251.

<sup>109</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 98.

<sup>110</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 32.

<sup>111</sup>Cf. Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 98; and Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 32.

related to his use of the analogy of faith. James T. Spivey observed that included in the Protestant's use of the "analogy of faith" is the idea that there "is an essential, organic Christological unity to the Bible."<sup>112</sup> As Perkins put it in his own "Summe of the Summe" of his method of interpreting and preaching Scripture, "Preach one Christ by Christ to the praise of Christ."<sup>113</sup> Since the overall message of Scripture was focused upon the person and work of Christ, an examination of the individual parts of Scripture in light of the whole would necessarily provide a Christological interpretation.

In Collins' works there is a clear emphasis on the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. While calling upon ministers to preach a variety of subjects, he asserts that the preaching of "Christ crucified the Object of a justifying Faith" was a duty and confessed that one could not "preach Christ too much."<sup>114</sup> For Collins, the first mark of a good workman was that they "build their Happiness upon Christ crucified."<sup>115</sup> When driven to interpret the Song of Solomon allegorically, his interpretation of the book was that it "must be understood . . . for the sweet Conference between Christ and his Church" which is "set down in those Expressions proper betwixt Husband and Wife."<sup>116</sup> But the most clear evidence of how Collins interpreted Scripture Christocentrically is found in a work titled *The Marrow of Gospel-History*.<sup>117</sup>

*The Marrow of Gospel-History* is described on its title page as a "Poem on the Birth, Life, Death, and Resurrection of our most blessed Lord and Saviour *Jesus*

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<sup>112</sup>Spivey, "The Hermeneutics of the Medieval and Reformation Era," 113.

<sup>113</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 148.

<sup>114</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 33.

<sup>115</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 20.

<sup>116</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 43.

<sup>117</sup>Hercules Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History: Or, A Diversion for Youth at their Spare Hours* (London: 1696).



Christ.”<sup>118</sup> In the preface to *Three Books*,<sup>119</sup> which was also published in 1696 and contained an edition of *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, Collins acknowledged that some parts of this poem were originally used as “Hymns sung at the Lord’s Table” by the Wapping Congregation.<sup>120</sup> These hymns were now being “dispos’d of in another manner, but to the same End, which is the Glory of Christ.”<sup>121</sup> This lyrical work, which extends to just over one hundred pages, was intended as a tool to teach children the story of the Bible.<sup>122</sup> It chronicles the progress of redemption throughout salvation history and reveals much of how Collins interpreted all of Scripture as pointing to Christ.

One chapter is especially helpful in showing how Collins shows Christ in the Old Testament by a “variety of Types and Figures in the Old Testament.”<sup>123</sup> The Fall of man and the *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3 are described in one stanza that seems to allude to John Milton’s epic poem *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.<sup>124</sup>

Adam the First *Paradise* lost,  
Where once he sweetly sang:  
But was regain’d by Man’s good Friend,  
Christ the triumphant King.  
He Satan fought, and gain’d the Fort,  
Yea won the Field and Day.  
The Woman’s Seed did break the Head,

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<sup>118</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, title page.

<sup>119</sup>Hercules Collins, *Three Books* (London: 1696).

<sup>120</sup>Collins, *Three Books*, ix.

<sup>121</sup>Collins, *Three Books*, ix.

<sup>122</sup>The work is subtitled as “*A Diversion for Youth at their Spare Hours.*” Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, title page.

<sup>123</sup>Collins, *Three Books*, 85.

<sup>124</sup>John Milton (1608–1674) first published *Paradise Lost* in 1668. John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (London: Peter Parker, 1668). Milton followed up this work three years later with *Paradise Regained*. John Milton, *Paradise Regain’d* (London: J. M., 1671). For a study of Milton’s life and thought, see Gordon Campbell and Thomas N. Corns, *John Milton: Life, Work, and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). For an analysis of Milton’s theology, see William Bridges Hunter, C. A. Patrides, and Jack Hale Adamson, *Bright Essence: Studies in Milton’s Theology* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1971).

Of Man's grand Enemy.<sup>125</sup>

In addition to the clear allusion to the title of *Paradise Lost* in the selection above, Collins also specifically references Milton's classic work on two other occasions by placing "Mr. *Milton*" in the margin. The first instance is a paraphrase of Satan's famous line in *Paradise Lost*, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heav'n."<sup>126</sup> Collins draws on this line to express in equally memorable fashion, "'Twere shame for me to bow the Knee, And God adore and love: A Prince in Hell, doth far excel Subjection, tho above."<sup>127</sup> In the second reference to "Mr. *Milton*," Collins recalls Milton's discussion of the eternal council of the triune God in Book III.<sup>128</sup> Describing the plan for the incarnation of the Son of God as originating in this inter-Trinitarian conference, Collins writes,

O blessed Morn, a King is born,  
A Virgin-Maid the Mother:  
But his Grandsire is God, admire  
This Myst'ry altogether.  
But pray from whence did come this Prince?  
From Heaven's Council-Board,  
Where he did sit, in Council great,  
Before the World was made.<sup>129</sup>

Other stanzas of Collins' poetic theology focus on various Old Testament persons or ceremonies which he saw as types of Christ. These selections reflect Collins' practice of interpreting the main storyline of the Bible Christocentrically.

Noah's ark:

Our Ark of Love, which saves thy Dove,  
Thou art, O Lord, most strong,  
When delug'd all the World beside,

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<sup>125</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 20.

<sup>126</sup>Milton, *Paradise Lost*, bk. 1, line 263.

<sup>127</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 5.

<sup>128</sup>See especially Milton, *Paradise Lost*, bk. 3, lines 167-82.

<sup>129</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 16-17.

Thou sav’dst thy Church alone.<sup>130</sup>

Jacob’s ladder and Isaac:

Our *Jacob*’s Ladder, by which God  
Doth friendly visit us,  
And we ascend upon the same,  
*Immanuel*, God with us.  
Our *Isaac* art, who bore the Cross,  
And felt the sharpned Sword,  
In whom the Nations all are blest,  
According to thy Word.<sup>131</sup>

Joseph, the fiery cloudy pillar and Joshua:

Our blessed *Joseph*, who was sent  
From *Canaan* heavenly,  
Unto the *Egypt* of this World  
For Food, we might not die.  
Our fiery cloudy Pillar art,  
In this dark Wilderness:  
Our *Joshua* doth us conduct  
Unto the Land of Rest.<sup>132</sup>

The Brazen Serpent and the Year of Jubilee:

Our brazen Serpent we behold,  
Whenever stung with Sin;  
From that Disease deliver’d are,  
Which else would end in Hell.  
Our *Jubilee*, accepted Year,  
Was the Year of thy Death;  
We heard the Gospel-Trumpet sound  
True Joy, and free from Wrath.<sup>133</sup>

The mercy seat:

Our Mercy-Seat, and Throne of Grace,

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<sup>130</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 88.

<sup>131</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 89.

<sup>132</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 89.

<sup>133</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 89-90.

The great Propitiatory;  
From which the Father kindly speaks,  
Poor Sinners here is Glory.  
The Mercy-Seat above the Ark,  
And Tables of the Law,  
Did figure Mercy triumphing,  
O'er Justice which we saw.<sup>134</sup>

The altar, priest and sacrifice:

The Altar, Priest, and Sacrifice:  
As Priest, both Man and God;  
As Altar, God, who sanctifies;  
As Man, the Offering's good.  
The rich and holy Vail thou art,  
Thy Body's Vail was rent:  
So we into the holy Place  
May have a free ascent.<sup>135</sup>

Sampson:

Our *Sampson* art, who slew by Death,  
More than when living was:  
The strangest way of conquering,  
Is dying on a Cross.  
Who took from Satan's Kingdom great,  
The Gates thereof away;  
And led Captivity captive,  
In his triumphing Day.<sup>136</sup>

The heart of what Collins was seeking to communicate in this chapter was that Christ by his death on the cross has regained what Adam had lost through sin. This thesis is summarized near the end of the chapter in the following lines, which again recalls Miltonic language from *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regain'd*:

Tho God and all our *Adam* lost,  
Yet Christ hath it regain'd:  
And now the Saints have God in all,

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<sup>134</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 90.

<sup>135</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 90.

<sup>136</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 92.

The want of which them pain'd.  
 . . .  
 And when Man lost a sight of God,  
 A Vision beautiful;  
 He by his Blood hath it regain'd,  
 When all things else did fail.<sup>137</sup>

Just as his contemporary Baptist hymn-writing pioneer Benjamin Keach has been accused of producing “doggerel,”<sup>138</sup> Collins may also have been guilty of using bad poetry at times. It is, however, important to remember, as James Barry Vaughn has pointed out regarding Keach’s poetry, that Collins “did not intend these hymns to be great poetry; he intended them to be exactly what they are, i.e., metrical doctrine.”<sup>139</sup> This is exactly what Collins intended as is seen in his stated desire on the title page that this work be used didactically to instruct young people concerning the history of redemption. True to his purpose, this work reflects Collins’ theological commitment and hermeneutic instinct to interpret Scripture in a Christ-centered manner.

### Puritan Homiletics

Although as shown above, the primary emphasis of the *The Art of Prophecyng* and *The Temple Repair'd* was upon how to interpret the Bible, these works also have much to say about preaching. According to Puritan scholar Horton Davies, Perkins’ work “enjoyed a magisterial reputation among the Puritans” for its explication of the “Puritan type of sermon.”<sup>140</sup> This type of sermon would be the kind preached and commended by

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<sup>137</sup>Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 94-95.

<sup>138</sup>C. E. Whiting, *Studies in English Puritanism from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660–1688* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931), 563. Whiting wrote that “Keach’s piety was better than his poetry. He wrote some dreadful doggerel at times.”

<sup>139</sup>James Barry Vaughn, “Public Worship and Practical Theology in the Work of Benjamin Keach (1640–1704)” (Ph.D. diss., St. Mary’s College, University of St. Andrews, 1989), 157.

<sup>140</sup>Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. 2, *From Andrewes to Baxter, 1603–1690* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 163.

Collins and his Baptist contemporaries.<sup>141</sup> Since Collins looked to Perkins as a guide in this area, there are a number of points of parallel between the two works by Perkins and Collins. There is also some evidence of Collins' dependence upon Perkins.

### **Use of Term “Prophecy”**

The first similarity between these two works is found on their respective title pages. Perkins' used the term “prophecy” as a synonym for preaching. This is clear from the parallelism in the title and subtitle. *The Arte of Prophecyng* is the title and the subtitle parallels this as “A TREATISE CONCERNING the sacred and onely true manner and *methode of Preaching*.”<sup>142</sup> Early on in his work, Perkins explicitly stated, “Preaching of the word is Prophecyng in the name and roome of Christ.”<sup>143</sup> Collins' used the term in the same way. The subtitle of *The Temple Repair'd* also makes this clear: “An ESSAY to revive the long-neglected Ordinances, of exercising the spiritual Gift of Prophecy for the Edification of the Churches; and of ordaining Ministers duly qualified.” Collins explained his use of the term “prophecy” in his dedication of the work as “a Gift from God to expound and interpret the Scripture to the Churches Edification.”<sup>144</sup> Although this is not a unique use of the term by these men, it is nevertheless an important similarity to note due to its prominence on the two works' title pages.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>For example, a recent study of Benjamin Keach's preaching observes, “In constructing his messages, Keach essentially followed the sermonic pattern suggested by William Perkins in his *Art of Prophesying*.” Holmes, “The Role of Metaphor in the Sermons of Benjamin Keach, 1640–1704,” 43.

<sup>142</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, title page.

<sup>143</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 3.

<sup>144</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 12.

<sup>145</sup>For a helpful discussion on the significance of Perkins' use of the word “prophesying,” see Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 4, *The Age of Reformation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 261-63.

## Plain Style Preaching

As Donald K. McKim has noted, “William Perkins has long been labeled the father of ‘plain style preaching.’”<sup>146</sup> This Puritan form of preaching sought to avoid both elaborate rhetorical ornamentations and ostentatious displays of human learning.<sup>147</sup> The purpose of this style of preaching was two-fold. Perkins explained that “it is a speech both simple and perspicuous fit both for the peoples understanding and to expresse the maiestie of the Spirit.”<sup>148</sup> In other words, preaching must be clear to the people and to demonstrate the power of the Spirit at work through the Word. Both Perkins and Collins cited 1 Corinthians 2:4 where Paul states his refusal to preach in the “words of man’s wisdom” in order that the power of the Spirit might be demonstrated. Perkins wrote, “*Humane wisdom* must bee concealed, whether it be in the matter of the sermon, or in the setting forth of the words . . . because the hearers ought not to ascribe their faith to the gifts of men, but to the power of Gods word.”<sup>149</sup> Collins clearly followed Perkins’ model of plain style preaching. He succinctly exhorted his fellow preachers, “Let your Speech be plain, as Paul’s was.” He went on to elaborate, “The Prophets and Apostles generally spoke in the vulgar and common Languages which the ordinary People understood: They did not only speak to the Understanding of a King upon the Throne, but to the understanding of the meanest Subject.”<sup>150</sup> Collins was obviously influenced by William Perkins and his emphasis on the “plain style” of preaching.

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<sup>146</sup>Donald K. McKim, *Ramism in William Perkins’ Theology* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1987), 126.

<sup>147</sup>For a more thorough description of “plain style preaching,” see McKim, *Ramism in William Perkins’ Theology*, 126-28. See also, Joseph A. Pipa, Jr., “Puritan Preaching,” in *The Practical Calvinist: An Introduction to the Presbyterian & Reformed Heritage*, ed. Peter A. Lillback (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 175-76. For Perkins’ own summary of his methodology, see Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 148.

<sup>148</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 135.

<sup>149</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 132.

<sup>150</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 28.

## Application of Scripture

Another key feature of Puritan preaching was its emphasis upon the application of doctrine.<sup>151</sup> Perkins defined application as “that, wherby the doctrine rightlie collected is diverssly fitted according as place, time, and person doe require.”<sup>152</sup> Perkins went on famously to divide the hearers of sermons into seven distinct categories to whom application should be made:

- I. *Unbeleevers who are both ignorant and unteachable. . . .*
- II. *Some are teachable, but yet ignorant. . . .*
- III. *Some have knowledge, but are not as yet humbled. . . .*
- III. *Some are humbled. . . .*
- V. *Some doe beleeve. . . .*
- VI. *Some are fallen. . . .*
- VII. *There is a mingled people.*<sup>153</sup>

Collins likewise asserted that “proper Uses are to be made upon each Doctrine.”<sup>154</sup> Also, like Perkins, Collins recognized the need to make a variety of applications from the doctrines in a text. In the spirit of Perkins, Collins submitted his own list of nine uses, urging ministers to allow their application to “be always natural from the Doctrine, and draw as many Inferences from it as it will bear.”<sup>155</sup> With the caution that “all Doctrines will not afford the same Uses,” Collins gave his list of applications of doctrines. But whereas Perkins outlined his types of application based on the characteristics of the hearer, Collins list of “uses” was based upon the content of the doctrine. “There is,” he

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<sup>151</sup>Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 4, *The Age of Reformation*, 268.

<sup>152</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 99.

<sup>153</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 102-122.

<sup>154</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 49.

<sup>155</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair'd*, 26.



said, “(1.) The Use of Information. (2.) Caution. (3.) Trial and Examination. (4.) Refutation. (5.) Instruction. (6.) Reprehension. (7.) Exhortation, with its Motives and Directions. (8.) Admiration. (9.) Consolation.”<sup>156</sup> Although his approach differed somewhat from that of Perkins, Collins was still well within the Puritan model of preaching in his commitment to applying the doctrines of a text to the hearers.

### **Qualifications of Ministers**

Both Perkins and Collins saw the life of the preacher as important. Perkins states that “holines of the heart, and an unblameable life” are “very necessarie” for a minister.<sup>157</sup> Collins agreed, urging churches “to choose Pastors after God’s own Heart.”<sup>158</sup> He followed this appeal with an exposition of the qualifications for pastoral ministry listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.<sup>159</sup> Under the qualification “blameless,” Collins explained that the minister “must be such a one as hath no notable Blemish or scandalous Offence in his Life, lest his Ministerial Work should want success; for it is necessary that he who requires Innocence in others should have it in himself.” He then searchingly asked, “Who will give Credit to that Man whose Doctrine and Life do not harmonize?”<sup>160</sup> Perkins likewise stated, “It is a thing execrable in the sight of God that godly speech should bee conioyned with an ungodly life.”<sup>161</sup> Perkins, like Collins, took several pages to expand on the qualities which must be present in a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>162</sup> Perkins and Collins clearly agreed that, as Perkins had solemnly written, “the

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<sup>156</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 26.

<sup>157</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 136.

<sup>158</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 53.

<sup>159</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 53-56.

<sup>160</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 53.

<sup>161</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 137.

<sup>162</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 136-143.

judgements of God remaine for wicked Ministers to tremble at.”<sup>163</sup>

### **Use of Commonplace Books**

A common place book was a collection of rhetorical sayings or quotations arranged topically for handy reference. Perkins strongly advocated that ministers construct their own such books. He instructed preachers that “those things, which in studying thou meetest with, that are necessarie and worthie to be observed, thou must put in thy tables or Common-place books, that thou maiest alwaies have in a readines both old and new.”<sup>164</sup> Perkins went on to provide detailed instructions on how to construct a common place book.<sup>165</sup> Collins apparently took this advice seriously for he too averred that “a good Common-place Book of a Man’s own making will be very necessary in a Study.”<sup>166</sup>

### **Use of Memory in Preaching**

One area where Perkins clearly influenced Collins was Perkins discussion on the use of memory in preaching. Perkins was himself deeply influenced by the methodology of the French philosopher Pierre de la Ramée<sup>167</sup> which not only provided a framework for his writings, but also served “as a memory system for the Puritan preacher.”<sup>168</sup> Perkins devoted a complete chapter in *The Arte of Prophecyng* to the topic,

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<sup>163</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 139.

<sup>164</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 28.

<sup>165</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng*, 29-30.

<sup>166</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 50.

<sup>167</sup>For more on Ramée’s influence on Perkins, see McKim, *Ramism in William Perkins’ Theology*; or for a more concise account, see Donald K. McKim, “The Functions of Ramism in William Perkins’ Theology,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 16, no. 4 (1985): 503-17. For an alternative perspective which argues that Perkins used the Ramist structure, but was not “significantly influenced” by Ramée’s content, see Paul Marshall, “William Perkins, A Ramist Theologian?,” *Baptist Review of Theology* 7, nos. 1-2 (Spring/Fall 1997): 49-68.

<sup>168</sup>McKim, *Ramism in William Perkins’ Theology*, 128.

“Of Memorie in Preaching.”<sup>169</sup> Perkins’ concern seems to have been to urge preachers to have a logical structure in mind to guide them in the recalling of their sermons. His assumption was that preachers would “speak *by heart* before the people.”<sup>170</sup> Collins, though not sharing Perkins’ Ramist background,<sup>171</sup> seized upon this statement by Perkins that “it is the received custom for Preachers to speak *by heart* before the people.”<sup>172</sup> He urged those ministers who would read his work to preach without notes: “And it is greatly desir’d that our Ministers would do as the *Scotch*, the *Dutch*, and *French* Divines, who hardly ever carry a Note into the Pulpit with them.”<sup>173</sup> To this he added his only direct citation of Perkins in the text of his book, “Mr. Perkins saith it was the Custom in his day for Ministers to use their Memories.”<sup>174</sup> This citation, along with the marginal reference mentioned earlier, provides clear evidence that Hercules Collins not only was familiar with *The Arte of Prophecy*, but also utilized some of Perkins’ arguments in his *The Temple Repair’d*.

### A Puritan Approach to Persecution

In a recent study of the period, Raymond Brown has labeled the years from 1660 to 1689 as a “Period of Repression” for English nonconformity.<sup>175</sup> During this period all Dissenters, including the Baptists, were persecuted.<sup>176</sup> As a result a rich body

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<sup>169</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecying*, 130-131.

<sup>170</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecying*, 130.

<sup>171</sup>According to Thomas Crosby, Collins “had not a learned education.” Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists* (London, 1740), 3:130. There is no evidence that Collins followed Perkins’ Ramist structure in his writings.

<sup>172</sup>Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecying*, 130.

<sup>173</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 37.

<sup>174</sup>Collins, *The Temple Repair’d*, 37.

<sup>175</sup>Raymond Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity: English Nonconformity in a Period of Repression, 1660–1689* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2012).

<sup>176</sup>In addition to Brown’s more recent study, see Gerald R. Cragg, *Puritanism in the Period of the Great Persecution 1660–1688* (Cambridge: University Press, 1957); and Michael R. Watts, *The*

of literature was produced that reflects a vibrant spirituality of persecution and suffering for the sake of the gospel. As Brown has observed, new forms of communication were opened up to those imprisoned for the gospel: “The writing of books, pamphlets, and collections of letters for distribution in printed form extended the ministry of those who had preached earlier at the cost of their freedom but were now ‘silenced’ prisoners.”<sup>177</sup> One such prisoner who made use of his time in prison to expand his ministry was Hercules Collins. His prison writings are characterized by confidence in the sovereign providence of God, a thankfulness for both physical and spiritual blessings, reflection upon the sufficiency of Christ, and a certain expectation of a future deliverance and reward. These aspects reflect a distinctly Puritan response to persecution.<sup>178</sup>

### **Counsel for the Living**

Though there is no indication of which was published first, the first work to be considered in this study is *Counsel for the Living, Occasioned from the Dead*. This work, whose primary audience was Collins’ fellow prisoners, was a discourse on Job 3:17-18. This discourse was written as a response to the deaths of two of Collins’ fellow prisoners at Newgate: Francis Bampfield<sup>179</sup> and Zachariah Ralphson.<sup>180</sup> Both apparently died in early 1684 while Collins was also imprisoned.<sup>181</sup> The scriptural text that formed the basis

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*Dissenters*, vol. 1, *From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 221-62.

<sup>177</sup>Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity*, 335.

<sup>178</sup>For an excellent exploration of how the Puritans responded to suffering in general and persecution in particular, see Brian H. Cosby, *Suffering and Sovereignty: John Flavel and the Puritans on Afflictive Providence* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012).

<sup>179</sup>For biographical details on Bampfield, see Richard L. Greaves, “Making the Laws of Christ His Only Rule’: Francis Bampfield, Sabbatarian Reformer,” in *Saints and Rebels: Seven Nonconformists in Stuart England* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), 179-210.

<sup>180</sup>Ralphson was the alias of Jeremiah Mardsen. For biographical details on Ralphson, see R. L. Greaves, “Mardsen, (alias Ralphson), Jeremiah (1624–1684),” in *BDBR*, ed. Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller (Brighton, England: Harvester Press, 1984), 2:214-15.

<sup>181</sup>Keith Durso dates the death of Bampfield as February 16, 1684. See Keith Durso, *No Armor for the Back: Baptist Prison Writings, 1600s–1700s* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 105. For a transcript of the proceedings of the trials of Ralphson and Bampfield, see *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*

for the address states regarding the eternal state, “There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor” (AV). Collins summarized these verses as consisting of three components: “first the Subjects; which are *Oppressors and Oppressed*: Secondly, The Predicate, *They shall Rest*: Thirdly, the *Receptacle*, or place of Rest, that’s the *Grave*.”<sup>182</sup> Collins focused on two aspects of “counsel” from Job 3:17-18, namely the future judgment of the persecutors and the corresponding relief of the persecuted. Collins believed that both of the ideas present in these verses were pertinent for his times. First, the persecuted needed to be encouraged by the fact that one day the persecutors would be stopped and they would experience relief, if not in this life, then in the life to come. Second, persecutors needed to realize that they would one day be judged for their mistreatment of the people of God. Collins’ primary purpose in this discourse, however, was to provide comfort to persecuted Christians. This is seen in that at the end of the book he exhorts his readers to follow the apostle Paul’s advice at the close of his discourse on the resurrection of saints in 1 Thessalonians 4 to “Comfort one another with these words.” Collins concluded his *Counsel for the Living* by exhorting his readers with these words: “While Sin, Satan, and an Unkind World is Discomforting you, do you in a lively Hope of the Resurrection of the Body, the coming of Christ, your Meeting of him, and continuing with him, cheer up and Comfort one another with these things.”<sup>183</sup>

Before turning to offer comfort for the persecuted, Collins first indicted their persecutors as godless men. Collins characterized the persecutors of Christians as wicked men who “are troublers of the *Church*.” As such they are “Strangers to Gospel Principles,

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<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org>, version 7.0 (accessed May 20, 2010), January 1684, trials of Zachariah Ralphson (t16840116–18) and Francis Bampfield (t16840116–20).

<sup>182</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 1-2.

<sup>183</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 33-34.

to a Gospel Spirit, and Gospel Teachings.”<sup>184</sup> Collins concluded that “a persecuting spirit is not of a Gospel-complexion.”<sup>185</sup> Judgment is coming for these evil-doers who “shall be made to confess their wickedness in not setting Gods People at liberty to Worship him; they shall fall into mischief, and be silent in darkness, and turned into Hell, with Nations which forget *God*.”<sup>186</sup> Note that the “liberty to Worship him” seems to be the main issue at stake for Collins. Further, Collins excoriated the persecutors elsewhere for arresting elderly men, “Men of threescore, fourscore Years of Age, hurried to Prison for nothing else but for worshipping their *God*.”<sup>187</sup> This seems to have especially raised the ire of Collins since Bampfield, one of the men whose death occasioned this sermon, was almost seventy when arrested for what would prove to be the final time.<sup>188</sup>

Saints, however, would be given rest. “The time is coming,” Collins asserted, when “God hath promised we shall no more hear the voice of the Oppressor.”<sup>189</sup> The saints “shall know no more Apprehendings . . . nor hear no more of, Take him Jaylor, keep him until he be cleared by due course of Law; we shall have no more Bolts nor Bars then on us, no more looking for the Keeper then, nor speaking to Friends through Iron-grates.”<sup>190</sup> The “rest” referred to in Job 3:17-18 was a “Rest in Sleep, being then out of all sense of care, trouble, pain, and all manner of distraction, so in like manner shall we be in the Grave.”<sup>191</sup> This was the rest that Bampfield and Ralphson had attained. However, this

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<sup>184</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 6-7.

<sup>185</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 8.

<sup>186</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 9.

<sup>187</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 15.

<sup>188</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, “The Piety of Hercules Collins (1646/7–1702),” in *Devoted to the Service of the Temple: Piety, Persecution, and Ministry in the Writings of Hercules Collins*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Steve Weaver (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007), 15.

<sup>189</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 21. Cf. also Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 31.

<sup>190</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 23.

<sup>191</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 23.

was not the only relief from persecution that Collins anticipated. His belief in the sovereign providence of God caused him to declare, “We shall none of us stay a night beyond God’s determination.”<sup>192</sup> Therefore, prisoners could be content with their circumstances “though limited to one Room, which was our Kitchin, our Cellar, our Lodging-Room, our Parlour.”<sup>193</sup> Like the apostle Paul, these persecuted believers had learned to be content in “every State.”<sup>194</sup> These prisoners believed “that place is best” where their Father had willed them to be.<sup>195</sup> Having their daily bread they confessed that “God is as good in Prison as out.”<sup>196</sup> Collins therefore exhorted his readers that God’s promises were not just to be read, but their truths trusted and experienced. “Beloved, it is one thing to Read the Promises, another thing to trust upon God by them, and experience the truth of them.”<sup>197</sup> These prisoners had experienced the promised presence and blessing of God in the prison cell and Collins wanted to exhort other persecuted Christians to trust in the promises of their loving Father. Collins reminded his readers that,

Gods Providential Dealings with his people in this world, is like Chequer-work, there is the dark, as well as the light side of Providence, the most Refin’d and best State and Condition of the best Saints are mixed here; if we have some peace, we have some trouble; if we have large Comforts one day, we may expect a great degree of trouble another; least we should be exalted above measure, we must have a thorn in the flesh now and then.<sup>198</sup>

Trusting God’s providence, Collins could confidently declare, “let men and Devils do their worst, God will in his own time loose the Prisoners.”<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>192</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 26

<sup>193</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 25.

<sup>194</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 26. Collins is citing Philippians 4:11.

<sup>195</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 25.

<sup>196</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 25.

<sup>197</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 26

<sup>198</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 28.

<sup>199</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 26.

Not only were Collins and his fellow-persecuted brothers content with their situation because of God's providence, they were also deeply thankful for God's physical and spiritual blessings while jailed. Collins called these blessings "Prison-comforts."<sup>200</sup> They blessed God for his grace that enabled them to have "as much peace and satisfaction" in their one-room prison cell as when they had complete liberty to stroll through their houses, gardens, and the homes of friends.<sup>201</sup> They were also thankful for God's daily physical provision for them. "Blessed be God we have bread for the day; as the day so our strength has been."<sup>202</sup> These prisoners, however, were most grateful for their spiritual blessings. Chief among these blessings was the presence of Christ. Of his persecuted brothers Collins could write, "How much of the Presence of Christ have they had to inable them to bear the Cross quietly, patiently, contentedly."<sup>203</sup> These saints also rejoiced that though they were bound by physical shackles, they had been set free from the bondage of sin and death. "Again, let us bless God, though we are in the Prison of man, yet that we are delivered from the Spiritual prison of Sin and Satan, into the glorious liberty of the Children of God, and out of the Kingdom of darkness into the glorious light of the Gospel."<sup>204</sup> They realized that "the darkness of a Material Prison is nothing to the darkness of a Spiritual one." In this spiritual freedom believers "may have Liberty in Bonds, light in Darkness, Peace in Trouble."<sup>205</sup> It was the spiritual blessings that enabled the suffering servants of Christ to endure their trials. Collins explained how he and his fellow prisoners had personally experienced the soul-strengthening power of

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<sup>200</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 25.

<sup>201</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 25.

<sup>202</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 25.

<sup>203</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 25.

<sup>204</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 26-27.

<sup>205</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 27-28.



spiritual fellowship with God the Father. “Communion with God by the Spirit is a good Cordial to keep up the heart from fainting in this valley of tears, until we come to our Mount of Joy, where there is no limits of Joy and Blessedness.”<sup>206</sup>

### **A Voice from the Prison**

A second work that Hercules Collins published from his prison cell was *A Voice from the Prison*. This work was an extended meditation on Revelation 3:11, where Christ admonishes the church of Philadelphia with the words, “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (KJV). Collins addressed this sermon “To the Church of God, formerly Meeting in Old-Gravel-Lane Wapping, and all who were Strangers and Foreigners, but now Fellow Citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God.” Collins drew from at least 213 passages of Scripture in his sermon, to encourage his congregation to stand firm in the face of persecution.<sup>207</sup> Collins urged his besieged flock to not abandon the cause of Christ. “*Hold fast what thou hast*, when Satan would pull thy souls good from thee; when Relations, Husband, Wife, Children call upon you, and perswade you because of danger to cease from the work of the Lord, then hold fast.”<sup>208</sup> Collins offered as a motivation for holding fast to Christ and his work that the one who stood fast would hear Christ profess to the Father on the day of judgment the words,

These are they which have continued with me in my Temptation; therefore I appoint unto you a Kingdom; therefore, because you owned me in an Evil Day.

These are the Men, Woman, People, which spoke of my Testimonies before Kings, and was not ashamed when many Cried, Crucify him and his Cause; these are the souls which came forth and declared they were on the Lords Side: These are they, Father, whose Love to me many Waters nor Floods could not quench nor drown; these are they that chose me on my own termes, with the Cross as well as the Crown; these have made Choice of me with Reproaches, Imprisonments, with Fines,

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<sup>206</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 28.

<sup>207</sup>Durso, *No Armor for the Back*, 169.

<sup>208</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 4.

Confiscation of Goods, Banishment, loss of Limbs, Life, and all, they have born all, indured all for my sake, in the greatest affliction, they kept from wavering, and the more they endured and lost for my sake, the more they loved me.<sup>209</sup>

Just as Collins had encouraged persecuted believers in his *Counsel for the Living* not to give in because of the future rest which awaited them, so too in *A Voice from the Prison* he exhorted them to live in view of their future appearance before God's judgment seat.

Collins also drew comfort from God's sovereign providence during his imprisonment. He began his written address to his "Dearly Beloved" church by expressing his confidence that God was providentially at work in his suffering for the advancement of the gospel.

Forasmuch as I am present depriv'd by my Bonds, of the Liberty of Preaching; I bless God I have the Advantage of Printing, being ready to serve the Interest of Christ in all Conditions to my poor Ability; and doubt not, but God and Interest are Served by my Confinement, as by Liberty; and am not without hopes that I shall preach as loudly, and as effectually by Imprisonment for Christ, as ever I did at Liberty; that all those who observe Gods Providential Dealings, will be able to say with me hereafter, as Holy *Paul* once said in his Bonds at *Rome*; What hath befallen me, hath tended to the furtherance of the Gospel.<sup>210</sup>

Like the apostle Paul in Philippians 1, Collins' belief in the providence of God caused him to have confidence that God would bring good out of his imprisonment. One of the goods that Collins believed could come out of the sufferings of the Baptists was that some of their adversaries might be convinced of the truth when they saw by how the Baptists patiently endured when persecuted. He argued that since "Actions are more Influential then words, and more Demonstrative of the Truth and Reality of a Person or Cause" and "as a man shall be better believed for his good works, then good words," suffering patiently would convince their persecutors.<sup>211</sup> Collins therefore encouraged his congregation,

so if we would Manifest our Integrity under a Profession, nothing will do it better

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<sup>209</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 5.

<sup>210</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 1.

<sup>211</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 1.

then your Suffering, . . . if by God called unto it; for, as a Tree is known by his fruit, so is a Christian by a Patient Wearing Christs Cross, this will and hath Convinced an Adversary, when a bare Profession will not.<sup>212</sup>

In a similar manner, in *Counsel for the Living*, Collins had maintained that God could “make people grow so much the more as their afflictions abound” for “thinking people will conclude they must be the Lords, that suffer patiently under such apparent wrong.”<sup>213</sup> Therefore, Collins encouraged his fellow believers to “see how our Churches fill, come let us go on, we have good success, we shall bring them all home at last.”<sup>214</sup> This proved to be true for Collins and his congregation: by the time of his death in 1702, as Michael A.G. Haykin has observed, Collins “was probably preaching to a congregation of roughly 700 people, which would have made his congregation one of the largest Calvinistic Baptist works in the city.”<sup>215</sup>

Collins also exhorted his readers to persevere for God has promised to reward the overcomers. He then draws on all the promises made by Christ in Revelation 2 and 3 to those who persevere through persecution. The overcomers shall “eat of the Tree in the midst of the Paradice of God”; they shall “not be hurt of the Second Death” and shall “have the hidden Manna”; “the white Stone, and a New name” will be theirs; they shall “have power over the nations, and rule them with a Rod of Iron”; and they shall be “clothed in white Rayment.” Their “name shall not be blotted out of the Book of Life, but made a Pillar in the Temple of God, and he shall go out no more.” Finally, those who overcome “shall sit with Christ on his Throne, as he overcame and sat down with the Father on his Throne.”<sup>216</sup> These shall receive “a Crown not of Gold, but Glory, not fading

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<sup>212</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 1.

<sup>213</sup>Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 26.

<sup>214</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 23.

<sup>215</sup>Haykin, “The piety of Hercules Collins (1646/7–1702),” 22.

<sup>216</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 6.

but eternal.”<sup>217</sup>

Collins knew that his readers would be able to “hold fast” if they were fully satisfied with Christ. As he put it in typical pithy Puritan fashion: “It is the Christ-finding Soul which is the Life-finding Soul.”<sup>218</sup> Collins explained that when it is said in Scripture, “Christ is all, and in all,” this means that, for the believer, “he is all, because all good is Comprehended in him, he is all in all; all in the Fullness of all, for if we have all Earthly Injoyments, and have not him, we have nothing comparatively.”<sup>219</sup> However to have Christ was to “have all Equivalently and comprehensively.”<sup>220</sup> Therefore, Collins warned that it was important to “hold fast this Christ.” The world, he declared, would try to sink believer if he or she held it too closely to his or her heart. So then, he urged his readers: “Cast away all, shake off all, rather then lose a Christ.”<sup>221</sup> Thus, “will a Believing Soul suffer the Loss of all, so he may win Christ; none but Christ, saith an illuminated Believer.”<sup>222</sup> Collins seemed to speak on behalf of the “illuminated Believer” as he thus extolled how this view of the sufficiency of Christ enabled the Christian to endure hardships in this life:

There are many good Objects in Heaven and Earth besides thee, there are Angels in Heaven, and Saints on Earth: But, what are these to thee? Heaven without thy Presence, would be no Heaven to me; a Pallace with thee, a Crown without thee, cannot satisfie me; but with thee I can be content, though in a poor Cottage with thee I am at Liberty in Bonds; Peace and Trouble; if I have thy Smiles, I can bear the worlds frowns; if I have Spiritual Liberty in my Soul, that I can ascend to thee by Faith, and have Communion with thee, thou shalt chuse my Portion for me in this World.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>217</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 6.

<sup>218</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 6.

<sup>219</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 8.

<sup>220</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 8.

<sup>221</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 18.

<sup>222</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 18.

<sup>223</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 18-19.

Some, however, were apparently being tempted to abandon the all-sufficient Christ for a respite from persecution. Collins warned that “without enduring to the End, all your Profession, your many years Prayers, all your Tears will be lost.”<sup>224</sup> Those who turned aside “mayst never more be called to be a witness for Christ.” In fact, “some have thought God hath not Lov’d them, because he hath not Exercised them this way.”<sup>225</sup> Elsewhere in this prison epistle, Collins soberly charged those who had been enabled by God’s grace to persevere not to boast in their state: “To all such as have not fallen in the Storm, who have kept their garments from Defiling, let God have the glory; thou standest by Faith, which God is Author of, be not High-minded but fear; glory not secretly, Rejoice not in thy Brothers fall.”<sup>226</sup> For those who had fallen, Collins offers a word of hope. “The Lord hath promised he will not let his Anger fall upon you, . . . therefore, Return, Return, . . . that we may look upon thee with Joy and Delight, as the Angels in Heaven do rejoice at the Returning of a Soul to God.”<sup>227</sup> Collins further exhorted his readers who had gone back on their profession to return to the arms of a merciful God: “Return to thy God from whom thou hast revolted, who stands with open Arms to receive you; return to the Church again, whom thou hast made sad by thy departing from the Truth, and humble thy self to God and them, and they will cheerfully receive thee into their fellowship.”<sup>228</sup>

Collins was sure that only those believers who had been mortifying sin daily in their lives would be enabled to endure persecution. “Let not that Man think to wear the

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<sup>224</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 3.

<sup>225</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 3.

<sup>226</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 28.

<sup>227</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 26.

<sup>228</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 26.

Cross of Persecution, that doth not first wear the Cross of Mortification.”<sup>229</sup> Collins further developed this concept.

We should inure our selves to wear the Publick Cross, by wearing it first more privately in our Houses, in our Families, in our Shops and Trades: For let not that Person think he will ever be able to part with his Houses, Lands, Liberties, for the Lord Jesus Christ, that cannot first part with a secret lust: But if we have Grace enough, to wear daily the Cross of Mortification of the old Man; you need not fear but he that giveth Grace to do the greater, will give Grace to doe the lesser; for I look upon the subduing of Corruption, a greater thing then enduring Persecution; though neither can be done as it ought, without help from Heaven.<sup>230</sup>

Those who, by the grace of God, were regularly putting to death their sins would experience an easier path in enduring physical persecution. Thus, Collins was encouraging personal holiness as the best means to prepare for persecution for the cause of Christ. Without this spiritual practice, professing believers would not be able to withstand the temptation to deny Christ in the face of persecution.

Ever the true pastor, Collins closed what amounted to a sermon from prison with a series of prayers to God. First, Collins prayed that God would purge the church of its impurities which he saw as a cause for their persecution. “God is contending with us: Let us all Banish and Expel the Achan out of our Hearts, out of our Churches, and shew our selves Zealous against Sin.”<sup>231</sup> Then, Collins asked God that his dear Son’s kingdom might come. “We should be willing to be Footstools, so Christ thereby might get upon his Throne.”<sup>232</sup>

Third, Collins prayed for “a universal spreading of the Gospel” in order that “a greater degree of Knowledge and Holiness will be in the World then ever.”<sup>233</sup> This is a

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<sup>229</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 30.

<sup>230</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 30.

<sup>231</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 32.

<sup>232</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 33.

<sup>233</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 33. For more evidence of Collins’ evangelistic passion for the lost, see the comments by John Piggott in Collins’ funeral sermon cited in chap. 2.

fascinating request, as it is often said that the seventeenth-century Puritans and Baptists were not missions-minded. For example, David W. Bebbington, the preeminent historian of Evangelicalism, argues that the emphasis on evangelism and missions is a post-Enlightenment development. He claims, “In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was rare to find a Protestant divine commending the spread of the gospel beyond the bounds of Christendom.”<sup>234</sup> Although Bebbington acknowledges some “unusual” exceptions,<sup>235</sup> he believes that because the seventeenth-century Calvinists lacked assurance they were paralyzed by self-introspection that hindered an evangelistic focus.<sup>236</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, in an article in a book interacting with Bebbington’s influential work, has questioned whether missionary zeal was as rare in the seventeenth century as Bebbington had indicated.<sup>237</sup> Clearly, Collins was not devoid of a missionary passion, but was he merely an isolated exception? One example will suffice to demonstrate that Collins’ prayer for a spread of the gospel was not unique. In a hymn composed by a contemporary of Collins, the seventeenth-century London Baptist pastor Benjamin Keach, one finds a remarkable plea for the nations.<sup>238</sup> Keach voices a desire for the gospel to shine to France, “dark *Spain*,” Italy, Asia, Africa, Egypt, Assyria, China, East India, those “Who live in wild *America*,” and “poor *Israel*.”<sup>239</sup> This prayer, which

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<sup>234</sup>David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 2005), 40.

<sup>235</sup>Bebbington cites Richard Baxter as “unusual among the Puritans in expressing an eagerness for the conversion of the nations.” Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 40.

<sup>236</sup>See Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 42-50.

<sup>237</sup>Haykin cites multiple examples demonstrating that Bebbington’s case is overstated. Michael A. G. Haykin, “Evangelicalism and the Enlightenment: A Reassessment,” in *The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 52-53.

<sup>238</sup>Benjamin Keach, *War with the Devil: Or the Young Mans Conflict with the Powers of Darkness*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Benjamin Harris, 1675), 124-28.

<sup>239</sup>Keach, *War with the Devil*, 126-28.

was published over one hundred years prior to the launch of the modern missionary movement, demonstrates that there is more continuity between Puritanism and Evangelicalism than is acknowledged by Bebbington.

Finally, Collins prayed for deliverance from the persecution. “We have no might, but our Eyes are upon thee. . . . Appear in thy strength, that the Kingdoms of the World may know that thou art God; and that there is none besides thee.”<sup>240</sup> But till then, Collins concluded, “let our Faith and Patience be lengthned out, to the coming of the Lord; till Time swallowed up in Eternity; Finite, in Infinite, Hope, in Vision; and Faith in Fruition; when God shall be the matter of our Happiness; when Fulness shall be the measure of our Happiness, and Eternity the Duration.”<sup>241</sup>

### Conclusion

As a part of the Particular Baptist movement, Collins had several direct connections to Puritanism. The Wapping Church emerged from the milieu of the Puritan/Separatist movement. Collins consciously sought to identify himself with the wider Reformed community in his *An Orthodox Catechism* and his signature appears on the Second London Confession which was adapted from documents which have codified Puritan theology—the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Savoy Declaration and Platform of Polity. Furthermore, whenever Collins differed from the Puritan establishment on ecclesiological matters, he did so based upon the Puritan regulative principle of worship.

Collins’ approach to the twin subjects of hermeneutics and homiletics reflect a Reformed/Puritan approach. Collins was influenced by the classic Puritan work on preparing and preaching sermons—*The Arte of Prophecyng* by William Perkins. In *The*

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<sup>240</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 34.

<sup>241</sup>Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 34.



*Temple Repair'd*, Collins also produced a guide for both biblical interpretation and exposition. Perkins' emphasis upon the importance of memory was specifically cited by Collins. Overall, Collins' treatment of hermeneutics and homiletics represents a Puritan approach to the subjects.

The prison writings of Hercules Collins provide a window for better understanding how the seventeenth-century English Baptist's response to persecution reflects a Puritan spirituality. The furnace of affliction revealed a deep and vibrant spirituality which was like pure gold. These golden writings are characterized by confidence in the sovereign providence of God, thankfulness for both physical and spiritual blessings, reflection upon the sufficiency of Christ, and a certain expectation of a future deliverance and reward.

## CHAPTER 5

### “BAPTIST”: HERCULES COLLINS AND BAPTIST ECCLESIOLOGY

In his 1854 study of Baptist beliefs, *Baptists the Only Thorough Religious Reformers*, John Q. Adams argued that chief among the reforms sought by Baptists has been “*The Exaltation of the Word of God above Tradition, in all Matters of Religious Duty.*”<sup>1</sup> Thus, Adams described Baptists as the only group which has consistently applied the principles of the Protestant Reformation. This was certainly the intent of the seventeenth-century English Baptists. They not only emerged historically from the Separatist congregations which had broken away from the Church of England in an attempt to further reform their churches according to the Word of God, they also developed doctrinally within the same theological framework as these reforming churches. As shown in the previous chapter, there was a basic agreement with the wider stream of Puritan/Separatist thinking. Flowing out of their commitment to the authority of Scripture, these Baptists developed their distinctive ecclesiology. Indeed all of the Baptist ecclesiological commitments can be shown to flow out of a Puritan/Separatist worldview. As such, Hercules Collins’ Baptist ecclesiology seems to have flown naturally from his orthodox and Puritan commitments examined in chapters three and four.

#### **Definition of the Church**

Collins was happy to define the church using the terms used in Reformation and Puritan documents. For example, in his hypothetical dispute between a conformist

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<sup>1</sup>John Q. Adams, *Baptists the Only Thorough Religious Reformers* (New York: Edward H. Fletcher, 1854), 47.

and nonconformist in *Some Reasons for Separation From the Communion of the Church of England* Collins admitted that he could “find but little fault” with the Reformed definition of the church contained in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England.<sup>2</sup> Collins had cited Article 19’s definition of the church: “The visible Church of Christ is a Congregation of Faithful Men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly Administred according to Christs Ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.”<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding his general agreement with this article, Collins would later dispute whether the practice of the Church of England actually conformed to this definition, especially regarding the Church being a “Congregation of Faithful Men” and whether they really administered the sacraments “according to Christs Institution.”<sup>4</sup> Collins made it clear, however, that he preferred the definition of the church put forth by the “Prince of Puritans”<sup>5</sup> John Owen in his *A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God*. In this work, Owen provided instruction about the worship and discipline of the church by means of a question and answer format. Collins cited question 19 and the answer from page 77 of the 1676 edition of Owen’s work.

Quest. *What is an instituted Church of the Gospel?*

Answ. *A Society of Persons called out of the World, or their natural worldly State, by the Administration of the Word and Spirit, into the Obedience of the Faith or the Knowledge of the Worship of God in Christ, joyned together in a Holy Bond, or by Special Agreement for the Exercise of the Communion of Saints in the due Observation of all the Ordinances of the Gospel.*<sup>6</sup>

Although, as James M. Renihan has observed, Collins would definitely have differed in

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<sup>2</sup>H[ercules] C[ollins], *Some Reasons for Separation From the Communion of the Church of England, and the Unreasonableness of Persecution Upon that Account* (London: John How, 1682), 4.

<sup>3</sup>Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation*, 4.

<sup>4</sup>Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation*, 4-8.

<sup>5</sup>So designated by biographer Andrew Thomson in his *John Owen: Prince of Puritans* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2004).

<sup>6</sup>Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation*, 4. Cf. J[ohn] Owen, *A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God, and Discipline of the Churches of the New Testament, by way of Question and Answer* (London: Nath. Ponder, 1676), 77.

his understanding of what the “due Observation of all the Ordinances of the Gospel” meant, he and Owen nevertheless shared “the same basic concept of what a church was to be.”<sup>7</sup> In short, the church was to be a company of believers, set apart from the world, united together for obedience to Christ’s ordinances. Throughout *Some Reasons for Separation*, Collins labored to show that this was, in fact, the Church of England’s own definition as codified in Article 19 of her confessional statement. On this basis, he argued that the National Church was inconsistent in recognizing sprinkled infants as members of the church.

Two years before Collins published his argument for separation from the Church of England, Collins’ convictions about the definition of the church had been obliquely expressed when he addressed his congregation, then meeting on Old Gravel Lane, as “the Church of Christ, who upon Confession of Faith have bin Baptised.”<sup>8</sup> Inherent in the definition of the church espoused by Collins was the idea of a regenerate church membership. The church was to be composed of those who have professed faith in Christ and who had then been subsequently baptized. This was the practice of the Wapping church during Collins’ ministry there. The church only admitted as members those who had been baptized as believers. At a church meeting held on December 29, 1698, Susanna Beale applied to the congregation for church membership. The minutes clarified that, although her membership had been most recently with a Congregational church,<sup>9</sup> she had been “formerly baptized by this congregation.”<sup>10</sup> On other occasions,

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<sup>7</sup>James M. Renihan, *Edification and Beauty: The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675–1705*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought 17 (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2008), 43.

<sup>8</sup>H[ercules] Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism: Being the Sum of Christian Religion, Contained in the Law and Gospel* (London, 1680), “The Preface;” James M. Renihan, *True Confessions: Baptist Documents in the Reformed Family* (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2004), 236.

<sup>9</sup>The Church in Southwark then pastored by Jonathan Owen. John Waddington, “Appendix I: The Church in Southwark,” in *The Works of John Robinson, Pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers* (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1851), 3:452. This church was the Jacob–Lathrop–Jessey church from which the first Particular Baptist churches emerged in the 1630s and 1640s. For the most helpful chronology of these events, see Jason G. Duesing, “Counted Worthy: The Life and Thought of Henry

when new members were received an indication was given in the minutes that the individual under consideration had been “formerly baptized by” with the name of the pastor who administered the baptism listed. Unlike the Church of England, the practice of the Wapping church was consistent with her confessional belief articulated in the Second London Confession of Faith, which stated that local congregations should be made up of “visible Saints” who had professed “the Faith of the Gospel, and Obedience unto God by Christ according to it.”<sup>11</sup>

### Religious Liberty

Closely related to Collins’ definition of the church was his commitment to religious liberty. As Baptist historian Thomas J. Nettles has observed, this commitment to religious liberty flowed from their prior commitment to a regenerate church, as opposed to a national one. “The doctrine of believers’ baptism coincident with the doctrine of regenerate church membership necessitates a doctrine of religious liberty with its attendant truths.”<sup>12</sup> It is no coincidence, then, that Collins’ clearest call for religious liberty is found in *Some Reasons for Separation From the Communion of the Church of England*, the work in which he most strongly argued for regenerate church membership. Baptists’ defense of religious liberty has historically been linked to their concept of a regenerate church membership, since this necessitates a separation of church and state. In the early seventeenth century, men such as John Smyth, Thomas Helwys, John Murton, and Roger Williams had been advocates for religious liberty. While Collins distanced

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Jessey, 1601–1663, Puritan Chaplain, Independent and Baptist Pastor, Millenarian Politician and Prophet” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 121-67.

<sup>10</sup>WCB, 29 December 1698.

<sup>11</sup>*A Confession of Faith, Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations Of Christians (Baptized upon Profession of their Faith) In London and the Countrey*, 3rd ed. (London: S. Bridge, 1699), 85-86; William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 285.

<sup>12</sup>Thomas J. Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity*, vol. 2, *Beginnings in America* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 19.

himself from any view of successionism which would have connected the Particular Baptists of his day with Smyth's se-baptism, he was not afraid to identify himself with their pleas for religious liberty. In the imaginary dialogue between a conformist and nonconformist in *Some Reasons for Separation*, Collins places himself clearly in the Smyth–Helwys–Murton–Williams continuum by citing some of the same sources first used in 1621 by John Murton in *A Most Humble Supplication of Many the Kings Majesties Loyall Subjects*.<sup>13</sup> These quotes were later repeated by Roger Williams in his defense of Murton against the New England Puritan John Cotton in the classic 1644 work on religious liberty, *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution*.<sup>14</sup> Collins quotes several of the same testimonies from history, including King James before Parliament in 1609 and in his *Apology to the Oath of Allegiance*, Hilary against Auxentius, and Tertullian *Ad Scapulam*.<sup>15</sup> The use of these references found in Murton and Williams likely indicates a familiarity by Collins with two of the most important early Baptist works on religious liberty. Collins, however, offered his own concise summary of the issue at stake by asserting, “That none should be compelled to worship God by a temporal Sword, but such as come willingly, and none can worship God to acceptance but such.”<sup>16</sup> Collins believed that, although dissenting churches may not have been in submission to the law of England, they were to the law of Christ, and this is what mattered for it was more important to obey God than man.

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<sup>13</sup>John Murton, *A Most Humble Supplication of Many the Kings Majesties Loyall Subjects, Ready to Testifie all civill obedience, by the oath, as the Law of this Realme requireth, and that of conscience; Who are Persecuted, onely for differing in Religion, contrary to divine and humane testimonies as followeth* (1621).

<sup>14</sup>Roger Williams, *The Bloody Tenent, of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience, discussed, in A Conference betweene Truth and Peace* (London, 1644).

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Murton, *A Most Humble Supplication of Many*, 26-30; Williams, *The Bloody Tenent*, 2-3; and Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation*, 18-20. The quotation from Tertullian, though reproduced in its entirety, is attributed merely to “one of the Ancients” in Collins. Cf. Murton, *A Most Humble Supplication of Many*, 27; Williams, *The Bloody Tenent*, 4; and Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation*, 19.

<sup>16</sup>Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation*, 20.

Christ hath given full power to his Church, as such to Preach the Gospel publickly, administer Ordinances, and to officiate in other Matters, relating to their Meeting in God's Worship; which, if we should decline at the Command of Men, this would be to regard men more than Christ, which we dare not do. *Is it better to obey God or man, judg ye?* Were the sayings of two Worthy of old, *Act. 5.*<sup>17</sup>

If ordering one's churches according to the law of Christ be considered "conceit and obstinacy," Collins declared in Luther-esque manner, "I shall so remain, unless you convince me of the contrary from Gods Word."<sup>18</sup> Collins believed that confidence in the promise of Christ in Matthew 5:10-12 to reward those persecuted for righteousness would enable him and his fellow Baptists patiently to endure without resistance when persecuted.

If you do persecute us for our Conscience, I hope God will give us that Grace which may inable us patiently to suffer for Christ's sake; for he that seeks to defend or preserve himself from Persecution, by taking up a temporal Sword; He is either one that believes there is no such Reward as is mentioned in *Matth. 5.* to those that patiently suffer, or unwise to Reject the opportunity of getting it.<sup>19</sup>

For the principle of religious liberty, which preserved the ability of freedom to worship God as conscientiously convinced by Scripture, Baptists like Hercules Collins were willing to risk their lives.

### **Congregationalism**

In his volume on the ecclesiology of English Particular Baptists in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, James M. Renihan acknowledges that there has been "some disagreement over the nature of church government as it was practiced among the Particular Baptists."<sup>20</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin argued that the First London Confession of Faith (1644) contained "a classic description of congregational church government."<sup>21</sup> Boon Sing Poh has countered that the early Baptist's polity was actually a form of

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<sup>17</sup>Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation*, 17.

<sup>18</sup>Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation*, 17.

<sup>19</sup>Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation*, 20.

<sup>20</sup>Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 63.

<sup>21</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach: Rediscovering Our English Baptist Heritage* (Leeds, England: Reformation Today Trust, 1996), 38.

Independency which included a strong idea of elder rule.<sup>22</sup> This form of church government, Poh argued, is to be distinguished from a congregationalism that places all of the authority with the congregation. Renihan has sufficiently demonstrated that Poh's assertion regarding the relationship between the congregation and elders does not fully account for the evidence found in the Baptist confessions, theological writings and church minute books of the period.<sup>23</sup> Poh's view is too simplistic. Renihan found the ecclesiologies held by Baptists during the seventeenth century to be diverse, but all with a delicate balance between pastoral and congregational authority. A survey of the minute book of the Wapping Church indicates that the reality on the ground was more complex than Poh has indicated. Not only does the minute book show what might be expected, namely that the congregation was actively involved in receiving and disciplining members, it also provides details of the sometimes complicated interactions between the congregation and pastor. In fact, the two incidents from the *Wapping Church Book* found below, which highlight the elder/congregation relationship, demonstrate that the Wapping Church had a strong view of congregational authority over against any idea of elder-rule.

### **A Dispute from Prison**

One incident from Collins' time in prison in 1684 illustrates that the pastor did not unilaterally rule the congregation.<sup>24</sup> In Collins' absence, there was a disagreement between him and the congregation as to the proper administrator of the Lord's Supper. While Collins was incarcerated, the church had taken the liberty of choosing a preaching brother to administer the Lord's Supper.<sup>25</sup> The church's main concern was that the

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<sup>22</sup>Boon Sing Poh, *The Keys of the Kingdom: A Study of the Biblical Form of Church Government* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Good News Enterprises, 1995), 16-29.

<sup>23</sup>Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 63-87.

<sup>24</sup>This imprisonment is described in more detail in chap. 2.

<sup>25</sup>The Wapping Church, like many other seventeenth-century Independent and Baptist congregations, recognized certain "gifted brethren" or lay preachers who were utilized in ways defined by



individual administering the ordinance should be “Able to Oppen the Nature of that Ordinance.”<sup>26</sup> Collins, on the other hand, believed that this function was “the Priviledge & duty of an Elder onely.” The pastor was convinced that the majority of the congregation was of his opinion and when he was released, Collins sought to persuade the church to his view on the matter. Nevertheless, he agreed to abide by the decision of the church if at the next church meeting the church disagreed with him. When the church met again in September of 1684 “it was againe Maintayned Ratified and Confirmed: by the deliberate Aprobation & Authority of the Chu: That it is Lawfull for a Bro<sup>r</sup>: whome the Chu – shall Judge Able to Oppen the Nature of that Ordinance: (Tho hee bee nott called to the office of an Elder:) To Administer the L<sup>ds</sup> Supper.”<sup>27</sup> Note the reference to the authority of the church. The Wapping Church clearly understood that the ultimate authority delegated by Christ to his church was to be invested in the congregation. Collins also understood this and, as he had promised, accepted the decision of the church on this matter.

The view held by the Wapping Church that the congregation was the ultimate locus of authority was in accordance with the Second London Confession of Faith.

Article 26, paragraph 7 states,

To each of these Churches thus gathered, according to his mind declared in his word, he hath given all that power and authority, which is in any way needful, for their carrying on that order in worship, and discipline, which he hath instituted for them to observe; with commands, and rules, for the due and right exerting, and executing of that power.<sup>28</sup>

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the individual churches. This would always include preaching on special occasions, but could also include assisting the pastor with the ordinances of the church. At least ten such men were recognized by the Wapping Church during Collins’ ministry, see section “Concern for the Coming Generation” in chapter two. For a more detailed description of this special class of unordained laymen in seventeenth-century Baptist life, see Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 107-14.

<sup>26</sup>WCB, 14 September 1684.

<sup>27</sup>WCB, 14 September 1684.

<sup>28</sup>*A Confession of Faith Put Forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country* (London: Benjamin Harris, 1677), 88; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 286-87. It should be noted, notwithstanding the Wapping Church’s functional agreement with paragraph 7 of article 26, the Church was operating in

It was the “Churches . . . gathered” that had been given authority regarding all that was necessary for worship and discipline. In this case, the Wapping Church used their authority to overrule the objections of their elder. Collins clearly did not see himself as possessing authority as an elder to overrule the congregation. This pastor merely sought to persuade through biblical argumentation. Apparently, this patient approach paid off eventually. As Michael A. G. Haykin has noted, “After his death in 1702, the church asked Richard Adams (d. 1718), the pastor of Devonshire Square Baptist Church, London, and not a gifted brother from within the congregation, to preside at the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>29</sup> It must be noted, however, that although Collins eventually won the day, his authority was not exercised compulsorily, but by means of persuasion.

### **A Charge of “Lording”**

Another incident illustrates the authority possessed by the congregation in the Wapping church. In early 1690, Collins came under attack from a member of the Wapping church by the name of Thomas Minge. He charged Collins with “Lording it over Gods Heritage.”<sup>30</sup> Since this charge deals directly with the issue of the relationship between the church and pastor’s authority, it will be useful to consider the church’s reaction to it. At the church meeting held on February 11, a meeting was scheduled for the 20<sup>th</sup> of the same month “to indeavour to end the Difference betweene bro Collings and bro Minng.”<sup>31</sup> There is no record of that meeting, but on March 6, the church held a meeting at which they disclosed their verdict on the dispute.<sup>32</sup> Their verdict was delivered

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contradiction with paragraph 8 which tasks the officers of the church with the “peculiar Administration of Ordinances.” *A Confession of Faith* (1677), 89; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 287.

<sup>29</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, “The Piety of Hercules Collins (1646/7–1702),” in *Devoted to the Service of the Temple: Piety, Persecution, and Ministry in the Writings of Hercules Collins*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Steve Weaver (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007), 17. *WCB*, 15 October 1702.

<sup>30</sup>*WCB*, 6 March 1690.

<sup>31</sup>*WCB*, 11 February 1690.

<sup>32</sup>*WCB*, 6 March 1690.

in six parts. First, they clearly rejected Minge's charge as false by calling upon him to "Acknowledge his Evill in charging bro Collins with Lording it over Gods Heritage." On this charge, the Wapping church considered Collins to have been falsely accused. Second, the church strongly resented Minge's accusation against them of being "so easie as to suffer themselves to bee Lorded over by bro Collins, further affirming they durst not say their Soules was their owne they was so Inslaved by him." It is unclear whether Minge actually said that the souls of the members of the church were enslaved by their pastor, or if the congregation believed it was implied about them by the former's accusation of Collins. Regardless, the church obviously took strong exception to this charge. Third, the church judged that Minge should "Acknowlegd his fault" in calling upon the church to replace Collins if he refused to sign the oaths and articles. Minge had apparently made public threats challenging the church to replace Collins as pastor if he would not sign the oaths of allegiance and subscribe to the articles of the Church of England.<sup>33</sup> The church asked Minge to repudiate those comments since they "seemed to have an ill tendencie [effect]." Fourth, in what appears, as Murdina MacDonald has noted, "a reasonable attempt towards reconciliation,"<sup>34</sup> Minge was asked to deny that he had acted out of personal malice against the pastor. In turn, Collins would be asked to acknowledge that he was wrong in accusing Minge of such. Evidently, this was never agreed upon as Minge appealed for arbitration to some of the other elders in London. The Wapping Church replied to their query in their April 8, 1690 church meeting by asserting their autonomy as a congregation. They sent a message to the unnamed elders that Minge

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<sup>33</sup>The Act of Toleration of 1689 had exempted dissenters from the penalties of laws originally designed to enforce religious conformity. Dissenters who took the oaths of allegiance and supremacy and subscribed to thirty-five and a half (with the exception of Articles 34, 35, 36 and a part of 20) of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England would be granted this exemption. Baptists were also exempted from Article 27 regarding "the baptism of young children." Philip Schaff, *The Progress of Religious Freedom as Shown in the History of Toleration Acts* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889), 65.

<sup>34</sup>Murdina MacDonald, "London Calvinistic Baptists 1689–1727: Tensions Within a Dissenting Community Under Toleration" (D.Phil. thesis, Regent's Park College, Oxford University, 1982), 318.

was under the church's admonition and that "they resolve to proceed with him according to the word of god."<sup>35</sup> Fifth, the church found Collins blameworthy for not better timing his charge against Minge and he was called upon to acknowledge such. Apparently, Collins had not followed the correct protocol of dealing with Minge's inflammatory charge and was asked to acknowledge such as a means of reconciliation. Last, two messengers, Hays and Bonham, were sent to summon Minge to the next church meeting and to order him to "then and there Deliver the papers or books hee redd to them, or a true copy of the same into ther hands." These "papers or books" must have been some collection of charges against Collins, and possibly the church, which Minge had compiled. These were the six conditions for reconciliation given by the church.

The Wapping Church's adamant rejection of Minge's assertion that the congregation was being "Lorded over" by Collins, along with their tersely worded response to the London elders, is another indication that the congregation viewed itself as possessing final authority in matters of church governance. They would not be domineered by their own elder or by any group of elders outside their local church. Although Collins was not guilty of what Minge had accused him, the church took this opportunity to express their distaste at being accused, even if indirectly, of being negligent in exercising the authority which they viewed as vested solely in them by Christ. The congregation believed they had the authority to adjudicate disputes in the body, even those involving an elder. Furthermore, the church did not hesitate to call upon their own beloved pastor to acknowledge his own wrong when they considered him blameworthy in any area, no matter how small.

### **Summary**

The two incidents recounted above demonstrate that the Wapping Church

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<sup>35</sup>*WCB*, 8 April 1690.

could not be considered as being elder-rule in a strict sense. Instead, the final authority of governance rested with the congregation, which was able to overrule even the pastor with a majority opinion. This evidence corresponds with the teaching of the confessional statement adopted by English Particular Baptists in 1689 and most likely represents the type of government practiced by these churches at the end of the seventeenth century.

### The Sacraments

In 1680, in just his third year as pastor of the Wapping congregation, Hercules Collins published a revision of the Heidelberg Catechism, which he titled *An Orthodox Catechism*.<sup>36</sup> Collins seems to have had at least three purposes in publishing this work. The catechism functions as a tool for pastoral instruction, as a polemic against false teaching, and as a plea for doctrinal unity. An examination of the *Orthodox Catechism* reveals that Collins has clearly modified the Heidelberg Catechism for use as a tool in fulfilling his pastoral duties. Despite these limited modifications, when comparing the two catechisms it is striking to note how very similar they are. Out of the 129 questions in the Heidelberg Catechism (the *Orthodox Catechism* is not numbered), there are only eleven substantial changes: ten questions added and one omitted. Most of the changes are what one might expect in a Baptist revision of a sixteenth-century Reformed document. The discussion of the mode and proper recipients of baptism constitutes the main area of divergence between the two catechisms. Collins, however, followed the Heidelberg Catechism in its treatment of the meaning of baptism. He also, perhaps more unexpectedly, retained unchanged the sections of the Heidelberg on the sacraments and the Lord's Supper. Although Collins was not hesitant to alter his catechism where he believed it to be warranted by Scripture, he obviously had no problem using the word

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<sup>36</sup>The complete text of the catechism can be found in Renihan, *True Confessions*, 236-87. Renihan does not include Collins' "An Appendix concerning the Ordinance of Singing." Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 75-86.

“sacrament” and retaining the definition used in the Heidelberg—language that can be traced back to authors such as Philipp Melancthon (1497–1560), John Calvin (1509–1564), and Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575). There is no scholarly consensus as to whether the Heidelberg Catechism is primarily indebted to Huldreich Zwingli (1484–1531), Melancthon, or Calvin in its description of the sacraments. Lyle D. Bierma has argued persuasively that the language of the Heidelberg on the sacraments is intentionally vague on matters on which the major leaders of the Reformation would disagree.<sup>37</sup> In other words, this language was specifically chosen to accommodate all the viewpoints of the Reformation (with the exception of the pre-Melancthonian unmodified Lutheran view). For the purpose of this chapter, it is sufficient to note that the language on the sacraments is grounded in a Reformation understanding, albeit as a consensus statement. This fact should prohibit an argument for one view to the exclusion of the others in interpreting the language of this document. Therefore, it can be assumed that whatever is said about the sacraments would have been acceptable to Zwingli, Calvin, and Melancthon. If the sacramental language was meant to cover such a variety of viewpoints among the Reformed churches, what can be said about the Baptists’ use of this language?

Baptists likely used the sacrament language for three reasons. First, they used the language because it reflected the wording found in the writings of their Reformed contemporaries. In their confessional statements and other writings they wanted to show as much solidarity as possible. In both “The Preface” to *An Orthodox Catechism* and the letter “To the Judicious and Impartial Reader” of the Second London Confession, the authors stressed their desire to express a united front with the broader Reformed

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<sup>37</sup>Lyle D. Bierma, *The Doctrine of the Sacraments in the Heidelberg Catechism: Melancthonian, Calvinist, or Zwinglian?* Studies in Reformed Theology and History, no. 4 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1999).

community.<sup>38</sup> They only differed from their esteemed Reformed brothers over matters of clear biblical conviction. Second, the Baptists sometimes seem to have retained the term “sacrament” for baptism and the Lord’s Supper to distinguish it from other matters of church order which they called “ordinances.” The term “ordinance” was used to refer to any command of Christ to his church. As will be shown in a later section of this chapter, Collins considered the laying of hands upon the newly baptized and the singing of hymns to be ordinances of Christ to the church. Nevertheless, the number of sacraments was always limited to two. In this way, Baptists were able to show their common Protestant conviction against the Roman Catholic Church which allowed for seven sacraments. Third, and most importantly, these Baptists retained the sacramental language of the wider Reformed community because it did not convey the idea that baptism and the Lord’s Supper were means of grace in and of themselves. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper always pointed to the once for all finished work of Christ which alone atones for sin. Their benefit, though real, was not salvific. The benefit of the sacraments was to bring assurance to those trusting in the work of Christ for them, which baptism and the Lord’s Supper symbolized. As evidence that the sacramental language found in both the Heidelberg Catechism and Collins’ *An Orthodox Catechism* corresponds with this interpretation, consider the following.

First, when stating the source from which the faith that alone makes us “partakers of Christ and his benefits,” both catechisms state: “From the Holy Ghost, who kindleth it in our hearts by the preaching of the Gospel, and confirmeth it by the use of the Sacraments.”<sup>39</sup> Faith alone makes one a partaker of Christ and his benefits, this faith is rekindled through preaching of the Gospel and confirmed by the sacraments. The

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<sup>38</sup>See *A Confession Of Faith, Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations Of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country* (London: Benjamin Harris, 1677), “To the Judicious and Impartial Reader;” Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 245; and Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, “The Preface;” Renihan, *True Confessions*, 237.

<sup>39</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 25; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 254.

sacraments, which are limited to baptism and the Lord's Supper, are then defined as the "sacred signs, and seals, set before our eyes, and ordained of God for this cause, that he may declare and seal by them the promise of his Gospel unto us."<sup>40</sup> Here the classic sacramental language of "sign" and "seal" is used. But what does it mean? The sign aspect is obviously stating that there is a physical portrayal of the gospel in baptism and the Lord's Supper. Next the catechism goes on to explain how the sacraments function as seals, namely to assure us "that the salvation of all of us standeth in the only sacrifice of Christ, offered for us on the Cross."<sup>41</sup> So the seal, which is often considered a "means of grace" function of the sacraments, simply provides assurance that the believer's salvation is dependent upon the finished work of Christ upon the cross.

In addition to his use of the term sacrament in his catechism, in his foundational work on baptism Collins described both baptism and the Lord's Supper as functioning "*Sacramentally and Symbolically*."<sup>42</sup> This might be one of the more difficult to understand usage of sacramental language in seventeenth-century Baptist literature. In the context, Collins is emphasizing the necessity of baptism for obedience to Christ. It follows Collins' dramatic question: "Your Redeemer was willing to be *baptized in Blood* for your Salvation, and will not you be baptized in Water, in obedience to his Commission?"<sup>43</sup> Collins follows this up by declaring,

I am perswaded, should God have commanded *some great Thing*, as was once said to *Naaman the Syrian*, it would have been done by many in the Reformed Churches before now: How much rather, when he only saith, *Go, wash and be clean?* Or, as *Ananias* unto *St. Paul*, *Arise, and wash away thy Sins*, viz. *Sacramentally and Symbolically*, as it is in the Lord's Supper. Take heed, my Friends, you are not guilty of Contempt, looking upon Christ's Ordinances as mean low and little things;

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<sup>40</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 25; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 254.

<sup>41</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 26; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 254.

<sup>42</sup>Hercules Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven, and of Divine Institution. Infants-Baptism from Earth, and Human Invention* (London, 1691), 10.

<sup>43</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 9.



for nothing is mean that hath Christ's Authority stamp'd upon it.<sup>44</sup>

This is a difficult passage since a surface reading seems to indicate that Collins, in his desire to emphasize the importance of baptism and the Lord's Supper, is describing them in a "means of grace" way. His reference to Naaman's cleansing in water and the words of Ananias to Paul seems to indicate that forgiveness of sins is in some way achieved through baptism. When the descriptor "sacramentally" is added, the meaning seems obvious, especially as it is something distinct from "symbolically." Since the parallel is made with the Lord's Supper, whatever Collins is affirming about baptism, he is affirming the same to the Lord's Supper. This much is clear, but is Collins really saying that baptism "sacramentally" washes away sins? This cannot be the case for he is on record in the *Orthodox Catechism* on this specific issue. Collins replied to the question, "*Is then the outward Baptism of Water the washing away of Sins?*", in the exact same words as the Heidelberg Catechism: "It is not; for the Blood of Christ alone cleanseth us from all Sin."<sup>45</sup> What then does Collins mean by "sacramentally"? The evidence seems to indicate that he must mean the same thing here as described in the previous paragraph, namely that the sacraments assure the hearts of believers by pointing them to the finished work of Christ which they present "symbolically." Collins does not ascribe any salvific benefit to either baptism or the Lord's Supper. As stated above, whatever it means for baptism to be a sacrament, it means the same for the Lord's Supper. Neither are to be considered as "means of grace" in and of themselves. Further evidence for this interpretation is found in the respective sections on baptism and the Lord's Supper in the *Orthodox Catechism*. Similar language is used in the catechism to describe the relationship between the physical symbols and the spiritual realities to which each sacrament points. Of baptism, the catechism states that just "as the filth of our Body is

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<sup>44</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 9-10.

<sup>45</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 33; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 259.

purged by Water, so our Sins also are purged by the Blood and Spirit of Christ, but much more to assure us by this divine Token and Pledg, that we are as verily washed from our Sins with the inward washing, as we are washed by the outward and visible Water.”<sup>46</sup>

The “outward and visible water” cleanses the “filth of our body,” but the believer’s sins are “purged by the Blood and Spirit of Christ.” The relationship between the two is of symbol and substance. Water baptism is the “divine token and pledge” that the one trusting in the sacrifice of Christ has already been spiritually cleansed from his sins just “as verily” as the water physically cleanses from filth. Likewise, on the Lord’s Supper the catechism states that when a believer partakes of the Lord’s Supper he may say, “my soul is no less assuredly fed to everlasting life with his body, which was crucified for me, and his blood, which was shed for me; than I receive and taste by the mouth of my body the bread and wine, the signs of the body and blood of our Lord, received at the hand of the minister.”<sup>47</sup> The believing soul feeds upon Christ through faith in the crucified Christ, and this spiritual feeding is just as real as the eating and drinking of the physical bread and wine. The partaker does not feed upon Christ by eating the bread and drinking the wine, but the eating of the bread and drinking of the wine symbolizes the spiritual reality that comes through faith in the finished work of Christ crucified.

Notwithstanding Collins’ willingness to use the term “sacrament” in his *An Orthodox Catechism*, the First London Confession of Faith had used the term “ordinance” exclusively in its discussion of baptism.<sup>48</sup> In Article XXXIX, baptism is described simply “as an Ordinance of the new Testament, given by Christ, to be dispensed onely upon persons professing faith, or that are Disciples, or taught, who upon

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<sup>46</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 33; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 258.

<sup>47</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 39; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 263.

<sup>48</sup>*The Confession of Faith, Of those Churches which are commonly (though falsly) called Anabaptists* (London: Matthew Simmons, 1644), XXXIX-XLI; William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 167.

a profession of faith, ought to be baptized.”<sup>49</sup> There is no salvific benefit described. Instead, the next article described baptism exclusively as a symbol of the spiritual cleansing provided by the blood of Christ, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and a guarantee of the future resurrection of those who have trusted in that finished work.

The way and manner of the dispensing of this Ordinance, the Scripture holds out to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water: it being a signe, must answer the thing signified, which are these: first, the washing the whole soule in the bloud of Christ: Secondly, that interest the Saints have in the death, burial, and resurrection; thirdly, together with a confirmation of our faith, that as certainly as the body is buried under water, and riseth againe, so certainly shall the bodies of the Saints be raised by the power of Christ, in the day of the resurrection, to reigne with Christ.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, all the articles describing God’s salvific action toward sinners do so without any reference to the ordinances/sacraments at all. The entire *ordo salutis* is complete from election through glorification without any reference to a dependence on the efficacy of the sacraments.<sup>51</sup> The closest reference to any kind of sacramental benefit is found in article XXXIV, which describes the benefits of those who are united to a visible congregation of believers.

To this Church he hath made his promises, and given the signes of his Covenant, presence, love, blessing, and protection: here are the fountains and springs of his heavenly grace continually flowing forth; thither ought all men to come, of all estates, that acknowledge him to be their Prophet, Priest, and King, to be inrolled amongst his household servants, to be under his heavenly conduct and government, to lead their lives in his walled sheepfold, and watered garden, to have communion here with the Saints, that they may be made to be partakers of their inheritance in the Kingdome of God.<sup>52</sup>

The reference to “the fountains and springs of his heavenly grace continually flowing

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<sup>49</sup>*The Confession of Faith* (1644), XXXIX; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 167.

<sup>50</sup>*The Confession of Faith* (1644), XXXIX; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 167. The 1646 edition removes the reference to “the washing the whole soule in the bloud of Christ.” *A Confession Of Faith Of seven Congregations or Churches of Christ in London, which are commonly (but unjustly) called Anabaptists*, 2nd ed. (London: Math. Simmons, 1646), XXXIX.

<sup>51</sup>See especially *The Confession of Faith* (1644), XXI-XXXII.

<sup>52</sup>*The Confession of Faith* (1644), XXXIV; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 165-66. The 1646 edition rearranges some of the material in article XXXIV placing it under article XXXV. *A Confession Of Faith of seven Congregations or Churches of Christ in London* (1646), XXXV.

forth” could be a reference to baptism and the Lord’s Supper, but it is more likely a more inclusive reference to all the ordinances of the church, which would include, but not be restricted to baptism and the Lord’s Supper. This is the most natural reading of the term “ordinances” in article XXXIII, which references “the practical injoyment of the Ordinances” to all those united together by a common profession of faith and baptism in “a company of visible Saints.”<sup>53</sup> The term “fountains and springs of his heavenly grace” at the beginning of article XXXIV seems to parallel the term “ordinances” at the end of article XXXIII. The term “ordinances” is used throughout the confession synonymously with “command.” For example, ministers are to “continue in their calling, according to Gods Ordinance.”<sup>54</sup> Likewise, ministers of the church should be financially cared for “that according to Christs Ordinance, they that preach the Gospel, should live on the Gospel.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, the “fountains and springs of his heavenly grace” is simply a reference to the spiritual benefit provided to the body of Christ living together in community under the commands of Christ.

The Second London Confession of Faith follows the First London Confession by using the term “ordinance” in the place of the Westminster Confession of Faith’s use of “sacrament.”<sup>56</sup> Stanley K. Fowler has argued that this changing of terminology in the Second London Confession does not mean that Baptists had embraced a non-sacramental view of baptism. Among the reasons that he cites for this conclusion are: “the terms ‘sacrament’ and ‘ordinance’ were often used synonymously by Baptists of that era, including signatories of this confession” and “Chapter XXX of the Second London Confession interpreted the Lord’s Supper in the Westminster tradition along the lines of a

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<sup>53</sup>*The Confession of Faith* (1644), XXXIII; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 165.

<sup>54</sup>*The Confession of Faith* (1644), XXXVII; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 166.

<sup>55</sup>*The Confession of Faith* (1644), XXXVIII; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 166-67.

<sup>56</sup>*A Confession of Faith* (1677), 96; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 245-46; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 178. The First London Confession also used the term ordinance

‘spiritual presence’ of Christ which is mediated through the Supper, i.e., the Calvinistic as opposed to the Zwinglian view.”<sup>57</sup> Fowler is correct in noting that the terms “sacrament” and “ordinance” were used interchangeably by seventeenth-century Baptists. It is simplistic, however, to contrast the Calvinistic and Zwinglian positions on the Lord’s Supper at this point.<sup>58</sup> The language used by Baptists is consistent with language used by both Calvin and Zwingli on the Supper.<sup>59</sup> Although there are certainly parallels with Calvin’s language, the language is not more expressive than Zwingli’s on the subject. Furthermore, Fowler is wrong to read an instrumental sacramentalism view into these Baptists’ language about the Lord’s Supper.<sup>60</sup> As demonstrated above, seventeenth-century Baptists used the term sacrament because of its familiarity, to distinguish between other “ordinances” of Christ, and to emphasize the assurance brought to the consciences of believers as they reflected with faith upon the finished work of Christ to which baptism and the Lord’s Supper pointed.

### **Baptism**

Within fifty years of the recovery of the practice of immersing believers, Collins would respond to Thomas Wall who had falsely accused the Baptists of receiving their baptism from John Smyth. Collins vigorously denied these charges.

Could not the Ordinance of Christ, which was lost in the Apostacy, be revived, (as the Feast of Tabernacles was, tho lost a great while) unless in such a filthy way as

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<sup>57</sup>Stanley K. Fowler, *More Than A Symbol: The British Baptist Recovery of Baptismal Sacramentalism*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought 2 (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster Press, 2002), 17.

<sup>58</sup>Princeton theologian Charles Hodge observed that there was “no essential difference . . . between the Churches of Zurich and those of Geneva.” Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 3:626.

<sup>59</sup>For the similarities between Calvin and Zwingli on the Supper, see Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:626-31.

<sup>60</sup>James Leo Garrett has pointed out that “the relative silence of the seventeenth-century confessions and the fact that only three authors offer strong evidence of instrumental sacramentalism” makes Fowler’s position untenable. James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 543.

you falsly assert, viz. that *the English Baptists received their Baptism from Mr. John Smith*? It is absolutely untrue, it being well known, by some yet alive, how false this Assertion is; and if *J.W.* will but give a meeting to any of us, and bring whom he pleaseth with him, we shall sufficiently shew the Falsity of what is affirmed by him in this Matter, and in many other things he hath unchristianly asserted.<sup>61</sup>

Collins was certainly in a position to know the origins of baptism among the Particular Baptists since he was a personal acquaintance of three important figures who were actively involved in the early 1640s when immersion was introduced in London. Not only was he a friend of William Kiffin and Hanserd Knollys,<sup>62</sup> he was also at the very least an acquaintance of Richard Blunt, with whom Collins was arrested along with thirteen others in June of 1670 for assembling together unlawfully at a conventicle.<sup>63</sup> Blunt is an enigmatic figure in Baptist history. He figures prominently in the so-called “Kiffin Manuscript,”<sup>64</sup> which provides most of the known details about the origins of Particular Baptists in England in the 1640s, but little else is known of him. Blunt was allegedly sent to the Netherlands to inquire about the practice of immersion. He returned with letters from a teacher identified as “Io: Batte.” Upon his return, he baptized a Mr. Blackrock and then together they baptized the others.<sup>65</sup> This event in January of 1642 not only marks the beginning of Particular Baptist life in England, it also constitutes the start of the very church of which Collins would become pastor in 1677. Blunt’s presence with Collins at the conventicle in 1670, nearly thirty years after his historic involvement in the re-

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<sup>61</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 115.

<sup>62</sup>These relationships are explored in more detail in chapter two.

<sup>63</sup>Sessions of the Peace Rolls for 27 June 1670–MJ/SR/1389.

<sup>64</sup>The text of the “Kiffin Manuscript” is transcribed in Champlin Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research (1550–1641)* (Cambridge: University Press, 1912), 2:302-5.

<sup>65</sup>For a detailed analysis of the evidence for and against this trip, see Stephen Wright, *The Early English Baptists, 1603–1649* (Woodbridge, England: The Boydell Press, 2006), 75-110; and Jason G. Duesing, “Counted Worthy: The Life and Thought of Henry Jessey, 1601–1663, Puritan Chaplain, Independent and Baptist Pastor, Millenarian Politician and Prophet” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 141-51. Wright argues against the trip to the Netherlands, proposing instead that Blunt met with an Englishman named Timothy Batte. Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, 85-89. Duesing counters that while “Wright puts forth a compelling case,” his wish for “Jo” to read “Tmo,” for “Timothy” is a “greater stretch” than earlier attempts to identify “Io: Batte” with the Dutchman John Batten. Duesing, “Counted Worthy,” 146n87.

introduction of immersion in England, is significant in demonstrating the young Collins' connections with the previous generation of Baptist leaders.

Collins not only had clear connections with the first generation of Particular Baptist leaders, he was also the third pastor of the body that first adopted immersion in 1642. Each of the first three pastors of the Wapping church published works on baptism. John Spilsbury (1593–c. 1662/1668)<sup>66</sup> was the first pastor of this congregation. According to B. R. White, Spilsbury was the first of the Particular Baptists to “preach and practice believer’s baptism” and his *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme* (1643) was “the first known publication on the subject by a Calvinist.”<sup>67</sup> Spilsbury was one of the original signers, and perhaps the author, of the First London Confession of Faith (1644).<sup>68</sup> Spilsbury’s work on baptism was largely apologetic, the majority of it being a response to objections made by paedobaptists who saw believer’s baptism as a novel practice. In 1652, Spilsbury published a second edition of his treatise on baptism, which was “corrected and enlarged by the Author.”<sup>69</sup> This is the edition that will be referenced for the analysis below. John Norcott (1621–1676) was the second pastor of the Wapping congregation, having followed John Spilsbury upon his death in either 1662 or 1668.<sup>70</sup> Norcott contributed to the seventeenth-century literature on

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<sup>66</sup>For a biographical and theological sketch of Spilsbury, see James M. Renihan, “John Spilsbury (1593–c. 1662/1668),” in *The British Particular Baptists: 1638–1910*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 1998), 1:21-37; and Thomas J. Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity*, vol. 1, *Beginnings in Britain* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 113-27.

<sup>67</sup>B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1996), 72. The General Baptist Edward Barber published on the subject in 1641. Edward Barber, *A Small Treatise of Baptisme, or, Dipping* (n.p., 1641).

<sup>68</sup>James Renihan states that “several authors hypothesize” that Spilsbury was either the author or co-author of the *First London Confession*. He cites A. C. Underwood, R. L. Greaves, and W. L. Lumpkin as supporting this view. Renihan, “John Spilsbury (1593–c. 1662/1668),” 24.

<sup>69</sup>John Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptism* (London: Henry Hills, 1652), title page.

<sup>70</sup>The date of Spilsbury’s death is unknown. According to Renihan, it could have been “as early as 1662 or as late as 1668.” Renihan, “John Spilsbury (1593–c. 1662/1668),” 25.

baptism with his *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully, According to the Word of God* (1672). This was the only work which he ever published, but it had a long life, being reprinted ten times.<sup>71</sup> The last edition was published over two hundred years after the first printing and was “Corrected and Somewhat Altered” by Charles Haddon Spurgeon.<sup>72</sup> Whereas Spilsbury’s work was largely a response to paedobaptist critiques, Norcott’s work was a much more positive biblical treatment of the subject of baptism. For the purpose of this chapter, the second edition of *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully* (1675) which was published in Norcott’s lifetime will be the edition used. Collins served as the third pastor of this historic church. Collins’ principal work on baptism was titled *Believers-Baptism from Heaven, and of Divine Institution. Infants-Baptism from Earth, and Human Invention* (1691) and at 139 pages it is the largest of the three works examined in this chapter, more than double the size of either Spilsbury or Norcott’s works. Since these three men advanced very similar arguments for the immersion of believers, their arguments will be examined together in what follows.

These early English Baptists argued for believer’s baptism by immersion based upon what Spilsbury would call “the plain testimony of Scripture.”<sup>73</sup> Spilsbury rejected infant baptism, since “there is neither command, or Example in all the New Testament for such practise.”<sup>74</sup> Similarly, Collins rejected infant baptism because, as he said, “We have neither precept nor example for that practice in all the Book of God.”<sup>75</sup> Likewise John Norcott would argue that sprinkling could not serve as a substitute for dipping, because

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<sup>71</sup>1675, 1694, 1700, 1709, 1721, 1722, 1723, 1740, 1801, and 1878.

<sup>72</sup>John Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully, According to the Word of God* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1878), title page.

<sup>73</sup>Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptism*, “The Epistle to the Reader.”

<sup>74</sup>Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptism*, “The Epistle to the Reader.”

<sup>75</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 26-27; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 255.



“God is a jealous God, and stands upon small things in matters of Worship; ‘tis likely Nadab and Abihu thought, if they put fire in the Censer, it might serve, though it were not fire from the Altar; but God calls it strange fire, and therefore he burns them with strange fire, Leviticus 10:2-3.”<sup>76</sup> In response to the possible question “Why Sprinkling will not do as well as Dipping?,” Collins provided five reasons:

1. Because that is another thing than Christ hath commanded; and ‘tis high presumption to change God’s Ordinances. . . .
2. In so doing, we lose the End of the Ordinance, which as aforesaid, is to shew forth the Death and Resurrection of Christ.
3. We must keep the Ordinances as they were delivered unto us; as Moses was to make all things according to the Pattern shewed him in the Mount.
4. God is a Jealous God and stands upon small things in Matters of Worship: Had Moses and Aaron but lifted up a Tool upon the Altar of ruff Stone to beautify it, they would have polluted it, because contrary to the Command.
5. This hath no likeness to the holy Examples of Christ and his Apostles.<sup>77</sup>

Beside the above text Collins added a marginal note more directly referencing the regulative principle.

‘Tis a known Maxim, to practice anything in the Worship of God, as an Ordinance of his, without an Institution, ought to be esteemed Will-worship & Idolatry. And that there is a necessity for Scripture-Authority to warrant every Ordinance and Practice in Divine Worship, is owned by Luther, Austin, Calvin, Basil, Theoph. Tertul, Mr. Ball; and in the 6<sup>th</sup> Article of the Church of England; also Bellarmine.<sup>78</sup>

For Collins then, it was the regulative principle of worship which required the rejection of infant baptism. These Baptist pastors sought to apply the regulative principle more thoroughly than the Reformed/Puritan traditions had done.<sup>79</sup>

Given the strong views on baptism held by the first three pastors of the

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<sup>76</sup>John Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly & Faithfully, According to the Word of God* (London, 1672), 19.

<sup>77</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 19-20.

<sup>78</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 20.

<sup>79</sup>See the chap. 4 for a summary of the classic statements of the regulative principle from Reformed and Puritan authors.

Wapping church and these early Baptists commitment to holding members accountable to the teaching of Scripture, it should come as no surprise that church members were often disciplined for having their infants sprinkled. On October 2, 1677, Charles Cheney was excommunicated for (among other things) “the grand Error of the Baptisme of Infants.”<sup>80</sup> The next month, the *Wapping Church Book* records that Elizabeth Durbon “was sharply Reproved for the Sin of Sprinkling her Infant Contrary to the Rules of Christ and the Gospel.”<sup>81</sup> Durbon was not excommunicated because when confronted with her “evill” act, she repented of it and “fell under it before them for doing that which was Contrary to the Command of Christ and the practice of the Apostles and the Constitution of this Church and her own Covenant.” Likewise, in September of 1685, a Brother Hemings was brought before the church where he “did there acknowledge his Evele” in the sprinkling of his child.<sup>82</sup> It was even considered a serious matter merely to attend an infant’s sprinkling. This was apparently considered an endorsement of an unbiblical and disobedient practice. In March of 1685, a Sister Leader was “sharply Reproved” by the church for being present at an infant’s sprinkling. No further action was taken against Sister Leader since “she did Acknowledg her falt therin.”<sup>83</sup> This was apparently an ongoing issue, as nearly a decade later a word of “Advice” was given by the church to midwives who were church members and might be asked to assist in the sprinkling of an infant.

At the same time this Advice was given to the Midwives in our congregation that they be not concerned Nither in the holding the Child at Sprinekling nor at prayers Nor doe not promote nor Incurrige Godfathers nor Godmothers as so Called but that they beare such a testimony for the truthes they ownes against the contrary practise as that they may not defile ther Conscience and as may be an honor to the profession

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<sup>80</sup>*WCB*, 2 October 1677. The other charges against Cheney were “neglect of his Duty in the Church” and “breaking his word.”

<sup>81</sup>*WCB*, 13 November 1677.

<sup>82</sup>*WCB*, 22 September 1685.

<sup>83</sup>*WCB*, 17 March 1685.

of Christ that they makes of him.<sup>84</sup>

This entry helps to explain why the church would discipline members who attended an infant sprinkling. These Baptist midwives were instructed not to participate in the ceremony, nor in any way to encourage the process. Their presence would be a condoning of the practice. By not participating, these women would be able to bear witness to their own beliefs as to the proper nature of baptism. In so doing, they would both guarantee a clear conscience and live up to their own profession of faith in Christ. What led to such strong convictions by these early Baptists on the mode and proper recipients of baptism? We turn now to the biblical reasoning for their position on this issue.

Clearly, the mode and meaning of baptism were of great importance to seventeenth-century Baptists. In general, these Baptists argued in three different ways for believers baptism by immersion based upon what John Spilsbury would call “the plain testimony of Scripture.”<sup>85</sup> English Baptists in the seventeenth century used three main types of arguments from Scripture. First, they argued from the meaning of the Greek word *baptizō*. Second, they argued from Great Commission texts. Third, they argued from New Testament example texts.

### **Definition of “Baptism”**

The *First London Confession* of 1644, in the formation of which Spilsbury played a large role, “the way and manner” of baptism is said to be “dipping or plunging the whole body under water.”<sup>86</sup> This is said to be the case because the “signe, must

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<sup>84</sup>WCB, 18 September 1694.

<sup>85</sup>Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptism*, “The Epistle to the Reader.”

<sup>86</sup>*The Confession of Faith* (1644), XXXIX; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 167.

answer the thing signified.”<sup>87</sup> The thing signified was threefold. Namely, the “washing of the whole soule in the bloud of Christ”; “the death, buriall, and resurrection” of Christ; and the future physical resurrection of believers.<sup>88</sup> In his “Epistle to the Reader” in his treatise on baptism, Spilisbury noted that the word *baptizō*, translated “baptism” means “to dipp, wash, or to plunge one into the water.”<sup>89</sup> This, he says, “is the judgement of the most and best learned in the land,” as well as seen “in all the Common Dictionaries.”<sup>90</sup> This was clearly foundational for Spilisbury. For him, the word *baptizō* simply meant immersion. Thus, any attempt to deny this doctrine was a rejection of “the plain testimony of Scripture.”<sup>91</sup> Similarly, in the General Baptist Edward Barber’s *A Small Treatise of Baptisme, or, Dipping*, one is hard pressed to even find the word “baptism” after the title page. In the subsequent pages, Barber virtually always substitutes the word “dipping,” or a variant, for “baptism.”<sup>92</sup> For these first two Baptist defenders of immersion, the meaning of the word *baptizō* was an important part of their argument for baptism by immersion.

Both Norcott and Collins devoted entire chapters to their belief “that baptism is dipping.”<sup>93</sup> Norcott plainly asserted, “The Greek βαπτίζω” means “to plunge, to overwhelm.”<sup>94</sup> “Thus,” he said, “Christ was plunged in water.”<sup>95</sup> Further, they “did

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<sup>87</sup>*The Confession of Faith* (1644), XXXIX; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 167.

<sup>88</sup>*The Confession of Faith* (1644), XXXIX; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 167.

<sup>89</sup>Spilisbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptism*, “The Epistle to the Reader.”

<sup>90</sup>Spilisbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptism*, “The Epistle to the Reader.”

<sup>91</sup>Spilisbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptism*, “The Epistle to the Reader.”

<sup>92</sup>For example, Matt. 28:19 is rendered, “Goe and make Disciples, all Nations, dipping them in the Name of the Father, and of the Sonne, and of the Holy Spirit.” Barber, *A Small Treatise of Baptisme*, 1.

<sup>93</sup>Chapter 4 of Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully*, 16-21; and chapter 3 of Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 11-20.

<sup>94</sup>Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully*, 16.

baptize in Rivers.”<sup>96</sup> Therefore, he asked, “what need it be in a River, and where there was much water, would not a little in a Bason serve to sprinkle the face?”<sup>97</sup> Norcott went on to show that the truths which baptism signifies only makes sense if baptism is a complete plunging underneath the water. “Baptism signifies the Burial of Christ.” Norcott therefore concluded: “Now we do not reckon a man buried, when a little earth is sprinkled on his face: but he is buried when covered, thus you are buried in Baptism.”<sup>98</sup> Likewise, “Christ’s sufferings are called a Baptism” and “when Christ suffered he was plunged into pains; . . . from head to foot in pain.”<sup>99</sup> Norcott summarized his findings:

Thus you see the place where they were Baptized, was a River, their Action, they went down into the Water; then being in the Water, they were Baptized; this was where was much Water. The end was to shew forth Christs Burial. Now if there be not a Burial under water to shew Christs Burial, the great end of the Ordinance is lost, but we are Buried by Baptism.”<sup>100</sup>

As with Spilsbury, so too for Norcott, the word baptism means dipping or immersion.

Hercules Collins began his chapter on “What Baptism is”<sup>101</sup> by first stating what baptism is not. Collins bluntly declared that baptism is “not sprinkling, dropping, or pouring of Water.”<sup>102</sup> Instead, “Baptism is an external washing, plunging or dipping a profest Believer, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”<sup>103</sup> The Second London Confession of Faith, of which Collins was a principal signer, states equally as bluntly that, “Immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary to the due

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<sup>95</sup>Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully*, 16.

<sup>96</sup>Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully*, 17.

<sup>97</sup>Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully*, 17.

<sup>98</sup>Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully*, 17.

<sup>99</sup>Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully*, 17.

<sup>100</sup>Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully*, 19.

<sup>101</sup>Chapter 3, also labeled “That Baptism is dipping” in the “The Contents.”

<sup>102</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 11.

<sup>103</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 11.

administration of this ordinance.”<sup>104</sup>

After stating his conviction that baptism is immersion, Collins proceeds to set out the evidence for his belief. The first evidence that baptism means immersion is taken from the fact that “the word Baptize in the New Testament is taken from the word Dip in the Old.”<sup>105</sup> In other words, the Hebrew equivalent (*tabal*) of the word translated “baptize” (*baptizō*) in the New Testament is always translated “dip” in the Old Testament. This Hebrew word is translated as *baptizō* in the Septuagint. A second evidence is that the “end of the Ordinance sheweth Baptism to be dipping.”<sup>106</sup> The end to which Collins is referring is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. There is, Collins said, “no manner of similitude and likeness between Christ’s Death and Burial, with sprinkling a little Water on the Face.” However, “burying in the Water is as lively a Similitude and Likeness of Jesus Christ’s Death., breaking Bread, and pouring out the Wine is at the Lord’s Table.”<sup>107</sup> Collins further argued that baptism is immersion by a series of examples and metaphors in a similar manner as Norcott had done previously.<sup>108</sup> Collins, therefore, concludes very similarly: “Thus you see the Places where the Apostles Baptized, were in Rivers, and where was much Water: You see their Act and Posture, they went down into the Water; you see their End was, to exhibit and shew forth Christ’s Death, Burial, and Resurrection.”<sup>109</sup>

### **Great Commission Texts**

The main way in which the early Baptists argued from Great Commission texts

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<sup>104</sup>*A Confession Of Faith* (1677), 98; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 291.

<sup>105</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 12.

<sup>106</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 15.

<sup>107</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 15.

<sup>108</sup>Although Collins rearranges and expands upon Norcott’s work on baptism, the dependence is obvious in certain places, such as here.

<sup>109</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 19.

was in regard to the proper order of faith and baptism. Just as preaching the gospel precedes baptism in the Great Commission texts, so too belief in the gospel on the part of the individual should precede their own baptism. Since infants are incapable of understanding and responding to the gospel message in faith, they are not fit, or “lawfull”, subjects for baptism. John Spilsbury argues that if Matthew 28:19 were “well considered, and rightly understood” it “would stop mens mouthes for ever having a word to say for the baptizing of infants.”<sup>110</sup> This is because “here teaching goes before baptizing, and presupposeth understanding and faith in that which is taught.”<sup>111</sup> Spilsbury then cites Mark 16:15-16 and declares that these verses “clearly manifest that infants are not the subjects of baptism appointed by Christ; for all the external benefits and privileges of the gospel are given onely to external and visible faith.”<sup>112</sup> Elsewhere, Spilsbury even more forcefully averred,

God hath ordained in the Gospel preaching and believing to go before baptizing, as Matt. 28:18, with Mark 16:15-16. And that way or order which hath not God of its Author, and found in the records of Christ, with his image and superscription upon it, let us say as sometime he did, “Give to Caesar that which is Caesars, and to God that which is Gods;” so say I, give to Antichrist his baptizing of infants, and to Christ his baptizing of believers.<sup>113</sup>

In this way Spilsbury used the Great Commission texts to show that faith in the message of the gospel must precede baptism, which makes infant baptism impossible since infants are incapable of faith.

Both John Norcott and Hercules Collins contained detailed expositions of a Great Commission text as the starting point for their works on baptism. Norcott lays a foundation for his rejection of infant baptism by an exposition of Matthew 28:18-20 in which he breaks down the text into eight sections. In his second chapter, Norcott makes

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<sup>110</sup>Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning The Lawfull Subject of Baptism*, 46.

<sup>111</sup>Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning The Lawfull Subject of Baptism*, 46.

<sup>112</sup>Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning The Lawfull Subject of Baptism*, 46.

<sup>113</sup>Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning The Lawfull Subject of Baptism*, 46.

repeated references to the order of teaching and then baptizing without making the application to infant baptism. He simply paraphrases the words of Scripture as “when you have taught them, then baptize them.”<sup>114</sup> In his concluding considerations, Norcott urges his readers to consider “whether it be safe to admit of Consequences against an express Rule, Matt. 28:19, ‘Teach and baptize’.”<sup>115</sup> Clearly, Norcott saw this divine order as forming “an express Rule” that forbids the practice of infant baptism.

Whereas Norcott appeals to the Great Commission as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20, Collins began his discourse on water baptism with the parallel text of Mark 16:16. The text simply states, “He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.” Collins very specifically spelled out the significance of this text. “Here is first Faith,” he writes, “then Baptism.”<sup>116</sup> Collins then explained the implication of this order.

Therefore to baptize before there be any appearance of Faith, is directly contrary unto this unerring standing Rule, and doth reflect upon our Lord and Lawgiver, as if he spoke rashly and inconsiderately, putting that first which should be last, and that last which should be first.<sup>117</sup>

Collins then proceeded to extrapolate two doctrines from the Great Commission.

Doctrine 1: “It’s the unalterable Will of Jesus Christ, who is King and Law-giver to his Gospel-Church, that all Persons believe before they are baptized.”<sup>118</sup> Doctrine 2: “It’s the indispensable Duty of all true Believers to be Baptized.”<sup>119</sup> Collins called baptism an indispensable duty for believers, “because I know of no Place where our Lord hath left this to the Liberty of Believers to do it, or leave it undone, as best pleaseth them.”<sup>120</sup> For

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<sup>114</sup>Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully*, 10.

<sup>115</sup>Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully*, 58.

<sup>116</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 8.

<sup>117</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 8.

<sup>118</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 9.

<sup>119</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 9.

<sup>120</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 9.



early Baptists such as Collins, this was a serious issue. They were not Baptists by default, but by clear conviction. Only one of such deep conviction on this matter could appeal so fervently as Collins did directly to his readers.

Therefore if this be your Lord and Savior's Will, Believers, pray obey him. In your Prayers you desire you may be enabled to do his Will on Earth as it is in Heaven: This is one part of his Divine Will; Your Redeemer was willing to be baptized in Blood for your Salvation, and will not you be baptized in Water, in obedience to his Commission?<sup>121</sup>

For these men, baptism was not optional for the believer. They argued just as strongly for the necessity of believers being baptized as they did against the baptism of infants. Their basic hermeneutic required them to do so.

### **New Testament Example Texts**

Another type of biblical text used by the early Baptists in their defense of believer's baptism were those providing examples of baptisms performed in the New Testament. These examples include both the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, but also the numerous examples of baptisms in the book of Acts. Most of the arguments based on these examples are short and to the point, but they are sprinkled throughout these texts and deserve some treatment here.

John Norcott began his treatise on baptism in the very first chapter with an account of the baptism of Christ in the river of Jordan. Norcott used the baptism of Jesus to demonstrate that baptism is dipping. The fact that Matthew 3:4 says that Jesus came "up out of the water" proved that Jesus was immersed beneath the water. Else, "had he not been down, 'twould not have bin said he went up."<sup>122</sup> "We never say," Norcott continued, "one goes out of the house when he never was in. So Christ could not be said to come out of the water, had he not been in."<sup>123</sup> Likewise, Hercules Collins cited John

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<sup>121</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 9.

<sup>122</sup>Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully*, 5.

<sup>123</sup>Norcott, *Baptism Discovered Plainly and Faithfully*, 5.

3:23 which states, “John the Baptist baptized in Enon, because there was much water there.” To which Collins responded, “if Sprinkling would have done, there had been no need of much Water nor Rivers.”<sup>124</sup> Collins elsewhere argued along with Norcott that if Jesus went up out of the water, “common sense signifies” that “He first went down . . . into the water.”<sup>125</sup> This is further seen in the examples from the times of the apostles. The evidence was succinctly summarized by Collins. “Thus you see the Places where the Apostles Baptized, were in Rivers, and where was much Water: You see their Act and Posture, they went down into the Water.”<sup>126</sup>

In addition to the pithy references referenced above, both Norcott and Collins each devoted an entire chapter to a listing of Scriptures, without commentary, that mention baptism.<sup>127</sup> Many of these were further examples of individuals baptized as believers. These Baptist pastors appealed to the examples of the baptism administered by John, the baptism of Jesus, and the numerous examples of baptism in the book of Acts. In these chapters, key texts were merely listed, the argument seemingly being that the overwhelming number of such texts should convince their paedobaptist adversaries. These texts were used both to demonstrate the proper mode of baptism: immersion, and the proper order of baptism: faith preceding water baptism.

## Summary

For Spilsbury, Norcott and Collins, it was enough that the word *baptizō* meant to dip, plunge, or immerse. The Great Commission texts mandated the proper order of faith and repentance before baptism. The numerous examples of baptisms described in

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<sup>124</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 16.

<sup>125</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 18.

<sup>126</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 19.

<sup>127</sup>Norcott, *Baptist Discovered Plainly and Faithfully*, 48-51; and, Collins, *Believer's Baptism from Heaven*, 72-76.

the New Testament further confirmed both the mode and proper order of baptism. This was “the plain testimony of Scripture.”<sup>128</sup> Any other mode was a “human invention” and therefore was rebellion against Christ, the Lord of the church. Collins spoke for all the early Baptists when he gave the following reason for writing his book on baptism. His stated purpose was

to display this Sacrament in its apostolic primitive purity, free from the adulterations of men, a sin which God charged upon the learned Jews, that they made void the commands of God by their traditions. O that none of the learned among the Gentiles, especially those of the Reformed churches, may be charged with setting up men’s inventions in the room of Christ’s institutions.<sup>129</sup>

Collins clearly saw the Baptist position as consistent with Reformed thought and correspondingly believed that “the Reformed churches” which practiced infant baptism were being inconsistent with their own self-proclaimed commitment to the regulative principle of worship. Thus, even at this key point of difference between Baptists and their Puritan counterparts, the Baptist position flowed out of an underlying commitment to the Puritan regulative principle of worship.

### **The Lord’s Supper**

The eminent Baptist historian H. Leon McBeth was certainly correct in asserting that in the seventeenth century the “major controversy among Baptists concerned not the meaning of the Lord’s Supper but eligibility to participate.”<sup>130</sup> Since most discussions about the Lord’s Supper in seventeenth-century Baptist life centered on who were the proper recipients rather than on the meaning of the Supper, there is

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<sup>128</sup>Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptism*, “The Epistle to the Reader.”

<sup>129</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 7.

<sup>130</sup>H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 81. Consider, for example, the debate between William Kiffin and John Bunyan in the 1670s and 1680s. For more on this controversy, see Michael A. G. Haykin and C. Jeffrey Robinson, “Particular Baptist Debates about Communion and Hymn-Singing,” in *Drawn into Controversie’: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates Within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and C. Jeffrey Robinson (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 285-96. The position of Collins and the Wapping Church on this important issue will be explored below.

comparatively much less data on Baptist views of the meaning of the Supper than one might suspect. For example, the earliest edition of the first confession of the Particular Baptists, the First London Confession of 1644, does not even mention the Lord's Supper at all. The 1646 edition added the words "and after to partake of the Lord's Supper" to the end of Article XXXIX which stated: "That Baptisme is an Ordinance of the new Testament, given by Christ, to be dispensed onely upon persons professing faith, or that are Disciples, or taught, who upon a profession of faith, ought to be baptized."<sup>131</sup> This lack of attention to the Lord's Supper was most likely, as James M. Renihan has suggested, because it was not a matter of controversy among the Particular Baptists at this time. They assumed, rather than argued for, the meaning of the Lord's Supper. They most likely assumed a similar view of the Lord's Supper as "the Independents with whom they were companions."<sup>132</sup> Preliminary evidence that these early Baptists shared a common view of the meaning of the Lord's Supper with the Independents and Presbyterians is indicated by a comparison of their respective confessions of faith. The Savoy Declaration issued by the Independents in 1658 adopted unchanged the following statement from the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647.

Worthy receivers outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death; the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally in, with, or under the bread or wine; yet as really, but spiritually present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.<sup>133</sup>

This same statement in essence was later officially adopted by the London Assembly of

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<sup>131</sup>Cf. *The Confession of Faith* (1644), XXXIX; *A Confession Of Faith Of seven Congregations or Churches of Christ in London* (1646), XXXIX. See also Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 167.

<sup>132</sup>Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 142.

<sup>133</sup>Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*, vol. 3, *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds, with Translations* (1931; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 666.

Particular Baptists in 1689,<sup>134</sup> but in the early seventeenth century their view of the Lord's Supper is only implied through the circumstantial evidence. By the late seventeenth century, however, the Particular Baptists in London had begun to articulate more clearly their beliefs regarding the Lord's Supper. These views can be seen most clearly in two catechisms produced by two Collinses (Hercules and William) and in the Second London Confession of Faith. After exploring these more representative sources, an examination will be undertaken of some of the writings of three of the more prominent Particular Baptist pastors in the latter half of seventeenth-century England. Before turning to the historical evidence, however, some important terms for this discussion need to be defined.

### **Defining Terms**

Of the four major views on the Lord's Supper (transubstantiation, consubstantiation, spiritual presence, and memorial), only two have been considered as viable options for Baptists historically (spiritual presence and memorial). Millard J. Erickson has described the spiritual presence view as "the Calvinistic or Reformed view."<sup>135</sup> He asserts that this view "holds that Christ is present in the Lord's Supper but not physically or bodily. Rather his presence in the sacrament is spiritual or dynamic."<sup>136</sup> Participants in the Lord's Supper "are spiritually nourished by partaking of the bread and the wine. The Holy Spirit brings them into closer connection with the person of Christ, the living head of the church and the source of spiritual vitality."<sup>137</sup> According to this view, Christ is spiritually present and believers are spiritually nourished in the Lord's

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<sup>134</sup>The only difference being the Baptist confession omits the phrase "in, with, or under the bread or wine; yet as really." Renihan, *True Confessions*, 185. This omission is most likely because the Lutheran view refuted by this phraseology was not really a threat in the English Particular Baptist community.

<sup>135</sup>Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 1126.

<sup>136</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1127.

Supper. In the Baptist expression of this view, believers receive spiritual nourishment and assurance of Christ's presence through their remembrance in faith of the once for all work of Christ on the cross. In contradistinction to the spiritual presence view, Erickson characterizes the memorial view, which he labels as the Zwinglian view, as "merely a commemoration" and as "essentially a commemoration of Christ's death."<sup>138</sup> This view emphasizes the importance of "bringing to mind the death of Christ and its efficacy on behalf of the believer."<sup>139</sup> Though this is also important to the spiritual view, the distinction is the lack of language emphasizing the presence of Christ and spiritual nourishment of believers. A good example of a modern expression of the memorial view is found in Article VII of the Baptist Faith and Message (2000).<sup>140</sup>

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

This description is notable for what it does not say. Nothing of the spiritual presence of Christ or of the spiritual nourishment of believers is mentioned. The Lord's Supper is simply "a symbolic act" to "memorialize" the death of Christ.

Although Erickson's definitions will be employed in this chapter to distinguish between the Reformed view of spiritual presence and the modern-day Baptist view of the Lord's Supper as a memorial, his use of the term "Zwinglian" to refer to the memorial view is problematic. Interestingly, Erickson acknowledges that Zwingli may have actually held the view commonly referred to as "spiritual presence" and helpfully labels

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<sup>137</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1127.

<sup>138</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1128.

<sup>139</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1128.

<sup>140</sup>According to John Hammett, the use of the word "memorialize" indicates that the Baptist Faith and Message (2000) is articulating the memorial view. John S. Hammett, "Article VII: Baptism and the Lord's Supper," in *Baptist Faith and Message 2000: Critical Issues in America's Largest Protestant Denomination*, ed. Douglas K. Blount and Joseph D. Wooddell (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 77.

the view as “The Reformed View” instead of simply Calvin’s view. Nevertheless, Erickson is inconsistent when he labels the memorial view as “The Zwinglian View.” Although clarification is provided by Erickson, both in the text and footnotes, that Zwingli likely did not hold this view himself, the labeling is unhelpful and has no doubt led to further misunderstanding of Zwingli’s actual views.<sup>141</sup> A careful study of Zwingli’s writings on the Supper reveals much more than the common mischaracterization of his view.<sup>142</sup> In fact, both aspects noted by Erickson as constituting the Reformed view (spiritual presence of Christ and spiritual nourishment of believers) may be found in the Zwingli corpus. Zwingli’s belief in the spiritual presence of Christ at the Supper is most clearly stated in the appendix to his *An Exposition of the Faith*.<sup>143</sup> Zwingli writes of the spiritual presence of Christ: “We believe Christ to be truly present in the Supper, indeed we do not believe that it is the Lord’s Supper unless Christ is present.”<sup>144</sup> Although Zwingli clearly affirms the presence of Christ at the Lord’s Supper, it is not his physical body that is present. This was the major concern for Zwingli. He rejected any notion of the ubiquity of Christ’s physical body. The physical body of Christ is seated at the right

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<sup>141</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1126-28. For helpful summary and analysis of Zwingli’s actual writings on the Supper, see W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 180-93. Also see Bruce A. Ware, “The Meaning of the Lord’s Supper in the Theology of Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531),” in *The Lord’s Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ Until He Comes*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology 10 (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010), 229-47.

<sup>142</sup>Bruce Ware writes, “When we see the textured character of Zwingli’s view, we must marvel at both its relative richness, when compared to popular reductionist (mis?)understandings of his position, and the striking similarities he shared with John Calvin’s view of the Supper when compared to that of Martin Luther or of the Roman Catholic Church.” Ware, “The Meaning of the Lord’s Supper in the Theology of Ulrich Zwingli,” 229.

<sup>143</sup>Originally written in Latin, the appendix was not included in G. W. Bromiley’s English translation of “An Exposition of the Faith,” in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, ed. G. W. Bromiley (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), 239-79.

<sup>144</sup>“Christum credimus vere esse in coena; imo non credimus esse domini coenam nisi Christus adsit.” Ulrich Zwingli, *Huldrici Zwingli Opera: Didactica Et Apologetica Ab Anno 1526 Usque Ad Obitum Auctoris Ceteraque Varia Poëtica Paedagogica Philologica Historica, Accedunt Sermones Vulgares in Psalmos Lingua Plerumque Vernacula*, ed. Melchior Schuler and Johanness Schulthess (Zürich: F. Schulthess, 1841). 4:73. English translation of this sentence found in W. P. Stephens, *Zwingli: An Introduction to His Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 106. I am indebted to Ian Hugh Clary for pointing out this statement.

hand of the Father. Therefore, Christ's presence at the Supper is spiritual, not physical. Because Christ is spiritually present, believers may feed upon Christ. Zwingli wrote that in the Lord's Supper "the natural and essential body of Christ in which he suffered and is now seated in heaven at the right hand of God is not eaten naturally and literally but only spiritually."<sup>145</sup> Later Zwingli explained what he means by stating that Christ is fed upon spiritually.

To eat the body of Christ spiritually is equivalent to trusting with heart and soul upon the mercy and goodness of God through Christ, that is, to have the assurance of an unbroken faith that God will give us the forgiveness of sins and the joy of eternal salvation for the sake of his Son, who gave himself for us and reconciled the divine righteousness to us.<sup>146</sup>

Two sentences later, Zwingli succinctly summarized his point: "If I may put it more precisely, to eat the body of Christ sacramentally is to eat the body of Christ with the heart and the mind in conjunction with the sacrament."<sup>147</sup> In other words, the way in which believers are spiritually nourished through the Lord's Supper is by the believers' conscious awareness of the finished work of Christ symbolized through the physical elements of the Supper and their active faith that through this finished work their sins are forgiven. Perhaps the best summary of Zwingli's view on this subject is the following:

So then, when you come to the Lord's Supper to feed spiritually upon Christ, and when you thank the Lord for his great favour, for the redemption whereby you are delivered from despair, and for the pledge whereby you are assured of eternal salvation, when you join with your brethren in partaking of the bread and wine which are the tokens of the body of Christ, then in the true sense of the word you eat him sacramentally. You do inwardly that which you represent outwardly, your soul being strengthened by the faith which you attest in the tokens.<sup>148</sup>

Clearly, Zwingli held to the two key components of the Reformed spiritual presence view of the Lord's Supper. His writings demonstrate that he affirmed both the spiritual

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<sup>145</sup>Bromiley, ed., *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 254.

<sup>146</sup>Bromiley, ed., *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 258.

<sup>147</sup>Bromiley, ed., *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 258.

<sup>148</sup>Bromiley, ed., *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 259.



presence of Christ and the spiritual nourishment of believers at the Supper. Thus, Zwingli was no “Zwinglian” in his view of the Lord’s Supper.

Mark E. Dever has helpfully observed that of the four major views of the Lord’s Supper (transubstantiation, consubstantiation, spiritual presence, and memorial), “only the Supper as *memorial* is universally accepted. Advocates for the other three positions go beyond the Supper as memorial, but no one denies this is an aspect of the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>149</sup> Dever went on to say, however, that “Baptists have historically used language so rich about Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper for those who come by faith that little difference is perceptible between their position and the Reformed idea of Christ’s spiritual presence.”<sup>150</sup> So when the *Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) calls the Lord’s Supper “a symbolic act of obedience” by which believers “memorialize the death of the Redeemer,” it is making a minimal statement meant to show common agreement among a sometimes diverse people.<sup>151</sup> All Baptists have, at the very least, believed in a memorial aspect of the Lord’s Supper. Some, though, have used more expressive language to describe the spiritual benefits accrued through the remembrance of the death of Christ at the Supper. The evidence that the English Particular Baptists of the seventeenth century fall into this latter category will now be explored. An examination of the confessions, catechisms, and personal writings of these Baptists reveals that they held to the spiritual presence view of the Lord’s Supper as defined above by Millard Erickson as consisting of the following two aspects: the spiritual presence of Christ and the spiritual nourishment of believers.

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<sup>149</sup>Mark E. Dever, “The Church,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 828.

<sup>150</sup>Dever, “The Church,” 828.

<sup>151</sup>As noted above, the Heidelberg Catechism provided the same function on this very topic for the Reformed community in the sixteenth century.

## Two Catechisms and a Confession

An excellent representative source for seventeenth-century English Particular Baptist views of the Lord's Supper is the catechisms and confessions which they wrote and circulated. Catechisms and confessions of faith reflect the perspective of a wider community than the writings of individual authors because they present truths commonly agreed upon and taught in the churches and homes. Therefore, the evidence cited from the two catechisms and confession of faith below should be given special attention.

**Hercules Collins and *An Orthodox Catechism*.** Some modern-day theologians might be surprised to learn that there is virtually no change between a sixteenth-century Reformed document and a seventeenth-century Baptist document on the issue of the Lord's Supper.<sup>152</sup> But that is exactly what one finds when the sections in the catechisms are examined side by side.<sup>153</sup> For example, the catechisms state that when a believer partakes of the Lord's Supper he may say, "my soul is no less assuredly fed to everlasting life with his body, which was crucified for me, and his blood, which was shed for me; than I receive and taste by the mouth of my body the bread and wine, the signs of the body and blood of our Lord, received at the hand of the minister."<sup>154</sup> Further, the one who partakes of the body of Christ at the Lord's Table can be said to be made "more and more to be united to his sacred body, that though he be in heaven, and we on earth, yet

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<sup>152</sup>For example, see Thomas White, "A Baptist's Theology of the Lord's Supper," in *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches*, ed. Thomas White, Jason G. Duesing, and Malcolm B. Yarnell III (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2008), 148; also Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 137. Although Gregg Allison notes in his recent monograph on ecclesiology that "the spiritual presence view of John Calvin . . . was embraced by many Baptists. Indeed, it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the memorial view became predominant in Baptist churches." Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 385.

<sup>153</sup>The only real change of note between the two catechisms is the change of the title of the section from "Of the Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ" in the Heidelberg to "Of the Lord's Supper." This change was probably made because the former smacked of the High Anglicanism of the late seventeenth century. The opportunity to compare the two catechisms side by side is provided in Renihan, *True Confessions*, 239-87.

<sup>154</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 39; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 263.

nevertheless are we flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bones: and as all the members of the body are by one soul” through the work of “the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth both in Christ and us.”<sup>155</sup> Likewise, Collins affirmed that in the Lord’s Supper, “by this visible sign and pledge, he may assure us that we are as verily partakers of his body and blood, through the working of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>156</sup> According to Michael A. G. Haykin, this statement means that Collins held that “although Christ’s body is in heaven, we can have communion with the risen Christ in the Supper through the Spirit.”<sup>157</sup> By retaining this language, Collins is assenting to the spiritual presence view of the Lord’s Supper first articulated by John Calvin.<sup>158</sup>

**William Collins and *A Brief Instruction in the Principles of Christian Religion*.** A second catechism was apparently produced by William Collins (d. 1702) around the year 1693 at the request of the General Assembly of Particular Baptists in England. Though often referred to as “Keach’s Catechism,” there is no evidence that Benjamin Keach actually had a direct hand in forming this catechism.<sup>159</sup> Instead, the Assembly meeting in London in June of 1693 passed the following resolution: “That a Catechism be drawn up, containing the substance of the Christian religion, for the instruction of children and servants, and that brother William Collins be desired to draw it up.”<sup>160</sup> Thus, it seems clear that it was William Collins, and not Benjamin Keach, to

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<sup>155</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 39; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 263-64.

<sup>156</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 42; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 265.

<sup>157</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, “‘His soul-refreshing presence’: The Lord’s Supper in Calvinistic Baptist Thought and Experience in the ‘Long’ Eighteenth Century,” in *Baptist Sacramentalism*, ed. Anthony R. Cross and Philip E. Thompson, *Studies in Baptist History and Thought* 5 (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster Press, 2003), 181.

<sup>158</sup>See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, Chapter VII.

<sup>159</sup>See Tom J. Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press Publishing, 1998), 49; and Austin Walker, *The Excellent Benjamin Keach* (Dundas, ON: Joshua Press, 2004), 219; both of which dispel this common assumption.

<sup>160</sup>Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: Printed for the Author, 1811), 1:533.

whom this catechism, which “defined what it was to be a Baptist throughout the eighteenth century, and for some years into the nineteenth,”<sup>161</sup> should be credited. Collins was uniquely gifted for such an important task.

William Collins, who served for twenty-nine years as the pastor of the Petty France church beginning in July of 1673 and ending at his death in October of 1702,<sup>162</sup> was apparently widely recognized as both a theologian and a scholar. Ivimey states that his “eminence . . . as a scholar and theologian was very great.”<sup>163</sup> In his funeral sermon, John Piggott called Collins “a very learned and judicious minister of Christ.”<sup>164</sup> He then elaborated on the learning achieved by Collins:

‘Twas early that he discovered an inclination to study and books, and his progress in learning was swift and sure. When he had passed through learning, and had had the approbation of one of the most severe critics of this age (Dr. Busby), he began to travel and, if I mistake not, before that time, God had made him sensible of sin, and drawn him to his Son. When he came abroad, not going so far as he at first designed, he remained a considerable time in France and Italy; where he finished the course of his other studies preparatory to that of Theology, to which he closely applied himself upon his return to England. . . . I need not say how well he was prepared for the study of divinity by nature, learning, and grace, for his proficiency therein soon appeared; and after he had passed a little time preaching in the country, he had a very remarkable call by this church.<sup>165</sup>

Collins was a man whose remarkable gifts were all used in the service of the One who had so obviously gifted him.

William Collins’ early commitment to studying theology served him well in the years which followed. On August 26, 1677, an obscure reference is made in the minutes of the Petty France church to the publication of a Confession of Faith.<sup>166</sup> This is

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<sup>161</sup>Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts*, 47.

<sup>162</sup>William Collins died the same month of the same year as Hercules Collins.

<sup>163</sup>Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, 3:332.

<sup>164</sup>John Piggott, *Eleven sermons preach’d upon special occasions* (London: John Darby, 1714), 279.

<sup>165</sup>Piggott, *Eleven sermons*, 279.

<sup>166</sup>*Petty France Church Minute Book*, 6.

commonly believed to be the same Confession which would become known as the Second London Confession of Faith when reissued in 1689. If this is the case, there is little doubt that William Collins and Nehemiah Cox, who served as Collins' assistant at Petty France for the first sixteen years of his pastorate, were the chief architects of this historic document which continues to unite Particular Baptists today. It should not be surprising therefore, that this same William Collins was requested to produce a catechism expounding the Confession which he had originally produced.

Just as *An Orthodox Catechism* was an adaption of the Heidelberg Catechism, *A Brief Instruction in the Principles of Christian Religion* was an adaption of the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism.<sup>167</sup> It was published with the desire, according to "An Advertisement to the Reader," "to shew our near Agreement with many other Christians, of whom we have great Esteem."<sup>168</sup> The differences, though "being not much,"<sup>169</sup> are again what one might expect from a Baptist revision of a Reformed document. William Collins, like Hercules Collins, modifies the section on baptism. However, unlike *An Orthodox Catechism*, *A Brief Instruction* removes the use of the word sacrament, replacing it with "Baptism and the Lord's Supper" or "Ordinance."<sup>170</sup> Notwithstanding this change in terminology, *A Brief Instruction* retains an exposition of the ideas intended by the Westminster divines' use of the word sacrament. For example, in answer to the question: "What are the outward Means, whereby Christ communicateth to us the Benefits of Redemption?", the catechism includes baptism and the Lord's Supper along with the Word and prayer as means that "are made effectual to the Elect for

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<sup>167</sup>See Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3:676-704.

<sup>168</sup>*A Brief Instruction in the Principles of Christian Religion*, 5th ed. (London, 1695), 24.

<sup>169</sup>*A Brief Instruction*, 24.

<sup>170</sup>Compare Shorter Catechism, questions 88, 91, and 96 with *A Brief Instruction*, questions 93, 96, and 102 respectively.

Salvation.”<sup>171</sup> Likewise, in answer to the question, “How do Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, become effectual Means of Salvation?”, this Baptist catechism follows the Shorter Catechism in saying these “become effectual Means of Salvation, not for any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the Blessing of Christ, and the working of the Spirit in those that by Faith receive them.”<sup>172</sup> Clearly, the Lord’s Supper was seen as more than a memorial, but what benefits are conferred to those who receive the Lord’s Supper in a worthy manner? According to the catechism, “the worthy Receivers are, not after a Corporal and Carnal manner, but by Faith, made Partakers of his Body and Blood, with all his Benefits, to their spiritual Nourishment, and growth in Grace.”<sup>173</sup> This understanding of the spiritual nourishment of believers communicated by Christ through the Holy Spirit distinguishes this catechism’s view of the Lord’s Supper from the memorial view and places it squarely within a Reformed understanding of spiritual presence.

**Second London Confession of Faith.** The Second London Confession of Faith was first published in 1677, but was officially adopted by the London General Assembly in 1689.<sup>174</sup> It would eventually be republished in 1699 with a list of those who signed the document on behalf of their churches at this historic gathering.<sup>175</sup> Hercules Collins and William Collins, (along with men like Hanserd Knollys, William Kiffin, and

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<sup>171</sup>*A Brief Instruction*, 18.

<sup>172</sup>*A Brief Instruction*, 19.

<sup>173</sup>*A Brief Instruction*, 20.

<sup>174</sup>*A Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly Of divers Pastors, Messengers and Ministering Brethren of the Baptized Churches, met together in London, from Septemb. 3. To 12. 1689, from divers parts of England and Wales: Owning the Doctrine of Personal Election, and final Perseverance* (London, 1689), 18.

<sup>175</sup>*A Confession of Faith, Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of man Congregations of Christians (Baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Countrey.* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: S. Bridge, 1699), back cover. This confession may also be accessed in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 235-95.

Benjamin Keach) were among the original signers of this historic document. This confession, like the two catechisms discussed above, had its origins in a Reformed document, this time the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647.<sup>176</sup> The framers of the Second London Confession explained their rationale for following the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Declaration so closely in their introductory letter “To the Judicious and Impartial Reader”:

we did in like manner conclude it best to follow their example in making use of the very same words with them both, in these articles (which are very many) wherein our faith and doctrine is the same with theirs. And this we did, the more abundantly to manifest our consent with both, in all the fundamental articles of the Christian religion, as also with many others, whose orthodox confessions have been published to the World, on the behalf of the protestants in diverse nations and cities; and also to convince all, that we have no itch to clog religion with new words, but to readily acquiesce in that form of sound words, which hath been, in consent with the holy scriptures, used by others before us; hereby declaring before God, angels, & men, our hearty agreement with them, in that wholesome protestant doctrine, which with so clear evidence of scriptures they have asserted. Some things, indeed, are in some places added, some terms omitted, and some few changed; but these alterations are of that nature, as that we need not doubt, any charge or suspicion of unsoundness in the faith, from any of our brethren upon the account of them.<sup>177</sup>

Like the *Orthodox Catechism* and *Brief Instruction*, the Second London Confession changed the sections on baptism. This confession also exchanged the word “sacrament” for “ordinance.”<sup>178</sup>

The Second London Confession does not deny that one purpose of the Lord’s Supper is to serve as a “perpetual remembrance” of the death of Jesus. However, the confession says more, not less, than this. It also states in the first paragraph of chapter XXX that the Supper is for the “confirmation of the faith of believers in all the benefits” of Christ’s death. Indeed, chapter XXX of the Second London Confession does interpret the Lord’s Supper according to a spiritual presence view in two important ways: as

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<sup>176</sup>See Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3:600-73.

<sup>177</sup>*A Confession Of Faith* (1677), “To the Judicious and Impartial Reader,” Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 245-46.

<sup>178</sup>For an analysis of the “minimal” differences between the confessions on the Lord’s Supper, see Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, 78-79.

“spiritual nourishment” to believers and Christ as “spiritually present.”<sup>179</sup> The confession states that believers receive “spiritual nourishment” by the “Supper of the Lord Jesus.”<sup>180</sup> This idea of “spiritual nourishment” is important in distinguishing the position of this confession from a memorial perspective, but perhaps the clearest evidence that this confession articulates a spiritual presence view of the Supper is seen in paragraph seven of chapter XXX.

Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this ordinance, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death; the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally, but spiritually present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.<sup>181</sup>

Throughout chapter XXX, the confession is careful to reject any Catholic understanding of the Supper.<sup>182</sup> This is seen in paragraph seven as the believer’s feeding upon Christ and Christ’s spiritual presence are both said not to be taken “carnally or corporally,” but spiritually. Nevertheless, the confession affirms that believers “really and indeed, . . . receive, and feed upon Christ crucified,” albeit “spiritually.” Likewise Christ is said to be “spiritually present to the faith of believers in that ordinance.” No further evidence should need to be given to prove that the English Particular Baptists of the seventeenth century held to a spiritual presence view of the Lord’s Supper than this representative document signed by thirty-seven pastors on behalf of “upwards of one hundred baptized congregations in England and Wales (denying Arminianism).”<sup>183</sup> This confession, like

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<sup>179</sup>*A Confession Of Faith* (1677), 98-102; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 291-93.

<sup>180</sup>*A Confession Of Faith* (1677), 98-99; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 291.

<sup>181</sup>*A Confession Of Faith* (1677), 102; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 293.

<sup>182</sup>Interestingly, the Second London Confession omits the words “in, with, or under the bread and wine, yet, as really,” which were intended to reject a Lutheran understanding of the presence of Christ in the Westminster Confession/Savoy Declaration, from between the phrases “the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally” and “but spiritually present to the faith of believers.” Probably, these words were omitted because the Lutheran understanding was not an issue of contention among Baptists in the seventeenth century.

<sup>183</sup>*A Confession Of Faith* (1699), back cover; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 238-39.



the two catechisms examined above, articulates a spiritual presence view of the Lord's Supper by asserting both the spiritual nourishment of believers and the spiritual presence of Christ at the Supper.<sup>184</sup>

### **Kiffin, Knollys and Keach**

Although no further evidence is needed to prove that the English Particular Baptists of the seventeenth century held a spiritual presence view of the Lord's Supper, in the interest of a thorough treatment of the subject, a final locus of evidence will be examined. This final source of evidence to be considered is the individual writings of the three most prominent English Particular Baptist pastors of the seventeenth century: William Kiffin, Hanserd Knollys and Benjamin Keach. Though none of the three wrote works directly addressing the meaning of the Lord's Supper, there is a spattering of references to the meaning of the Lord's Supper in their writings. These will now be examined in order to ascertain if they reflect a memorial or spiritual presence view of the Supper.

**William Kiffin.** Nineteenth-century English Baptist historian Joseph Ivimey called William Kiffin (1616–1701) “one of the most extraordinary persons whom the denomination has produced, both as to the consistency and correctness of his principles and the eminence of his worldly and religious character.”<sup>185</sup> High praise, but an examination of the life of this remarkable individual seems to bear out Ivimey's assessment.<sup>186</sup> Kiffin was orphaned as a child, apprenticed to a glover as a young man,

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<sup>184</sup>Thus, E. P. Winter was wrong to state, based on the confession's omission of the word sacrament, that: “Clearly, at least some Baptist would not be bound to accept ‘Calvinist’ sacramental doctrine.” E. P. Winter, “Calvinist and Zwinglian Views of the Lord's Supper Among the Baptists of the Seventeenth Century,” *BQ* 15, no. 7 (July 1954): 325.

<sup>185</sup>Joseph Ivimey, *The Life of Mr. William Kiffin* (London, 1833), xi.

<sup>186</sup>For details on the life of Kiffin, see B. A. Ramsbottom, *Stranger Than Fiction. The Life of William Kiffin* (Harpden, England: Gospel Standard Trust, 1989); and Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, 42-52.

and eventually became one of the wealthiest merchants in England. His longevity, Kiffin's life spanned most of the seventeenth century, allowed him to be the only individual who was an original signer of both the 1644 and 1689 London confessions of faith.<sup>187</sup> Kiffin's standing as a leading statesman for his fellow Particular Baptists was augmented by the fact that for over sixty years Kiffin served as the pastor of the Baptist congregation which met at Devonshire Square in London.<sup>188</sup> William Kiffin was most certainly "extraordinary."

Kiffin wrote an important tract on the Lord's Supper, but its main focus was on who were the rightful participants/receivers of the Supper. In *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church-Communion*, Kiffin argued against John Bunyan (who held to open membership and open communion)<sup>189</sup> that only believers baptized by immersion are the proper recipients of communion, i.e., "no unbaptized person may be regularly admitted to the Lord's Supper."<sup>190</sup> Though Kiffin's focus in this work was on who may be admitted to church membership and the table of communion, he did address the nature of the Lord's Supper in at least two places. First, while arguing for the priority of baptism before the Lord's Supper in the life of the believer, Kiffin described baptism as "the Sacrament of Spiritual *Birth*" and the Lord's Supper as the sacrament of "Spiritual *Nourishment and Growth*" by which believers are "*Spiritually fed*."<sup>191</sup> Notice that Kiffin does not shy away from using the term "sacrament" to describe baptism and the Lord's

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<sup>187</sup>Hanserd Knollys would sign the second edition (1646) of the First London Confession, along with the Second London Confession in 1689.

<sup>188</sup>A history of the Devonshire Square church up to the early nineteenth century is include in Walter Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches* (London, 1808), 1:400-54.

<sup>189</sup>These two ideas were almost always linked in seventeenth-century thought. In other words, while there were sometimes Separatist or Baptist congregations which were open communion, they were also invariably open membership. At the same time, those churches which restricted membership to baptized believers, also restricted communion to the same.

<sup>190</sup>William Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church-Communion* (London: Geo. Larkin, 1681), title page.

<sup>191</sup>Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse*, 23.

Supper. He, like Hercules Collins in his *An Orthodox Catechism*, obviously had no problem with this word when properly defined.<sup>192</sup> Kiffin’s argument was that baptism is an initiatory rite for a believer at the beginning of spiritual life and the Lord’s Supper is an ongoing rite of spiritual nourishment and growth as a believer. Kiffin’s understanding of the Lord’s Supper as a means of spiritual nourishment and growth by which believers are spiritually fed had implications for his argument that baptism should precede the Lord’s Supper. A couple of pages later, Kiffin addressed the nature of the Lord’s Supper a second time in his argument that “*Baptism Signs and Seals our Salvation to us*” by appealing to the assumed common understanding that “the *Supper* is a Spiritual participation of the *Body and Blood* of Christ by Faith, and so (not merely by the work done) is a means of Salvation.”<sup>193</sup> In other words, Kiffin is arguing that the Lord’s Supper provides spiritual communion with Christ by faith in the same way that baptism “signs” and “seals” our salvation, not because of any merit in the act itself, but by symbolizing the work of Christ which confirms our faith in him. Kiffin’s point here was to show the importance of baptism (which, of course, is defined as immersion) for the professing believer. For the interest of this chapter, it is sufficient to see that by using the language of “spiritual nourishment” and “spiritual participation” Kiffin assumed a spiritual presence view of the Lord’s Supper as he argued that believer’s baptism by immersion was a necessary prerequisite to the Supper.

**Hanserd Knollys.** Like William Kiffin, the life of Hanserd Knollys (c. 1599–1691)<sup>194</sup> spanned most of the seventeenth century. Knollys was unusual for a Baptist in

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<sup>192</sup>See the definition of this term found above in the section “The Sacraments.”

<sup>193</sup>Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse*, 25.

<sup>194</sup>For biographical sketches of Knollys, see Dennis C. Bustin, *Paradox and Perseverance: Hanserd Knollys, Particular Baptist Pioneer in Seventeenth-Century England* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2006); Pope A. Duncan, *Hanserd Knollys: Seventeenth-Century Baptist* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1965); and Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, 54-61.

that he was university educated. The son of a priest in the Church of England, Knollys studied at St. Catherine Hall in Cambridge University.<sup>195</sup> Hanserd followed his father Richard as a minister in the Church of England at the parish church at Humberstone in Lincolnshire.<sup>196</sup> After resigning his parish in 1631 over his Puritan convictions, Knollys had completely broken with the national church by 1635. By 1644, Knollys had come to Baptist convictions and signed the second edition (1646) of the First London Confession of Faith.<sup>197</sup> Knollys was highly regarded in the Particular Baptist community as a scholar. He was a prolific author producing manuals on Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; as well as numerous expositions of Scripture.<sup>198</sup> In his exposition of the first chapter of the Song of Solomon, Knollys draws on the imagery of the love relationship between the king and the spouse to expound the love of God for His people. One aspect of this relationship is the table fellowship which Knollys applied to the communion of Christ with believers in the Lord's Supper.

Jay T. Collier has analyzed Hanserd Knollys approach to interpreting Scripture and has found him to use a fourfold method: "typically, each section began by announcing the verses to be treated, gave a synopsis of the argument or aim of the text, and then alternated between commenting on the meaning of words or phrases and improving upon these comments with meditations."<sup>199</sup> Knollys' comments related to the Lord's Supper fall under this last category of meditations. Each meditation had "at least a statement of a doctrine" and often "application for his readers."<sup>200</sup> By examining his

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<sup>195</sup>Duncan, *Hanserd Knollys*, 1-3.

<sup>196</sup>Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, 54.

<sup>197</sup>Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, 54-55.

<sup>198</sup>Jay T. Collier, "Hanserd Knollys as interpreter of Scripture: An examination of his An Exposition of the First Chapter of the Song of Solomon," *Eusebeia: The Bulletin of The Jonathan Edwards Centre for Reformed Spirituality* 5 (Autumn 2005), 6.

<sup>199</sup>Collier, "Hanserd Knollys as interpreter of Scripture," 16.

<sup>200</sup>Collier, "Hanserd Knollys as interpreter of Scripture," 23.

meditations, Knollys' doctrine of the Lord's Supper and its application to believers will become evident.

Reflecting on Song of Solomon 1:8 ("feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents"), Knollys called the church the place where "faithful Ministers dispense his holy Ordinances" that believers might "be fed and nourished, converted and comforted, sanctified and saved by the Spirit and grace of God in Jesus Christ."<sup>201</sup> Knollys also identified the church and the kingdom very closely. In his meditation on Song of Solomon 1:12 ("While the king sitteth at his table"), Knollys stated that the table in Christ's kingdom is the Lord's Table where Christ is in communion with believers.

This Kingdome is his Church, the Keyes whereof he gave unto his Apostles, Mat. 16. 18, 19. And his Table in his Kingdome is the Lords Table, to wit, his holy Ordinances (especially that of the Lords Supper. 1 Cor. 10.21. Called *the Lords Table*) where Christ sits and Sups with his Saints.<sup>202</sup>

Elsewhere, Knollys expressed similarly: "Christ and his Saints, do enjoy mutual communion and spiritual fellowship one with another, at the Lords Supper. . . . Christ Sups with his Saints, and the Saints Sup with Christ, in his holy Ordinances."<sup>203</sup> The marriage bed was also an image of spiritual communion for Knollys. When the Song of Solomon 1:15 says "also our bed is green," Knollys saw an application to the ordinances which are "the means of Grace wherein Christ and his Saints have spiritual communion together."<sup>204</sup> Clearly, Knollys believed that Christ was spiritually present with believers at the Supper, but does he also proffer a notion of spiritual nourishment for believers?

The evidence shows that Knollys not only articulated a belief in the spiritual presence of Christ at the Lord's Supper; he also held that believers were spiritually

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<sup>201</sup>Hanserd Knollys, *An Exposition of the First Chapter of the Song of Solomon* (London: W. Godbid, 1656), 39.

<sup>202</sup>Knollys, *An Exposition of the First Chapter of the Song of Solomon*, 56.

<sup>203</sup>Knollys, *An Exposition of the First Chapter of the Song of Solomon*, 57.

<sup>204</sup>Knollys, *An Exposition of the First Chapter of the Song of Solomon*, 78.

nourished by the bread and wine. In his meditation on the table imagery of Song of Solomon 1:12, Knollys stated: “Christ giveth his Saints spiritual Bread, hidden Manna, New-wine and water of life at his Supper.”<sup>205</sup> Since there is spiritual nourishment provided to believers at the Supper, Knollys urged believers not to neglect this ordinance.

The Saints when they sup with Christ, have meat and drink, which others know not of. Those beleevers, who sleight or neglect any of the holy Administrations and Ordinances of God, do want that fellowship with the Father, and that communion with Jesus Christ in the Spirit, which other beleevers do enjoy.<sup>206</sup>

Knollys then moved from the doctrine that believers are nourished at the Supper to an exhortation to believers. Knollys here directly addressed his readers:

O dear Friends [*sic*]! Be not wanting to your precious souls, either in sleighting or neglecting the Ordinances of God, why should you cry, O my leanness, my barrenness &c? . . . How unkindly do ye deal with Christ, to sleight and neglect or refuse his gracious Invitations, to heavenly banquets at his Table?<sup>207</sup>

Apparently this was a matter of some importance to Knollys. The seriousness with which Knollys views an abstention from the Lord’s Supper flows from his high understanding of the table as a place where Christ is spiritually present and at which believers are spiritually nourished.

**Benjamin Keach.** Murdina MacDonald has called Benjamin Keach (1640–1704)<sup>208</sup> “the single most important apologist for Calvinistic Baptist views in the period 1689–1702.”<sup>209</sup> He was prolific as an author, no other Baptist of the period comes close to matching Keach’s productivity. Originally a General Baptist, Keach became convinced of a Calvinistic soteriology within five years of arriving in London where he had brought

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<sup>205</sup>Knollys, *An Exposition of the First Chapter of the Song of Solomon*, 57.

<sup>206</sup>Knollys, *An Exposition of the First Chapter of the Song of Solomon*, 57.

<sup>207</sup>Knollys, *An Exposition of the First Chapter of the Song of Solomon*, 57-58.

<sup>208</sup>For biographical sketches of Keach, see Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, 83-97; and Austin Walker, *The Excellent Benjamin Keach* (Dundas, ON: Joshua Press, 2004).

<sup>209</sup>MacDonald, “London Calvinistic Baptists 1689–1727,” 77.

his family in order to escape persecution.<sup>210</sup> At some point Keach met William Kiffin and Hanserd Knollys, and when Keach remarried in 1672 two years after his first wife had died, it was Knollys who officiated at the marriage.<sup>211</sup> This, perhaps, explains the influences which prompted Keach's mysterious shift to the Particular Baptist camp. In the same year as his second marriage, Keach began a church in Horsleydown, Southwark, which he served as pastor until his death in 1704.<sup>212</sup>

Amongst Keach's numerous writings is his *ΤΡΟΠΟΛΟΓΙΑ: A Key to Open Scripture Metaphors*, which, as the title suggests, provides a guide to interpreting the metaphors and types found in Scripture.<sup>213</sup> This work includes an exposition of the Scriptural teaching on the Lord's Supper in which Keach rejects the Catholic understanding of transubstantiation. Keach seems to be the most cautious of any of the Particular Baptist authors in addressing the nature of the Lord's Supper. He is careful not to use terminology that would imply a literal, physical presence of Christ at the Supper. Christ, Keach declared, used "metaphorical and figurative expressions . . . when he instituted the holy sacrament of the Supper."<sup>214</sup> The language used by Christ in the institution of the Supper was metaphorical, and the phrase "This is my body" should not be interpreted literally as if Christ is corporally present. Despite these cautions, however, there is evidence that Keach held to more than a memorial view of the Lord's Supper. For example, he could say of the Supper that, "There is a mystical conveyance or communication of all Christ's blessed merits to our souls through faith held forth hereby,

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<sup>210</sup>Walker, *The Excellent Benjamin Keach*, 389.

<sup>211</sup>Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach*, 86.

<sup>212</sup>This is the same congregation later famously served by John Gill and Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and that still exists as the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London.

<sup>213</sup>B[enjamin] K[each] *ΤΡΟΠΟΛΟΓΙΑ: A Key To Open Scripture Metaphors* (London: J. D., 1681). This work is now in print as Benjamin Keach, *Preaching from the Types and Metaphors of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1972). The modern edition will be used for citation purposes below.

<sup>214</sup>Keach, *Preaching from the Types and Metaphors*, 632.

and in a glorious manner received, in the right participation of it.”<sup>215</sup> Keach clearly believed that something happens spiritually between believers and Christ in the proper observance of the Lord’s Supper. A memorialist would not say this. Furthermore, Keach said something that only one who had endured the trials of persecution possibly could. He wrote that the Supper “may animate and encourage us to suffer martyrdom, when called to it, for his sake.”<sup>216</sup> There is a real strengthening that comes to those who observe the Supper in faith.

Further evidence of Keach’s understanding of the Lord’s Supper is found in the articles of faith adopted by the Horsleydown congregation.<sup>217</sup> As pastor, Keach led his church to adopt the confession of faith which he had compiled. In it he included the Lord’s Supper as a means of grace, in Article XX, “Of the Means of Grace”:

We believe that the outward and more ordinary means, whereby Christ communicates to us the Benefits of Redemption, are his Holy Ordinances, as Prayer, the Word of God, and Preaching, with Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper, &c. and yet notwithstanding it is the Spirit of God that maketh Prayer, Reading, &c. and specially the Preaching of the Word, effectual to the convincing, converting, building up, and comforting, through Faith, all the Elect of God unto Salvation.<sup>218</sup>

For Keach, one of the means by which “Christ communicates to us the Benefits of Redemption” was the Lord’s Supper. This is accomplished by the Spirit who makes all the means of grace “effectual to the convincing, converting, building up, and comforting, through Faith.” This high view of the Lord’s Supper is also seen in Article XXIV “Of the Lord’s Supper”:

[The Lord’s Supper] it being appointed for our spiritual Nourishment, and Growth in Grace, and as a farther Engagement in, and to all Duties we owe to Jesus Christ, and as a Pledg of his eternal Love to us, and as a Token of our Communion with

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<sup>215</sup>Keach, *Preaching from the Types and Metaphors*, 639.

<sup>216</sup>Keach, *Preaching from the Types and Metaphors*, 639.

<sup>217</sup>Benjamin Keach, *The Articles of Faith of the Church of Christ, or Congregation meeting at Horsley-down, Benjamin Keach, Pastor, As asserted this 10<sup>th</sup> of the 6<sup>th</sup> Month, 1697* (London, 1697).

<sup>218</sup>Keach, *The Articles of Faith*, 19.



him, and one with another.<sup>219</sup>

Once again, the language of spiritual nourishment and growth is used as a benefit of the Lord's Supper. Even with Keach's more guarded use of language, it is clear that he held to a view of the Lord's Supper more akin to the spiritual presence view than the memorial view.

### **Eligible Participants of the Supper**

Before ending this discussion of the Lord's Supper, a word needs to be said regarding its proper recipients. As noted above, this was the major issue of debate among seventeenth-century Baptists and deserves some treatment here. This is especially the case since some have argued that the Wapping Church practiced open communion and that Collins taught the same.<sup>220</sup> In his dissertation on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper among English Baptists, Glenn O. Hilburn described Spilsbury, the first pastor of the Wapping Church as "an ardent advocate of open communion principles."<sup>221</sup> This put the author in the unenviable position of having to argue that Spilsbury's beliefs were in direct contradiction to the confession of faith which was published with his signature in 1646.<sup>222</sup> Unfortunately, this is not the only challenge which Hilburn faces, his analysis of

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<sup>219</sup>Keach, *The Articles of Faith*, 24-25.

<sup>220</sup>In a recent essay, New Testament scholar Ray Van Neste has stated that "the first Particular Baptist church, under pastors John Spilsbury and Hercules Collins, practiced open Communion." Ray Van Neste, "The Lord's Supper in the Context of the Local Church," in *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ Until He Comes*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology 10 (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010), 385. Van Neste is following a 1960 dissertation on English Baptists and the Lord's Supper and an 1860 monograph on the open communion controversy among the Baptists of Norwich. Glenn O. Hilburn, "The Lord's Supper: Admission and Exclusion Among English Baptists" (Th.D. thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1960); and George Gould, *Open Communion and the Baptists of Norwich* (Norwich, England: Josiah Fletcher, 1860).

<sup>221</sup>Hilburn, "The Lord's Supper," 44.

<sup>222</sup>*A Confession of Faith Of seven Congregations or Churches of Christ in London, which are commonly (but unjustly) called Anabaptists*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Matth. Simmons, 1646), "To the judicious and impartial Reader." This confession added the phrase "and after to partake of the Lords supper" to article XXXIX of the confession that dealt with baptism. Hilburn states that Spilsbury's signature upon this confession proves that one did not have to affirm "close communion" to affirm the confession. Hilburn, "The Lord's Supper," 44.

Spilsbury's works is marred by a misunderstanding of the historical context and how the term "communion" was used in the seventeenth century.<sup>223</sup> First, Hilburn does not properly deal with those whom Spilsbury is addressing in his two extant works.<sup>224</sup> Spilsbury's first work on baptism was largely apologetic, the majority of it being a response to objections made by paedobaptists who saw believer's baptism as a novel practice. Since Spilsbury also affirmed covenant theology, his work interacted, as Thomas J. Nettles has noted, "of necessity" with the covenant theology of his paedobaptist contemporaries. Spilsbury argued "that the spirituality of the new covenant in Christ eliminated the possibility of an infant's participation in it."<sup>225</sup> By missing this important point of historical context, Hilburn insists that Spilsbury was merely arguing that baptism was not what constituted a church and therefore, he assumes, Spilsbury does not require baptism before the Lord's Supper. In reality, Spilsbury's point was that baptism does not form the church, rather baptism symbolizes the spiritual reality experienced by those included in the covenant of grace through faith. Ironically, Hilburn takes a selection out of context from Spilsbury which makes exactly this point. He writes: "Baptism was said to be a symbol of 'the parties regeneration and spirituall new birth' and not an initiatory rite."<sup>226</sup> The full quote from Spilsbury reads,

To Baptize Infants, makes the holy ordinance of God a lying signe, because none of those things can be expected in an Infant which the said ordinance holds forth or signifies in the administration thereof, which is the parties regeneration and spirituall new birth; a dying and burying with Christ in respect of sin, and a rising with him in a new life to God, and a confirmation of faith in the death and resurrection of Christ, and a free remission of sinne by the same; as *Rom. 6. 3, 4. Col. 2. 12. I Pet. 3. 21. Act: 2. 38.* None of all which can be expected in an Infant.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>223</sup>Hilburn, "The Lord's Supper," 50-54.

<sup>224</sup>For example, Hilburn does not properly deal with those whom Spilsbury is addressing in his two extant works: Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*; and Spilsbury, *Gods Ordinance, the Saints Priviledge* (London: M. Simmons, 1646).

<sup>225</sup>Nettles, *The Baptists*, 1:113.

<sup>226</sup>Hilburn, "The Lord's Supper," 51.

<sup>227</sup>Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 26.

This hardly seems to be a plea for allowing those baptized as infants to participate at the Lord's Table.

Similarly, in his analysis of Spilsbury's *Gods Ordinance, the Saints Priviledge*, Hilburn fails to account for the historical context. Whereas Spilsbury's first work was largely a response to objections made by paedobaptists, this work responded to the objections of another group, the Seekers. This group argued that the true church has been lost during the time of Roman dominance in the church and therefore the ordinances were likewise lost. They were "seekers" of a restoration of primitive Christianity by a new Pentecost with living Apostles. The early American Baptist Roger Williams had been influenced by this movement about the same time as Spilsbury wrote this tract. Spilsbury responded to the influential arguments of the Seekers by stating that every believer has the right to the ordinances which have been purchased by Christ. That he was addressing Seekers is clear from his words in the letter to the reader.

And thus in summe, Christian Reader, I present to thy view the subject I deale upon, endeavoring to maintaine the right & priviledges purchased by Christ, and freely given to all that believe in him for salvation, against such as oppose the same: who under pretense of seeking the truth, doe by cunning and craftie enquiries undermine the same, and (as they of old did) overthrow the faith of some: who deny unto such as do believe in Jesus Christ for eternal life, Church fellowship and communion with Christ in his Ordinances of the new Testament, for want (as they say) of a Ministry with power from God to call and fit a people for Ordinances, and to administer the same.<sup>228</sup>

Hilburn does not acknowledge this historical background, instead arguing that Spilsbury is continuing "to deny the necessity of baptism for church membership and communion."<sup>229</sup> Ironically, this second work by Spilsbury included a letter "To the Reader" by Benjamin Coxe, whom Hilburn himself classifies as a close membership, strict communion Baptist.<sup>230</sup> Hilburn does not mention this connection. Obviously, Coxe

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<sup>228</sup>John Spilsbury, *Gods Ordinance, the Saints Priviledge*, "To the Reader."

<sup>229</sup>Hilburn, "The Lord's Supper," 53.

<sup>230</sup>See Hilburn, "The Lord's Supper, 64-66.

would not have endorsed this work if it was indeed arguing against his own position.

In addition to the errors of historical background, Hilburn also fails to distinguish the way the word “communion” was used in seventeenth-century Baptist literature. James Renihan has demonstrated conclusively that the Baptists of the period used the term “communion” to refer to relationships between members of the churches or between churches in association with one another.<sup>231</sup> Hilburn, as many have done, seems to assume that “communion” always refers to the Lord’s Supper. This is rarely, if ever, the case. Because of the misunderstanding of his use of the term, Hilburn assumes that when Spilsbury says “a church is onely so a church before Baptisme, as that the end of her union, is for communion,”<sup>232</sup> he is arguing that the church may have the Lord’s Supper before having baptism. However, if the word is being used to refer to the fellowship that exists between Christ and each member of the congregation, Hilburn’s conclusion does not follow. Most glaring in Hilburn’s misreading of this term is when he cites Spilsbury’s personal confession of faith stating his belief “that there is an holy and blessed communion of Saints, that God of his grace calls such as belong to life by election, unto the fellowship of his Sonne by the Gospel; of which matter, God by his Word and Spirit joyns them together in his covenant of grace, and so constitutes his Church.”<sup>233</sup> The expression “communion of Saints” seems most naturally interpreted in the same sense as when it appears in the Apostle’s Creed, as the fellowship of all

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<sup>231</sup>See James Renihan’s analysis of the use of this term in the confessions, ecclesiological writings, associational records, documents of the general assembly and church minute books of seventeenth-century Baptists. Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 156-73.

<sup>232</sup>Hilburn omits without ellipsis “onely so” and incorrectly capitalizes “communion.” Cf. Hilburn, “The Lord’s Supper,” 51; and Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 41. Hilburn was apparently relying upon George Gould’s citation of this work since the identical reading appears in Gould, *Open Communion and the Baptists of Norwich*, cxix. Gould’s note on the prior page that “I regret to say that I have failed to obtain this book” is quite damaging to Hilburn’s thesis. Gould, *Open Communion and the Baptists of Norwich*, cxviii. This dependence upon a secondary source which did not itself have access to the actual work being cited is sufficient explanation for why the original work has been so misused by Hilburn.

<sup>233</sup>Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 44.

believers, past, present, and future.<sup>234</sup> However, Hilburn concludes: “Therefore, Spilsbury held that the only stipulation for church membership and communion was Christian conversion. Baptism was important but not prerequisite to Lord’s Supper participation.”<sup>235</sup> This conclusion is not warranted by the evidence. It is based on a misreading of both the historical context and the meaning of the word “communion” in early English Baptist thought.

In like manner, Hilburn has also misread Collins on the communion question. Hilburn asserts that “Spilsbury’s influence was such that his church at Old Gravel Lane, Wapping continued to practice open communion and probably open membership.”<sup>236</sup> He admits that Collins, whom he calls “an ardent advocate” of the immersion of believers, “may have possibly altered the open membership practice.” Hilburn claims, however, that he did not “regard immersion as prerequisite for communion.”<sup>237</sup> Hilburn is here once again clearly following Gould, who cited Collins’ treatment of the Lord’s Supper in his *An Orthodox Catechism* as evidence that Collins taught open communion.

Q. *Who are to come to the Table of the Lord?*

A. They only, who are truly sorrowful they have offended God by their Sins, and yet trust that those Sins are pardoned them for Christ's sake, and what other Infirmities they have, that those are covered by his Passion and Death; who also desire more and more to go forward in Faith and Integrity of life: but Hypocrites, and them which do not truly repent, do eat (b) and drink Damnation to themselves.

(b) 1 Cor. 10.21. and 11.28, &c.

Q. *Are they also to be admitted to the Lord's Supper who in Confession and Life declare themselves to be Infidels, profane, and ungodly?*

A. No; For by that means the Ordinance of God is profaned, and the Wrath of God

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<sup>234</sup>For a summary of how this doctrine was understood by the early church, see Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 46-48.

<sup>235</sup>Hilburn, “The Lord’s Supper,” 51.

<sup>236</sup>Hilburn, “The Lord’s Supper,” 54.

<sup>237</sup>Hilburn, “The Lord’s Supper,” 54.

is (c) stirred up against the whole Assembly, wherefore the Church by the Commandment of Christ and his Apostles, inspired by the Holy Ghost using the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, ought to drive them from this Supper till they shall repent and change their Manners.

(c) 1 Cor. 11.20, 34. Isa. 1.11, &c. and 66.3. Jer. 7.21, &c. Psal. 50.16, &c.<sup>238</sup>

Gould summarized these questions and responses in the following words: “All the faithful, or, in other words, all penitents who trusted in Christ for pardon were free to come unto the Table of the Lord, and none were excluded but those who in Confession and Life declared themselves Infidels, profane, and ungodly.”<sup>239</sup> Therefore, he concluded that it is “inconceivable that a Strict Communionist should be the author of such statements.”<sup>240</sup> Does this conclusion bear up to scrutiny in light of the historical evidence?

Gould seems to be unaware that *An Orthodox Catechism* was an adaption of the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563.<sup>241</sup> This is an important point for interpreting this document correctly. One of the reasons given by Collins for the publication of his catechism was to identify himself and his fellow Particular Baptists as a part of the Reformed community throughout Europe. Collins thus noted in his preface, “I concenter with the most Orthodox Divines in the Fundamental Principles and Articles of the Christian Faith.”<sup>242</sup> As Collins further wrote:

albeit there are some differences between many Godly Divines and us in Church-Constitution, yet inasmuch as those things are not the Essence of Christianity, but that we do agree in the fundamental Doctrine thereof, there is sufficient ground to lay aside all bitterness and prejudice, and labor to maintain a spirit of Love each to other, knowing we shall never see all alike here.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>238</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 43-44; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 266; and Gould, *Open Communion and the Baptists of Norwich*, cxxvi-cxxvii.

<sup>239</sup>Gould, *Open Communion and the Baptists of Norwich*, cxxvii.

<sup>240</sup>Gould, *Open Communion and the Baptists of Norwich*, cxxvii.

<sup>241</sup>There is no mention of this fact in either Gould or Hilburn.

<sup>242</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, “Preface”; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 237.

<sup>243</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, “Preface”; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 237.

Both the choice of the Heidelberg as the basis for his catechism and the use of the word “orthodox” in the title highlight Collins’ interest in identifying himself with historic Protestant orthodoxy. As James Renihan writes of Collins’ choice of a title: “While it obviously refers to the true character of the doctrines it promotes, it also identifies the source of those doctrines, the so-called Protestant Orthodox divines of Europe. Collins was making an emphatic statement: just as they are Orthodox, so also are we.”<sup>244</sup> Given Collins’ purpose in utilizing this historic reformed document, we can understand that he is merely reproducing, almost completely unchanged, questions 81 and 82 of the Heidelberg Catechism.<sup>245</sup> Collins’ desire to show unity with the wider Reformed community causes him to alter the catechism as little as possible. Nevertheless, Collins was not unwilling to modify the Heidelberg where he thought it absolutely essential.

The most noticeable change made by Collins in his catechism is the change of the section dealing with baptism. Collins’ desire to promote unity between Baptists and other Protestant groups did not cause him to compromise this Baptist distinctive. In fact, in his preface which calls for unity on the “Essence of Christianity,” Collins stated that he only differed with the “Orthodox Divines” in “some things about Church-constitution, wherein I have taken a little pains to show you the true form of God’s House.”<sup>246</sup> The first hint within the catechism that Collins would make a significant change on the subject of baptism is found when he inserts the phrase “figured out in holy Baptism” into the answer to question 43 of the Heidelberg.<sup>247</sup> This answer describes the believer’s sharing with Christ in his crucifixion, death, and burial. Collins’ insertion of the phrase about baptism demonstrates the importance of the symbol’s correspondence to the thing

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<sup>244</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, “Preface;” Renihan, *True Confessions*, 235.

<sup>245</sup>This section of the two catechisms can be compared side-by-side in Renihan, *True Confessions*, 266.

<sup>246</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, “Preface;” Renihan, *True Confessions*, 237.

<sup>247</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 16; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 248.

signified for seventeenth-century Baptists.

Although the questions describing the meaning of baptism remain unchanged in the *Orthodox Catechism*, Collins has added a complete section on the mode and proper subjects of baptism. This illustrates that the Baptist quarrel with their Reformed brothers and sisters was not so much over the understanding of the meaning of baptism (at least as it applied to adults). Their disagreement was over the mode of baptism and the identity of the sacrament's appropriate recipients. In answer to the question "What is Baptism?"—which is conspicuous by its absence in the Heidelberg—Collins essentially reproduced the description of baptism from the Second London Confession of Faith, which had first appeared three year earlier in 1677: "Immersion or dipping of the Person in Water in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by such who are duly qualified by Christ."<sup>248</sup> Having answered the question of mode with this definition, this answer begged the question: "Who are the proper subjects of this ordinance?" The response came almost word for word from the Second London Confession: "Those who do actually profess Repentance towards God, Faith in, and Obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>249</sup> The only difference between the *Orthodox Catechism* and the Second London Confession is that Collins adds the word "Christ." Collins continued his treatment of baptism by denying the validity of the baptism of infants based upon the fact that Scripture nowhere commands it.<sup>250</sup> This is followed by a series of questions providing an extensive rebuttal of arguments for infant baptism from covenant theology.<sup>251</sup> From this point on, Collins resumed following the Heidelberg in its treatment of the meaning of baptism. The

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<sup>248</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 26; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 255. Cf. the Second London Confession of Faith 29.3-4.

<sup>249</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 26; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 255. See the Second London Confession of Faith 29.2.

<sup>250</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 26-27; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 255.

<sup>251</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 27-31; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 255-58.



discussion of the mode and proper recipients of baptism thus constitutes the main area of divergence between the two catechisms. Having already settled the question of baptism, Collins apparently saw no need to address the issue further in the section on the Lord's Supper. This was not an oversight on his part, but merely reflects that he, like the framers of the Heidelberg Catechism, believed that only the baptized may partake of the Lord's Supper.<sup>252</sup> Their only difference on this point was as to what constituted baptism.

Understanding the provenance of this document should cause one to beware of basing an interpretation of Collins' beliefs on the proper recipients of the Lord's Supper based solely upon a selection out of context from this document.

Thankfully, Collins did say more addressing the topic of who may receive the Lord's Supper. In his *Some Reasons for Separation from the Communion of the Church of England*, Collins rebuked his hypothetical Conformist antagonist for the practice of the Church of England of making infants members of the church, yet withholding the Lord's Supper from them. In a string of rebuttals of the liturgy of the Church of England, Collins included,

you make Infants Members of the Church, Article 27.<sup>253</sup> and yet deny them the Eucharist, the Apostles gave the Eucharist to all that were Members, therefore would not admit Infants to be Members, because the same Qualifications which are prerequisite to the Lords Supper, the same is required to Baptism.”<sup>254</sup>

By calling out the national church for inconsistency on this manner, Collins seems to be

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<sup>252</sup>John Hammett notes that: “Most denominations agree that baptism should normally precede participation in the Lord's Supper. For those that practice infant baptism, the order seems obvious. The problem is that Baptists do not see infant baptism as baptism at all.” John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2005), 283.

<sup>253</sup>A reference to Article 27 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England which states: “Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of Regeneration or New-Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed, Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God.

The Baptism of young Children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.”

<sup>254</sup>Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation*, 13.

articulating a view which linked church membership, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. The apostolic pattern, which these early Baptists were committed to following, was to restrict church membership to adult professors of faith who had been immersed as believers. Thus, those baptized as infants were permitted neither to church membership nor the Lord's Table. That this was the practice of the Wapping Church is apparent from an examination of the minute book. The church only received members upon their baptism,<sup>255</sup> upon assurance of their good standing in another church practicing believer's baptism,<sup>256</sup> or from a paedobaptist church after assurances had been provided of the individual's baptism.<sup>257</sup> Furthermore, reception into membership was required before permission to partake of the Lord's Supper was granted. Members were typically received by the church on the day on which they observed the Lord's Supper.<sup>258</sup> This was most likely done in order to allow them to partake of the Lord's Supper upon their entry into church membership. On May 23, 1683, just three years after the publication of *An Orthodox Catechism*, the minute book provides an example of the practice of the Wapping Church in receiving members at the Lord's Table.

It was agreed by the Church in old gravell lan that Such Persons that propound themselves for Communion: before they are Received, it Shall be Signified both ther name and place of Abod to the Church the next Day of that the Church break

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<sup>255</sup>E.g., see *WCB*, 2 June 1691. "Att Thee Same Time It was Agreed after full Satisfaction of the work of Grace & of the Life & Conversation Mistris Jones That Shee haveing Been Baptized Is Ordered to Bee Received Into full Communion The next first Day."

<sup>256</sup>E.g., see *WCB*, 4 August 1696. "Att a Church meeting then held it was agreed that Mary Cattell formerly a member of the Congregation whereof Mr. Wiles is pastor be received into full Communion of this Congregation They having first sent to that congregation & having received satisfaction from them that she was in full Communion with them."

<sup>257</sup>E.g., see *WCB*, 21 November 1693. "It was further agreed that Bro Lindsey and Bro Evans be sent as messengers to Mr Burgis Minister at [westminster?] to inquire of him wether John Thomas be in full communion with that congregation where he is the elder." [Below in pencil: "satisfaction being given was baptized"]. Also, see *WCB*, 19 June 1696. The church agreed to receive a sister as member who was "formerly baptized by B<sup>r</sup> Belshen."

<sup>258</sup>This appears to have normally have been once a month, although sometimes this schedule was altered. See *WCB*, 29 September 1696. "It was further agreed that the Church alter the day of ther breaking bread & to be next first day come 3 weakes in respect of the benefit of the moone."

bread that we may have a mutuall Satisfaction before they are admitted.<sup>259</sup>

Nearly ten years later, another record collaborates this practice and also provides evidence of the care taken in receiving new members into the church.

Brother Burgis of Colechesther was last breaking bread day Received in as a member of our Society upon the evidence and testimony of severall Baptized persons and since that have had a letter testimoniall with many hands which gives Ample sattisfaction.<sup>260</sup>

There is no evidence of any persons not immersed partaking of the Lord's Supper at the Wapping Church. Instead, the evidence points in a different direction. Namely, that the Wapping Church required confirmation of baptism and church membership before allowing participation at the Lord's Table.

## Summary

While most modern discussions of the nature of the Lord's Supper assume that the Baptist view is that the Supper is merely a memorial, a closer examination of the historical data reveals that the most prominent writing Baptists of the seventeenth century, along with the confessional statements and catechisms they helped to formulate, articulated a spiritual presence view of the Lord's Supper. This is the view expressed in the two catechisms produced by Hercules and Williams Collins respectively, as well as the view found to be articulated in the Second London Confession of Faith. The individual writings of three giants of seventeenth-century Baptist life were also examined and the same conclusion was reached for each. These men were not memorialists. They believed that when Christ's sacrifice was remembered at the Supper, Christ was spiritually present to the believer and that the believer received strength and nourishment from his communion with Christ at the Lord's Table. While the memorial view would eventually come to dominate in Particular Baptist church life by the late eighteenth

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<sup>259</sup>*WCB*, 23 May 1683.

<sup>260</sup>*WCB*, 24 January 1693.

century, the earliest Particular Baptists understood the Lord's Supper to be a rich experience of Christ's nearness and the believer's nourishment through the Spirit when received in faith. For Collins and the Wapping Church, baptism by immersion was a prerequisite both to church membership and the Lord's Supper.

### Other Ordinances?

Although Collins followed the Heidelberg Catechism in limiting the sacraments to baptism and the Lord's Supper, he would use the word "ordinance" to refer to other activities mandated by Christ to the church. For example, delineating the source that issues in the faith that alone makes us "partakers of Christ and his benefits," the *Orthodox Catechism* stated: it is from "the Holy Ghost, who kindleth it in our hearts by the preaching of the Gospel, and other Ordinances, and confirmeth it by the use of the Sacraments."<sup>261</sup> Collins' expanded use of the term "ordinances" is revealed by his use of the phrase "other ordinances" in his rendition of the answer to the Heidelberg Catechism's question 65. Collins seems to have made a clear distinction between "ordinances" and the "sacraments." The former included preaching,<sup>262</sup> prayer,<sup>263</sup> the laying on of hands,<sup>264</sup> as well as hymn singing<sup>265</sup>—and Collins could even describe baptism<sup>266</sup> and the Lord's Supper as such.<sup>267</sup> While it can certainly be understood why

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<sup>261</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 25; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 254. In Renihan's parallel version of the two catechisms at this point, he renders them identical. In actuality, Collins has added the phrase "and other Ordinances."

<sup>262</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 25; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 254.

<sup>263</sup>See Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 37; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 262, where Collins includes prayer with baptism and preaching, both of which he regards as ordinances.

<sup>264</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 33-34; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 260.

<sup>265</sup>"An Appendix concerning the Ordinance of Singing" in Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 75-86. This appendix is not reproduced in Renihan's *True Confessions*.

<sup>266</sup>Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*, 15, 17; Hercules Collins, *The Antidote proved A Counterfeit: or, Error detected, and Believers Baptism Vindicated* (London: William Marshall, 1693), 8.

<sup>267</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 33-34; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 266

Collins included baptism and the Lord's Supper as ordinances of the church, and even preaching and prayer, since all of these are clearly commanded to be practiced by the church in the New Testament, the inclusion of the laying on of hands upon the newly baptized and the practice of hymn singing may require some explication. In what follows, an attempt is made to elucidate these practices in their seventeenth-century context.

### Laying On of Hands

In his insistence that the laying on of hands upon the baptized was commanded by Scripture,<sup>268</sup> Collins represented a minority position among seventeenth-century Particular Baptists. This was a commonly held belief among the General Baptists of the period, being included in their *An Orthodox Creed* of 1678 as a major article of faith.<sup>269</sup> The other notable exception in the belief of this doctrine among Particular Baptists of the period was Benjamin Keach, who in 1675 defended this conviction in *Darkness Vanquished: or, Truth in it's Primitive purity*,<sup>270</sup> later published in a second edition twenty-three years later as *Laying on of Hands upon Baptized Believers, As such, Proved an Ordinance of Christ*.<sup>271</sup> For both Keach and Collins, "the ordinance has a deeply experimental significance" and speaks primarily of assurance of salvation.<sup>272</sup> Collins

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<sup>268</sup>Collins, like all other Particular Baptists of his day, also believed in the laying on of hands upon the newly ordained, which "consecrates the ordinand to office, symbolizes the presence of the hand of God, and provokes special prayer for a fruitful ministry." Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 102. Cf. Hercules Collins, *The Temple Repair'd: Or, An Essay to revive the long-neglected Ordinances, of exercising the spiritual Gift of Prophecy for the Edification of the Churches; and of ordaining Ministers duly qualified* (London: Willam and Joseph Marshal, 1702), 61.

<sup>269</sup>See, for example, the *Orthodox Creed* 32 (1678) in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 320-21. For a brief survey of Baptist practice of laying on of hands, see Ernest A. Payne, "Baptists and the Laying on of Hands," *BQ* 15, no. 5 (January 1954): 203-15.

<sup>270</sup>Benjamin Keach, *Darkness vanquished: or, Truth in it's Primitive purity Being An answer to a late Book of Mr. Henry Danvers, intituled A Treatise of laying on of Hands* (London: Benjamin Harris, 1675).

<sup>271</sup>Benjamin Keach, *Laying on of Hands upon Baptized Believers, as such, Proved an Ordinance of Christ*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Benj. Harris, 1698).

<sup>272</sup>J. K. Parratt, "An Early Baptist on the Laying on of Hands," *BQ* 21, no. 7 (July 1965): 325-27, 320. See also the discussion by Walker, *The Excellent Benjamin Keach*, 186-88. In some ways, this conviction is a variant of the belief held by some Puritans about the sealing of the Spirit. See, with regard to

believed it was “the duty of every Christian to be under this practice” which he defined as:

Christ’s ministers laying their hands solemnly upon the head of the baptized, with prayer to Almighty God for an increase of the graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost, . . . enable us to hold fast the faith which we now visibly own, having entered into the church by holy Baptism, and also be helped thereby to maintain constant war against the world, flesh and Devil.<sup>273</sup>

### **Singing of Hymns**

Just as the laying on of hands was an ordinance to be added to the sacrament of baptism, so too was the singing of a hymn to be added to the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. This was a matter of no small controversy among the Baptists in the two decades following the publication of Collins’ *Orthodox Catechism*, especially during the 1690s.<sup>274</sup> In the catechism, Collins inserted the question, “How ought this ordinance of the Lord’s Supper be closed?” Collins made a succinct argument for this then largely neglected practice in his answer:

In singing praises to God vocally and audibly for his great benefits and blessings to his church in the shedding of the most precious blood of his Son to take away their sin; which blessings are pointed out in this sacrament. Also we find our Lord and his disciples did close up this ordinance in singing an hymn or psalm; and if Christ did sing, who was going to die, what cause have we to sing for whom he died, that we might not eternally die, but live a spiritual and eternal life with Father, Son, and Spirit in inexpressible glory.<sup>275</sup>

In summary, Collins argued singing praise to God is the most appropriate response to the

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the latter, Adam Embry, “‘Keeper of the Great Seal of Heaven’: Sealing of the Spirit in the Thought of John Flavel” (Th.M. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008) and Choon-Gill Chae, “Thomas Goodwin’s Doctrine of the Sealing of the Holy Spirit” (Th.M. thesis, Toronto Baptist Seminary and Bible College, 2010).

<sup>273</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 34; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 260.

<sup>274</sup>On the hymn-singing controversy, see Murdina D. MacDonald, “London Calvinistic Baptists, 1689–1727: Tensions Within a Dissenting Community Under Toleration” (D.Phil. thesis, Regent’s Park College, University of Oxford, 1982), 49-82; Walker, *The Excellent Benjamin Keach*, 275-303; James C. Brooks, “Benjamin Keach and the Baptist Singing Controversy: Mediating Scripture, Confessional Heritage, and Christian Unity” (Ph.D. diss., The Florida State University, 2006); James Patrick Carnes, “The Famous Mr. Keach: Benjamin Keach and His Influence on Congregational Singing in Seventeenth Century England” (M.A. thesis, North Texas State University, 1984); Haykin and Robinson, “Particular Baptist Debates about Communion and Hymn-Singing,” 296-308.

<sup>275</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 44-45; Renihan, *True Confessions*, 266-67.

Lord's Supper because it expressed gratitude to God for the "great benefits and blessings" given to the church of Christ in the death of the Lord Jesus. Furthermore, this practice imitated the model provided by Christ and his disciples on the eve of the crucifixion.

In addition to the section in the catechism proper arguing for hymn singing at the conclusion of the Lord's Supper, a substantial appendix was attached to the catechism which argued for hymn singing in a more general sense. In his "An Appendix Concerning the Ordinance of Singing,"<sup>276</sup> Collins not only set forth his arguments for singing praise to God, he also described the proper attitude to accompany such singing.<sup>277</sup> "Singing," Collins asserted, "is a moral duty"<sup>278</sup> and it must be accompanied by "faith," "spiritual joy" and "grace."<sup>279</sup> Although often overshadowed by Keach in discussions of the subject, Collins was actually the first London Baptist to argue for congregational singing in print.<sup>280</sup> In his dissertation on Keach, James Barry Vaughn calls Collins the "most enthusiastic Baptist proponent of corporate singing before Keach."<sup>281</sup> Keach introduced a hymn at the end of the Lord's Supper by 1673, four years before Collins became pastor at

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<sup>276</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 75-86. Renihan did not include this text in his *True Confessions*. Excerpts from this appendix are included in Haykin and Weaver, eds., *Devoted to the Service of the Temple*, 79-84.

<sup>277</sup>In his description of the proper attitude required in singing, Collins appears to be heavily dependent upon a sermon based on Ephesians 5:19 preached by John Wells titled "How we may make Melody in our Hearts to God in Singing of Psalms." This sermon was published in Samuel Annesley, *A Supplement to the Morning-Exercise at Cripple-Gate: or, Several more Cases of Conscience Practically Resolved by sundry Ministers* (London: Thomas Cockerill, 1674), 124-41.

<sup>278</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 76.

<sup>279</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 85.

<sup>280</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin points out that as early as 1663 Hanserd Knollys argued for solo singing on the basis of 1 Corinthians 14:15. This practice could only be observed, however, if the Holy Spirit "dictated" both the words and tune. Haykin also notes that Vavasor Powell (1617–1670) had stated in his personal confession of faith that singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs was "a continued Gospel-ordinance, and duty; and to be performed by all, but especially in the Churches." Michael A. G. Haykin, "'At Thy Table . . . Thy Loveliness I View': The person of Jesus Christ in the hymns of Joseph Stennett I," *BQ* 45, no. 2 (April 2013): 70.

<sup>281</sup>James Barry Vaughn, "Public Worship and Practical Theology in the Work of Benjamin Keach (1640–1704)" (Ph.D. diss., St. Mary's College, University of St. Andrews, 1989), 165.

Wapping. He did not, however, argue for the practice in print until 1691 in his *The Breach Repaired in God's Worship*.<sup>282</sup> By this time, somewhere between twenty and thirty Baptist congregations were practicing congregational singing as a part of their public worship.<sup>283</sup> Collins, as has already been shown, was on record on the topic as early as 1680. Collins, like Keach, composed his own hymns for use in public worship. Collins argued, not only for the singing of Psalms in meter, but also “that we are at our liberty to compose other parts or portions of God’s Word to that end.”<sup>284</sup> Apparently, Collins had taken to this exercise himself. In the “Epistle Dedicatory” of *Three Books* addressed to the “Church and Flock of Christ meeting near Wapping,”<sup>285</sup> he referenced some of his own hymns, which had been included in his epic poem *The Marrow of Gospel-History*.<sup>286</sup> These hymns had been “sung at the Lord’s Table”<sup>287</sup> by the Wapping church and he thought they might recognize these sections that he had retooled for this new work. Collins’ exhortations in the *An Orthodox Catechism* apparently reflected the practice of the Wapping Church of singing a hymn at the conclusion of the Lord’s Supper.

## Summary

Collins was not reluctant to hold to unpopular positions, if he thought they were demanded by Scripture. Although it was a minority position among seventeenth-century English Baptists, Collins maintained that the laying on of hands upon the newly baptized was mandated by the examples of the practice found in the New Testament. Similarly,

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<sup>282</sup>Benjamin Keach, *The Breach Repaired in God's Worship: or, Singing of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, proved to be an Holy Ordinance of Jesus Christ* (London, 1691).

<sup>283</sup>Carnes, “The Famous Mr. Keach,” 83.

<sup>284</sup>Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 84.

<sup>285</sup>Hercules Collins, *Three Books* (London, 1696), iii.

<sup>286</sup>Hercules Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History: or, A Diversion for Youth at their spare Hours* (London, 1696).

<sup>287</sup>Collins, *Three Books*, ix.



Collins did not consider the introduction of corporate hymn singing to be an innovative practice, but rather a matter of obedience to Christ. Although only hymn singing continues to be practiced widely today, Collins' commitment to both of these practices is yet another illustration of Collins' commitment to the regulative principle of worship.

### **Conclusion**

Collins' Baptist ecclesiology flowed out of his Puritan/Separatist commitments. His definition of the church was consistent with the definition found in the Church of England's Thirty-Nine Articles and in the ecclesiological writings of the Puritan Independent John Owen. The difference is that Collins consistently applied this definition and found that it demanded a regenerate church membership. Consistent with this definition of the church was Collins' commitment to religious liberty. Since the church and state are not coterminous, individuals should not be punished by the state because of their religious convictions. Each church then is governed internally by the congregation, not externally by the state. Since the congregation is composed of regenerate believers filled with the Spirit of Christ, the congregation is itself the ultimate seat of authority in the church. Even the ordinances, the most distinctive elements of Baptist ecclesiology, reflect Reformed/Puritan approach. The immersion of believers was an outworking of the regulative principle of worship and the Lord's Supper was viewed in an identical manner with the Reformed/Puritan tradition as involving a real spiritual presence of Christ. Finally, two of the most controversial practices of Baptists in the seventeenth century, the laying on of hands and the singing of hymns, reflect a desire to be faithful to the Reformation's own regulative principle of worship. These early Baptists saw themselves as fitting comfortably within a Puritan framework. They deserve to be studied and accepted on their own terms.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

In his 1979 Oxford thesis on the seventeenth-century English Particular Baptist Thomas Collier, Richard Land observed that the “careful examination of one man, and his interaction with his society and with the views and opinions of his contemporaries, can be of value in understanding the historical and theological development of [the] period.”<sup>1</sup> This belief has undergirded this study of Hercules Collins. This dissertation has argued that the writings of Hercules Collins demonstrate that he viewed himself as faithfully operating within both the historic Christian orthodoxy shown in the early creeds and the Protestant orthodoxy codified by the Westminster Assembly in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Collins’ writings demonstrate that he affirmed historic Christianity and those evangelical doctrines hammered out in the Protestant Reformation. In addition, Collins’ writings on ecclesiological issues demonstrate that he was committed to a Baptist ecclesiology that flowed naturally from his orthodox and Puritan foundational beliefs.

In order to accomplish the purpose of this dissertation, a careful examination of Collins’ published writings was required. An analysis of these writings has revealed that Collins self-consciously identified himself within the theological streams of historic Christianity, Reformed-Puritan orthodoxy, and Baptist ecclesiology. Additionally, this study has incorporated findings from the unpublished church minute book. The insight into seventeenth-century Baptist church life provided by this largely untapped resource

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Dale Land, “Doctrinal Controversies of English Particular Baptists (1644–1691) as Illustrated by the Career and Writings of Thomas Collier” (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1979), 3.

has served to illuminate how these Baptists' theological convictions worked themselves out practically in the context of their local churches. In summary, this dissertation has examined Hercules Collins in his own historical context, in his own words, and as a pastor of a congregation of believers.

### **Summary of Arguments**

One of the goals of this dissertation has been to demonstrate the pervasive influence and representative status of Hercules Collins. Although heretofore largely neglected in seventeenth-century English Baptist historiography, Collins was a prominent pastor among the London Particular Baptists of his day. His theological convictions, therefore, can be a helpful guide to understanding the doctrinal commitments of the community of which he was a vital part. A careful examination of Collins' writings, then, can provide a window into understanding how seventeenth-century Baptists viewed themselves in relationship to historic Christian orthodoxy and Puritan orthodoxy. Furthermore, these writings reveal how these early Baptists were able to wed together their Puritan commitments with a distinctively Baptist ecclesiology.

Chapter 1 provided a background of how Hercules Collins has been cited in Baptist historiography. This chapter explored the brief proof-text type citations given to him on questions of Baptist origins, the beginning of hymn-singing, the education of ministers, and seventeenth-century women studies. It argued that Collins' importance in Baptist life far exceeds the brief references given to him in these studies. Instead, Collins was presented as a prominent member of the late-seventeenth-century Particular Baptist community whose theological emphases well represent the wider group of which he was a part. Thus, Collins' commitments to historic Christian orthodoxy, Puritan theology, and Baptist ecclesiology can be taken as a representative study sample for the wider Baptist community.

Chapter 2 offered a biographical sketch of Collins. At just over fifty pages, this

chapter provides the most comprehensive study of Collins' life to date. Collins is shown to be a faithful and loving pastor, and one who endured persecution for the sake of the gospel. Combined, the various details of Collins' life demonstrate not only his importance in the Particular Baptist community, but also his interconnectivity with several recognized leaders within that community. This helps demonstrate how Collins can be viewed as a faithful representative of Particular Baptist thought in the late-seventeenth century.

Chapter 3 explored the orthodoxy of Hercules Collins. Collins' relationship to historic Christianity was demonstrated by showing the way in which he utilized the creeds of the early church and the writings of the Patristic era. Further analysis of Collins' writings demonstrated his commitment to a robust Nicene-Trinitarianism and Chalcedonian-Christology. Collins' *An Orthodox Creed* was seen to be, in part, a response to Trinitarian and Christological errors that were plaguing the wider Baptist community in the mid- to late-seventeenth century. Overall, Collins' writings reveal a clear understanding of and commitment to the historic formulations of the Trinity and two-nature Christology defined at Nicaea and Chalcedon respectively.

Chapter 4 demonstrated Collins' relationship to a Reformed/Puritan mindset. The Baptist movement of which Collins was a part emerged from a Puritan/Separatist milieu. Collins self-consciously identified himself with the "Orthodox Divines" of Protestantism. He shared a Puritan approach to hermeneutics and homiletics, and demonstrated a Puritan approach to suffering while in prison. Furthermore, and somewhat ironically, when Collins was forced to dissent from his Reformed brothers over the immersion of believers, he only did so based upon his commitment to the Reformed regulative principle of worship.

Chapter 5 argues that the Baptist ecclesiology of Collins ecclesiology flowed naturally out of his Puritan/Separatist commitments. Collins shared a definition of the church with the Puritan divine John Owen and the Church of England, Collins, however,

consistently applied this definition to the concept of a believer's church. Flowing from his commitment to regenerate church membership, Collins affirmed religious liberty from the state for all. The Baptist churches were congregational in their church government and were led by elders/pastors. Collins and other prominent Baptists retained language sometimes associated with sacramentalism, but they, like their Reformed contemporaries distanced themselves from any concept of salvific benefit coming through the ordinances themselves. This chapter also demonstrated the way that Collins and other Baptists applied the Protestant regulative principle of worship, while at the same time rejecting the historic Protestant position on baptism. Collins and other key Baptist leaders spoke of the Lord's Supper in ways which went beyond the memorial view currently in vogue in Baptist life. They articulated a Reformed view of spiritual presence in the Supper which reflected the emphases of Reformers John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli. Two other "ordinances" of the church were also explored in this chapter. Although only singing remains a part of present-day mainstream Baptist life, both the laying on of hands upon the newly baptized and the singing of congregational hymns were argued for based on the Reformed regulative principle of worship.

Overall, Collins was demonstrated to be significant due to his prominent role and representative writings. He is a faithful spokesperson for the broader Particular Baptist community of which he was a part. Seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists viewed themselves as fitting quite comfortably within the framework of historic Christianity and Protestant orthodoxy. Their Baptist ecclesiological commitments were not seen to be in contradiction to these more "Fundamental" concerns. They alone were consistently applying the principles of the Reformation regarding the sole authority of Scripture to govern faith and practice to their practical ecclesiology.

### **Implications for Questions of Baptist Identity**

While the turn of the twentieth century saw controversy rage among Baptists

regarding Baptist origins,<sup>2</sup> the most divisive issues among Baptists during the first decade of the twenty-first century have been regarding Baptist identity.<sup>3</sup> Virtually all Baptist scholars today acknowledge that the earliest English “Baptists,” such as John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, did not immerse. Previous Baptist historians who argued for an organic succession of Baptist churches have been shown to be wrong by the historical evidence.<sup>4</sup> It does not follow, however, that pre-twentieth century Baptist historians were wrong in their understanding of the essence of Baptist identity. This seems to be the assumption today as new models are being trumpeted which emphasize “soul liberty” as the *sine qua non* of Baptist identity.

For example, Walter Shurden, in an essay published in a recently published *Festschrift* in honor of the Baptist historian Harry Leon McBeth, recently deceased, asserted in no uncertain terms that the “voluntary principle is the core value of the Baptist people.”<sup>5</sup> In making this statement, Shurden was echoing the words of E. Glenn Hinson, former professor of church history at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, who

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<sup>2</sup>Known as “The Whitsitt Controversy,” this controversy revolved around the writings of the third president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, William H. Whitsitt. Whitsitt published his research arguing that contrary to the traditional successionist view of Baptist history, immersion did not begin to be practiced in England until 1641. For a recent treatment of this controversy, see James H. Slatton, *W. H. Whitsitt: The Man and the Controversy* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009). See also Gregory A. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859–2009* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 189-229.

<sup>3</sup>David Bebbington noted this trend at the end of the twentieth century in his recent history of Baptists, devoting an entire chapter to the subject: “The identity of Baptists became a major subject of discussion in the last quarter of the twentieth century.” David W. Bebbington, *Baptists through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 255.

<sup>4</sup>See W. Morgan Patterson, *Baptist Successionism: A Critical View* (Valley Forge, PA: The Judson Press, 1969); and James Edward McGoldrick, *Baptist Successionism: A Crucial Question in Baptist History* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994).

<sup>5</sup>Walter Shurden, “Baptist Freedom and the Turn Toward a Free Conscience: 1612/1652,” in *Turning Points in Baptist History: A Festschrift in Honor of Harry Leon McBeth*, ed. Michael E. Williams, Sr., and Walter B. Shurden (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2008), 31.

called religious liberty “the most vital of Baptist principles.”<sup>6</sup> While no student of Baptist history would dare to question that Baptists have always been advocates of religious liberty, it is another matter altogether to make this principle the center of Baptist identity. The important question, of course, is whether there is historical evidence for making freedom the center of Baptist identity.

This study has demonstrated that commitment to the Baptist distinctive of religious liberty actually was a by-product of robust theological principles. These principles were rooted in historic Christian orthodoxy and Reformation theology. All of the Baptist distinctives, while of obvious special importance to Baptists, would simply not exist without the theological framework provided by historic Christian orthodoxy and Reformed/Puritan theology. Any attempt to elevate a distinctive to foundational status is doomed to undermine the rational basis for that distinctive. Thus, the best way for Baptists to retain a commitment to religious liberty is by remaining committed to the theological convictions of our Baptist forebears which brought them to that commitment in the first place.

A more compelling vision of Baptist identity is seen in the work of such early Baptist historians such as Thomas Crosby,<sup>7</sup> Joseph Ivimey,<sup>8</sup> Isaac Backus,<sup>9</sup> and David Benedict.<sup>10</sup> This view of Baptist identity was most recently articulated by Thomas J. Nettles as the “coherent-truth model” of Baptist identity. In his three-volume history of

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<sup>6</sup>E. Glenn Hinson, “In Search of Our Baptist Identity,” in *Are Southern Baptists “Evangelicals”?* by James Leo Garrett, E. Glenn Hinson, and James E. Tull (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), 140.

<sup>7</sup>Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, 4 vols. (London: John Robinson, 1740).

<sup>8</sup>Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, 4 vols. (London, 1814–1823).

<sup>9</sup>Isaac Backus, *A History of New England with Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians called Baptists*, 2 vols. in 1 (Newton, MA: Backus Historical Society, 1871).

<sup>10</sup>David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America, and other parts of the World* (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1813).

Baptists, Nettles proposed a four-fold description of Baptist identity as: “Orthodox,” “Evangelical,” “Conscientiously Confessional,” and “Separateness, or a Theological Integrated Ecclesiology.”<sup>11</sup> In this model, the Baptist distinctives are rightly seen as flowing from foundational theological doctrines rooted in patristic orthodoxy and Reformation theology.<sup>12</sup> Nettles’ quadrilateral of Baptist identity more accurately reflects the historical data gathered from the scrutiny of the writings and ministry of one of the most well-connected seventeenth-century English Particular Baptists, namely Hercules Collins who was at once orthodox, Puritan, and Baptist.

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<sup>11</sup>Thomas J. Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity*, vol. 1, *Beginnings in Britain* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 35-50.

<sup>12</sup>Similar models are promoted with some variations by David S. Dockery, Nathan A. Finn, James Leo Garrett, Timothy George, Michael A. G. Haykin, and R. Stanton Norman.



APPENDIX 1  
CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE AND  
WORKS OF HERCULES COLLINS

- 1647 Hercules Collins is born.
- 1669 Collins began to preach at the age of 23.
- 1670 Arrested at a Conventicle in June along with 13 others including Richard Blunt.
- 1677 March–Collins began to pastor the Wapping church.
- 1680 Published *An Orthodox Catechism*.
- 1682 Published *Some Reasons for Separation from the Communion of the Church of England*.
- 1683 March–Collins was cited for his failure to attend the local parish church.  
May–Collins was taken from a Lord’s Day service and arrested.
- 1684 Published *A Voice from Prison and Counsel for the Living Occasioned from the Dead*.  
August–Likely released from the Newgate Prison.
- 1687 August–On the 7<sup>th</sup>, the Wapping Church met for the first time in her newly constructed meeting house.
- 1689 September–Attended the General Assembly of Particular Baptists in London which formally adopted the Second London Confession of Faith.
- 1690 Published *Mountains of Brass, Or, a Discourse upon the Decrees of God*.  
June–Attend the General Assembly of Particular Baptists in London.
- 1691 Published *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*.  
June–Attended the General Assembly of Particular Baptists in London.
- 1692 May–Attended the General Assembly of Particular Baptists in London.

- 1693 Published *The Antidote Proved A Counterfeit*.
- 1695 Published *Truth and Innocency Vindicated* and *The Sandy Foundation of Infant Baptism Shaken*.
- 1696 Published *The Marrow of Gospel-History* and *Three Books* (which included reprints of *Mountains of Brass*, *The Marrow of Gospel-History* and only edition of *The Scribe Instructed into the Kingdom of Heaven*).
- 1702 Published *The Temple Repair 'd*.
- October—Collins died on the 4<sup>th</sup> and was interred on the 9<sup>th</sup> in Bunhill Fields.
- 1703 April—Sarah Collins died and was interred on the 6<sup>th</sup> beside her husband in Bunhill Fields.

APPENDIX 2  
HERCULES COLLINS' TOMBSTONE

The following entry appears in Additional Manuscript 28516 (British Library), folio 26 verso:

COLLINS Flat stone laid in the yard.  
Here lieth int[erre]d the body of the Revd  
Herc.....llins who depd  
this Life the 4th Octr 1702  
in the 56 yr of his age.  
Here also lieth Sarah Wife of  
Hercules Collins who depd  
this Life the 6th April 1703 aged .....yrs

The whole entry has a cross through it, although it is still legible. Any gaps in the above, indicated by a row of dots, are as they appear in the manuscript, suggesting that they could not be read on the tombstone.

This manuscript is one drawn up by the Baptist pastor and author John Rippon (1751—1836), a part of the transcription he made of all of the visible inscriptions of the tombs in Bunhill Fields in the 1790s and 1800s. His work has never been published, but is contained in fourteen volumes in the British Library.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Ken R. Manley, *'Redeeming Love Proclaim': John Rippon and the Baptists*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought 12 (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster Press, 2004), 211-14. For a brief history of the cemetery, see W. T. Whitley, "Bunhill Fields: The Place and the Records," *BQ* 5, no. 5 (January 1931): 220-26.

APPENDIX 3

LIST OF BOOKS PURCHASED  
FOR "GIFTED BRETHREN"

		Books Given by the Church unto Br Chaplaine Br Lyndsey <sup>1</sup>						
Imprimis	Dutch Annotations	-	-	-	-	00	16.	00
	Two Charnocks Attributes and on providence	-	-	-	-	02.	01.	- 00
	One Leighs Body Divinity	-	-	-		00	14.	00
	One More Leighs Body Divinity				-	00	13.	00
	One Book Logic and Retic	-	-	-		00	01	- 00
	Two Books of Doc Willison on preaching prayre					00	04.	- 06.
	One Florus Intelectus	-	-	-	-	00	01	- 08.
	One Bagster on Witches and Mony				-	00	01	06.
	One Bunyan Warr holy	-	-	-	-	00	01	08.
	One English Dictionary				-	00	01	06.
	One Confession of faith				-	00	00	10.
	Two Bibels and Cases	-	-	-	-	00.	11.	04.
	One Scholars Library				-	00	12.	00.
	Sum totall					<u>06</u>	<u>00</u>	<u>00</u>

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<sup>1</sup>Transcription from *WCB*. The lists appear on two undated and unnumbered pages just after the roll of church members. Photograph of page appears on following page for comparison. Images used by permission of Strict Baptist Historical Society.

Books Given by the Church unto Br Chaplain Br Synge

*Ingrinis*

Dutch Annotations - - - - -	00	16.	00.
Two Charnocks Attributes - - - - -	02.	01.	00
and on providence - - - - -			
One Light Body Divinity - - - - -	00	14.	00
One More Light Body Divinity - - - - -	00	13.	00
One Book Logic and Rhetoric - - - - -	00	01	00
Two Books of Doc Willeson on <sup>prop.</sup> <del>providing</del> - - - - -	00	04.	06.
One Florus Intolclus - - - - -	00	01	00
One Bayster on Witches - - - - -	00	01	06.
One Bunyan Harr holy <sup>and Money</sup> - - - - -	00	01	00
One English Dictionary - - - - -	00	01	06.
One Confession of Faith - - - - -	00	00	10.
Two Bibles and Cases - - - - -	00.	11.	04.
One Scholars Library - - - - -	00	12.	00.
Sum totall		<u>06</u>	<u>00 00</u>

Figure A1—First list of books purchased for “Gifted Brethren”

Books Given by the Church unto Br Hall  
Br. Gander Br. Humphrys Br Mills Br Batim

Imprimis	Two Scholars Library	-	-	01	-	04.	00
	Two Smiths Retoric	-	-	-	00	-	03 - 03.
	One Book Coles Logic	-	-	-	00	-	01 - 09
	One Diodate Annotations		-		00	-	04 - 00
	One English Dictionary	-	-	-	00		01 - 06.
	Confessions of Faith five		-		00		04 - 02
	Three Ames Marrow Divinity		-		00		03 02.
	One Leighs Body Divinity		-	-	00		06. - 00
	Three Books Paid for to Br Lyndsey		-		00		04 06.
	One Cottons Concordance		-	-	00		05 - 00
	One Florus Intellectus		-	-	-	00	01 08.
	One Newtons Logic	-	-	-	-	00	01 - 00
	Sum totall				<u>03</u>	<u>00</u>	<u>00.</u>

Books Given by the Church unto Br Hall  
 Br. Gauder Br. Humphreys Br Mills Br  
 Babin

*Imprimis*

Two Scholars Library	--	01	04	00
Two Smiths <del>Library</del>	---	00	03	03
One Book for Logic	--	00	01	09
One <del>Disputate</del> Annotations	---	00	04	00
One English Dictionary	--	00	01	06
* Confessions of Faith five	--	00	04	02
Three James Marrow Divinity	---	00	03	02
One Brights Body Divinity	---	00	06	00
Three Books Paid for Br Lyndsay	---	00	04	06
One Cottons Concordance	--	00	05	00
One Florus Intellectualus	---	00	01	08
One Newtons Logic	--	00	01	00
				<hr/>
Sum totall				03 00 00
				<hr/>

Figure A2—Second list of books purchased for “Gifted Brethren”

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## ABSTRACT

### HERCULES COLLINS: ORTHODOX, PURITAN, BAPTIST

Garry Stephen Weaver, Jr., Ph.D.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013  
Chair: Dr. Thomas J. Nettles

This dissertation argues that the writings of Hercules Collins demonstrate that he viewed himself as faithfully operating within both the historic Nicene-Christianity shown in the early creeds and the Protestant orthodoxy codified by the Westminster Assembly in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the thesis of the dissertation and the methodology that is pursued in arguing for the thesis. In chapter 2, a biographical sketch of Collins is provided. Collins' life demonstrates not only his significance, but also that he can be viewed as a faithful representative of Particular Baptist thought in the late seventeenth century.

The third chapter focuses on the orthodoxy of Hercules Collins. Collins' relationship to historic Christianity is demonstrated by showing the way he utilized the creeds of the early church and the writings of the Patristic era. Further analysis of Collins' writings will demonstrate his commitment to a robust Trinitarianism that reflects a Nicene understanding of orthodoxy. Collins' writings will be mined for his doctrines of Theology Proper and Christology in order to demonstrate his commitment to historic Christianity. In chapter 4, Collins' commitment to a Puritan/Protestant Evangelicalism is explored. This is proven by showing his dedication to the Protestant regulative principle of worship. Collins' work on hermeneutic and homiletics reveal Puritan influence. In addition, Collins' approach to suffering reflects a Puritan piety. Chapter 5 presents the Baptist ecclesiology of Hercules Collins. This chapter demonstrates the way that Collins'



applied the Protestant regulative principle of worship, while at the same time rejecting the historic Protestant position on baptism. This chapter also explores Collins' doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

In the sixth and concluding chapter, the issue of Collins' significance is again explored by a summary of the evidence presented for his importance and ability to represent the broader Particular Baptist community of which he was a part. The thesis is also revisited as I summarize the evidence that the Particular Baptist community of Collins' day viewed themselves within the framework of historic Christianity and Protestant orthodoxy. This chapter also provides an opportunity to reflect upon what this study can tell us about the nature of Baptist identity.

## VITA

Garry Stephen Weaver, Jr.

### EDUCATION

B.S. Religion, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, 2001

M.Div., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005

### MINISTERIAL

Minister of Outreach, Grace Baptist Church, Newport, Tennessee, 1998–2000

Pastor, West Broadway Baptist Church, Lenoir City, Tennessee, 2000–2008

Senior Pastor, Farmdale Baptist Church, Frankfort, Kentucky, 2008–

### ACADEMIC

Seminary Extension Instructor, Loudon County Baptist Association, 2006–  
2008

Research and Administrative Assistant, Andrew Fuller Center, 2008–

Garrett Fellow, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009–2012

Junior Fellow, The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies, 2009–

Adjunct Instructor, Center for Pioneer Church Planting, 2011–

Adjunct Instructor, Boyce College, 2013

Adjunct Instructor, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013

### ORGANIZATIONAL

Baptist Historical Society (UK)

Evangelical Theological Society

J. H. Spencer Historical Society

Kentucky Historical Society

Strict Baptist Historical Society (UK)