

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY BAPTIST VIEW OF MINISTRY AS
SEEN IN THREE FUNERAL SERMONS BY JOHN PIGGOTT

A Paper

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In the course of three months in the year 1702, there died three of the most prominent Particular Baptist pastors in London.¹ These men were William Collins, Thomas Harrison and Hercules Collins. Their deaths signaled the end of a most eventful seventeenth century in Baptist life in England marked by both persecution and progress. All three of their funeral sermons were preached by the same man, a young Baptist minister by the name of John Piggott (d. 1713). In these funeral sermons preached to the deceased ministers' respective churches, a specific view of ministry can be detected. While all three of these sermons were preached between August and November of the year 1702, they actually provide a glimpse of the prevalent view of ministry among Particular Baptists in London during the mid to late seventeenth century.

Biographical Sketches

In order to better understand the significance of the view of ministry expressed in the funeral sermons of John Piggott which testify of the lives and ministries of Thomas Harrison, Hercules Collins and William Collins, a brief biographical sketch of each of these four individuals will be drawn.

¹As nineteenth-century English Baptist historian Joseph Ivimey notes, "The last few years had made great alterations in the churches of the Baptist denomination in London. Many of their pastors, eminent for age and usefulness, had not been 'suffered to continue by reason of death.' It is remarkable that six of the most distinguished of them should have been taken away during the short period of three or four years. These were the venerable Hansard Knollys and William Kiffin; William Collins, Thomas Harrison, Benjamin Dennis, and Hercules Collins. It is easy to conceive what an effect the loss of such ministers must have produced: at their deaths all exertion to promote a union of the churches, by means of a general assembly, seem to have been discontinued." Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: B. J. Holdsworth, 1823), 3:46.

John Piggott

The man who preached the three funeral sermons under consideration was apparently a young man when these sermons were preached.² The esteem with which Piggott was held by his contemporaries is evident in that he was given the responsibility of preaching the funeral sermons for three such respected ministers. He is described by the English Baptist historian Thomas Crosby as a “learned and pious minister, whose memory is blessed, and will be precious in the account of all, who knew the excellent gifts and abilities God was pleased to bestow on him.”³ A later Baptist historian, Joseph Ivimey, attributes the extent of Piggott’s learning and his “eminent qualifications as a minister of Christ” to his “intimacy with Mr. Joseph Stennett, and with that extraordinary scholar Mr. William Collins.”⁴ This was surely true since Piggott himself alludes to the influence of William Collins in his funeral sermon for the same:

He was very communicative, and ready to inform those he conversed with. And I must ever own, to the honour of his memory, that he acted towards me, not only like a friend but a father, both in directing and encouraging me in my studies. He has often cleared up that to my understanding, which before was perplexed and obscure. He has prayed with me, and comforted me; but he is absent: O! how do I miss my guide and my friend?⁵

These influences were clearly successful as Piggott was recognized over a hundred years later as “a most judicious and doctrinal preacher.”⁶

²A few reasons for deducing this are: 1. He was an “intimate friend” of Thomas Harrison who was only thirty-five years old at his death. 2. He could refer to William Collins as being like a “father”. 3. He spoke of his relative youth when addressing the ministers at Hercules Collins’ funeral.

³Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists* (London: John Robinson, 1740; reprint, Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., 2001), 4:315-16.

⁴Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, 3:565.

⁵John Piggott, *Eleven sermons preach’d upon special occasions* (London: John Darby, 1714), 282-83.

⁶Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, 3:262.

Although Piggott was himself “purely Calvinistic” in his ministry, he was originally a member of a “six principle” church in Rupert-street, Goodman’s fields.⁷ These churches, which were founded upon the six principles found in Hebrews 6:2, were largely Arminian in their doctrine. Piggott was sent out by the church at Rupert-street on November 15, 1691 to found another “six principle” church in John’s-court, Hart-street, Covent-garden.⁸ By 1699, the differences between congregation and pastor on the matters of personal election and final perseverance that a split seemed imminent. By January of 1701, Piggott and a majority of the congregation had separated from the Arminian segment of the congregation and were meeting at a meeting-house located at Little Wild [Weld] Street.⁹ Piggott “continued his ministry with great reputation and success” among this congregation until becoming too ill in July of 1712.¹⁰ He died in March of 1713 and his funeral sermon was preached by Joseph Stennett. This sermon is contained in the same volume from which the other three funeral sermons under consideration in this paper are preserved.¹¹

Thomas Harrison

The first sermon under consideration in this paper is the one preached by John Piggott on the occasion of the death of his “intimate friend” Thomas Harrison.¹² Harrison had become a

⁷Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, 3:566.

⁸Ibid., 3:565.

⁹Ibid., 3:566.

¹⁰Ibid., 3:567.

¹¹John Piggott, *Eleven sermons preach'd upon special occasions* (London: John Darby, 1714).

¹²Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: n.p., 1814), 2:407.

member of the Petty France church, which was served by pastors William Collins and Nehemiah Cox, in the year 1676 at the age of twelve.¹³ Harrison apparently preached the Lord's day morning lecture at Pinner's-hall in London for many years before succeeding the deceased Nehemiah Coxe as assistant to William Collins at his home church at Petty France on July 7, 1689.¹⁴

Harrison, who was well-known for his "talents, learning, zeal, and usefulness",¹⁵ left the Petty France church around the year 1700 over the issue of congregational singing.¹⁶ The Petty France congregation had decided not to include singing in the public worship. Harrison and a number of others within the congregation who believed congregational singing to be a divine command, formed a new congregation at Artillery-lane. This congregation was known for its commitment to singing as a part of public worship.¹⁷ Harrison's ministry at Artillery-lane, however, was short-lived as he died on August 14, 1702 at the age of thirty-five.¹⁸ Piggot's funeral sermon was preached on August 23, 1702 from 1 Timothy 4:7-8 which reads, "I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith: Henceforth is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that Day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his Appearing."¹⁹

¹³Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, 3:341.

¹⁴Ibid., 3:334, 340-41, and 407-08.

¹⁵Ibid., 3:341.

¹⁶Ivimey says it was in 1699 in volume 2 and in 1700-01 in volume 3 of his *A History of the English Baptists*.

¹⁷Ibid., 3:340.

¹⁸Ibid., 3:341.

¹⁹Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 159.

Hercules Collins

The second sermon under consideration in this paper is the sermon preached by John Piggott at the funeral of Hercules Collins. Hercules Collins served for over twenty-five years as the third pastor of London's oldest Baptist church.²⁰ Before becoming pastor of this congregation which was then meeting at Old Gravel Lane in March 23, 1677,²¹ Collins and his wife Sarah were apparently members of the Petty France congregation and sat under the ministry of William Collins.²² Although there is no evidence of any relation between these two men, both were signatories of the reissued *Second London Confession of Faith* in 1689. Few biographical details are known about Hercules Collins. It is known that he was imprisoned at Newgate in 1684 for his nonconformity to the Church of England.²³ English Baptist historian Thomas Crosby records within forty years of Collins' death that he was "a faithful minister of the gospel; though he had not a learned education, yet was a useful and laborious servant of Christ, and one that suffered imprisonment for his sake. He began to be religious early, and continued faithful to the last, and was not shocked by the fury of persecutors."²⁴

Hercules Collins was a relatively prolific author for his day. At least twelve books or

²⁰See Ernest F. Kevan, *London's Oldest Baptist Church* (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1933) for the remarkable first three hundred years of history of this congregation. The church was started by John Spilsbury in 1633 and continues today as an evangelical congregation. The church is now called Church Hill Baptist Church, Walthamstow. Their website is: <http://www.chbc.org.uk/>.

²¹Kevan, *London's Oldest Baptist Church*, 38.

²²Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, 3:301.

²³Michael A. G. Haykin, "Collins, Hercules," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 709.

²⁴Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists* (London: John Robinson, 1740), 129.

tracts were published by him beginning in 1680 with his *Orthodox Catechism*²⁵ and ending in 1702 with his *A Temple Repair'd*.²⁶ His works include Baptist defenses of credo-baptism and critiques of paedobaptism, as well as *Some Reasons for Separation from the Church of England* (1682). He was also an ardent defender of God's sovereignty in a work titled *Mountains of Brass, or, A Discourse upon the Decrees of God* (1690). He died on October 4, 1702 and his funeral sermon was preached on October 9 from Matthew 24:44 which reads, "Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an Hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh."²⁷

William Collins

The third sermon under consideration in this paper is the sermon preached by John Piggott at the funeral of William Collins. William Collins 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. During the first sixteen years of Collins' pastorate he was assisted by Dr. Nehemiah Cox, with whom he was ordained in 1673.²⁸

William Collins was apparently gifted as both a theologian and a scholar. Ivimey, states that his "eminence . . . as a scholar and theologian was very great."²⁹ In his funeral sermon,

²⁵A Baptist revision of the Lutheran *Heidelberg Catechism* of 1562. Includes an interesting appendix in which Collins argues for the duty of congregational singing. Although Benjamin Keach is generally credited with being the first to introduce congregational singing, Hercules Collins actually argued in print before him in 1680. 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.

²⁶This could be Collins' *magnum opus*. Written in the same year that he died, Collins outlines a vision of the church as a place of theological training for ministers. It contains practical advice on both hermeneutics and homiletics which would still be useful today. The full title is: *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).

²⁷Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 205.

²⁸Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, 3:331.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 3:332.

John Piggott calls Collins “a very learned and judicious minister of Christ.”³⁰ He then elaborates 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.³¹

Collins was a man whose remarkable gifts were all used in the service of the One who had so obviously gifted him.

William Collins’ 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.³² This is commonly believed to be the same Confession which becomes 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 were the chief architects of this historic document which continues to unite Particular Baptists today. William Collins died on October 30, 1702 and his funeral sermon was preached on November 15 by John Piggott from Job 14:14 which reads, “All the Days of my appointed Time will I wait, till my Change come.”³³

³⁰Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 279.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, 3:332.

³³Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 245.

View of Ministry

In his extensive survey of the evolving views of ministry held from the English Separatists of the late sixteenth century to the Southern Baptist Convention of the early twentieth century, William Gene Moore summarizes his findings on how seventeenth and eighteenth century British Baptists viewed ministry:

The duties of British Baptist ministers to their congregations all involved watching over the souls of their members. . . . Proclaiming the Word of God, engaging in pastoral visitation, administering the ordinances, and overseeing church discipline were essential duties of the minister. Outward success was left in the hands of God – ministers were required to be faithful in carrying out their scriptural tasks.³⁴

This general description is certainly true of the four men who are the focus of our examination in this paper. John Piggott, in his funeral sermons for Thomas Harrison, Hercules Collins and William Collins, basically says as much. Piggott’s descriptions of the ministries of these men reveal not only what they believed and practiced, but his own values in ministry as well. In these three sermons, four distinct and essential characteristics of ministry recur again and again. These four characteristics are: (1) The Life of the Minister, (2) The Ministry of the Word and Prayer, (3) Oversight of Souls, and (4) Evangelistic Fervor.

The Life of the Minister

The majority of John Piggott’s funeral sermons are expositions of specific texts of Scripture. Only at the very end of these sermons does he make any personal remarks regarding the individual whose death occasioned the sermon. However, when Piggott begins to describe

³⁴William Gene Moore, “From Biblical Fidelity to Organizational Efficiency: The Gospel Ministry from English Separatism of the Late Sixteenth Century to the Southern Baptist Convention of the Early Twentieth Century” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 67.

the men of God who lie in the casket before the congregation, he repeatedly refers to the personal character of the minister. These men were no doubt greatly impacted by the words of the apostle Paul to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”

Thomas Harrison. Amazingly, Piggott could say of his friend Thomas Harrison, whom he knew intimately, “His life in every instance was agreeable to his profession.”³⁵ Piggott expands on the character of Harrison in a remarkable way:

He was a person of great integrity of soul, a Nathaniel indeed, one that could be facetious in conversation without being forthy and vain, and serious without being morose and sullen.

He kept himself (through the grace of God) unspotted from the world: *he kept innocence, and took heed to the thing that was right.* And so great concern had he for the honour of his holy profession, that he would deny himself in things innocent in their own nature, rather than scandalize the weak, or lay a stumbling-block before the openly profane. He was a careful observer of the apostolic injunction, *To abstain from even the appearance of evil.* And one thing I have often remarked concerning him (which I believe all that knew him will confess) he was a very religious observer of his word, his promises were as sure and sacred as an oath.³⁶

As a result of his striking character, “men were convinced that he himself believed what he preached”³⁷ for “he was one who lived so that his sermons might be read in his conversation.”³⁸

Hercules Collins. Similarly, Piggott said that Hercules Collins “lived what he preached.”³⁹ Piggott later summarized exactly what it meant for Hercules to so live: “In a word,

³⁵Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 190.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 191.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 192.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 191.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 236.

he 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.”⁴⁰ Because of the way in which Hercules Collins lived his life among his congregation, Piggott did not need to say much. 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.”⁴¹ The life and doctrine of this “late worthy pastor”⁴² were in clear agreement.

William Collins. William Collins was also a man who lived what he preached.

According to Piggott, Collins “had a rich stock of experience as well as of useful knowledge; he felt what he preached, and lived on that food he imparted to others.”⁴³ Piggott knew this on a personal level for he could comment that “he was one of the most modest humble men that ever I conversed with. How did this grace make him shine! which is one of the brightest ornaments of the christian life.”⁴⁴ Therefore Piggott could exhort the congregation who knew such a one in these words: “And let me add, whatever you have heard, and learned, and seen in him as a follower of Christ, that do.”⁴⁵ For a minister of the gospel, no greater words could be spoken.

⁴⁰Piggott, *Eleven Sermons.*, 237.

⁴¹Ibid., 235.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., 281.

⁴⁴Ibid., 281-82.

⁴⁵Ibid., 285.

The Ministry of the Word and Prayer

In Acts 6:4, the apostle Peter states, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” Ever since then, faithful ministers have seen the ministry of the Word and prayer as being their highest calling. Piggott, Harrison and the two Collinses were no different. They too held a high view of the ministry of the Word and prayer.

Thomas Harrison. Harrison’s “close study and constant preaching (frequently three times a day)” resulted in him being greatly exhausted.⁴⁶ As such, Piggott could say that he “preached himself to death.”⁴⁷ As for the content of his sermons, Piggott says that they were always substantive and solid: “He dispensed the bread of life to nourish your souls, and not curiosities to indulge your fancies. Christ crucified was the sum of his preaching.”⁴⁸ His life was one committed to the proclamation of the Word of God.

Hercules Collins. Piggott describes Hercules Collins as possessing Luther’s three qualifications for a minister of the gospel. Those three qualifications are meditation, prayer and temptation (or trials). Here Piggott is no doubt referring to how Collins endured the trial of persecution as a prisoner in the Newgate jail for his nonconformity.⁴⁹ His qualifications of meditation and prayer were lived out in his day in and day out ministry as a pastor. Such was the reputation of this man of God 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

⁴⁶Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 192.

⁴⁷Ibid., 196.

⁴⁸Ibid., 193.

⁴⁹Haykin, “Collins, Hercules,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 709.

shew yourselves workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.”⁵⁰

Piggott likewise exhorted the church to train young men for the ministry who would be “able to defend the truths they preach.”⁵¹ This, Piggott was sure, was the sense of Hercules Collins’ own mind which he would have spoken to them if able.⁵²

William Collins. Piggott speaks much of the learning possessed by William Collins.

He was gifted man, given to much study. But, says Piggot:

He did not study to amuse, but instruct his hearers; not so much regarding what would please as profit them always having on his mind a sense of the worth of souls and therefore he constantly advised his brethren of the ministry to take the greatest care they could to help forward the salvation of sinners, to exalt Christ, and not preach themselves.⁵³

Collins possessed the apostle Paul’s qualification of a Bishop or Elder as being “apt to teach”:

He was apt to teach, and able, upon a sudden, to bring forth something proper for the use of edifying, out of that excellent stock of divine knowledge that he had treasured up; having more than once, when disappointed of that help he expected, gone into the pulpit, and preached an excellent sermon, in the opinion of competent judges. Yet though he was thus qualified, he did not serve God nor you with that which cost him nought, but applied himself to close study for every sermon, when his health would admit.⁵⁴

Even when he was not studying the Scriptures, Collins was meditating on some text of Scripture as he walked down the streets. The result was, in Piggot’s words, “that he had a constant savour of divine things on his spirit.”⁵⁵ William Collins truly exemplified a man given continually “to

⁵⁰Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 238-39.

⁵¹Ibid., 239.

⁵²Ibid., 240. 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 encouragement of humble men that have real gifts, and let such be trained up in useful learning, that they may be able to defend the truths they preach. Your pastor’s mouth is stopped, and cannot speak to you; but this I am sure was the sense of his mind.”

⁵³Ibid., 281.

⁵⁴Ibid., 280.

⁵⁵Ibid., 282.

prayer, and the ministry of the Word.”

Oversight of Souls

One of the titles used for the office of pastor in the New Testament is the word “bishop.” The underlying Greek term ἐπίσκοπος (*episkopos*) literally means “one who has the responsibility of safeguarding or seeing to it that something is done in the correct way.”⁵⁶ These seventeenth-century ministers clearly had an understanding of this concept. This is evident in the care shown to the congregations committed to their care.

Thomas Harrison. The care of Thomas Harrison for his congregation is evident in that even on his death-bed, he “expressed a great concern” for the church.⁵⁷ Piggott describes the pastoral ministry of Harrison in glowing terms:

With what application of mind, and unwearied diligence did he discharge his pastoral office, not only preaching in season and out of season, but in visiting those under his charge, encouraging the serious, gently reproofing the froward, and instructing those that opposed themselves; defending the great truths of the gospel, and setting them in a clear light?⁵⁸

Harrison took very seriously his role as “bishop” of the church at Artillery-lane.

Hercules Collins. Piggott seems to have been less acquainted with the particulars of the life of Hercules Collins than either Thomas Harrison or William Collins. For this reason, knowledge of the details of Hercules’ life is sketchy at best. What is known, however, is that he

⁵⁶Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, rev. ed. [BDAG], 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “ἐπίσκοπος.”

⁵⁷Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 195.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 192.

was a faithful pastor, both in life and doctrine. It is also known that he fulfilled his pastoral role of the oversight of souls. Of the discharge of this duty Piggott said to Collins' congregation: "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."⁵⁹

William Collins. Near the end of his sermon, in his address to the "brethren of the church", Piggott urged the members of the Petty France congregation to "mourn that you got no more good from him, who took so much pains with you."⁶⁰ Such was the ministry of William Collins at the Petty France Church. Piggott could further state from his own first hand knowledge of the love of Collins for his church:

As for you that were under his care, you lay near his heart; and how greatly he longed for you all in the bowels of Christ, I am his witness: I, did I say? The God in whose presence I stand, and at whose bar I must shortly appear, is his witness. I speak this with so great solemnity, because he mentioned it to me with such affection and tears, and told me how glad he would have been to have seen you settled with a judicious learned minister before he died; but God saw meet to remove him before this desirable thing was accomplished.⁶¹

This is the heart of a true "bishop" who still cares for those whom he is about to live behind and is earnest about their care even in his own absence.

Evangelistic Fervor

This final characteristic of ministry among the Particular Baptists of the seventeenth century is perhaps the most prominent. It is probably also the most shocking. Particular

⁵⁹Ibid., 236.

⁶⁰Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 285.

⁶¹Ibid., 283.

Baptists? Passionate evangelists? This is exactly what one finds who examines the funeral sermons preached by John Piggott on the occasion of the deaths of Thomas Harrison, Hercules Collins and William Collins. Piggott's descriptions of these men highlight their evangelistic fervor. Additionally, Piggott's own zeal for souls is evident in the way in which he pleads for sinners at the close of each of these sermons.

Thomas Harrison. Piggott closed his funeral sermon for Thomas Harrison with a long and emotional appeal to those who had been the regular hearers of his dead friend's preaching, yet remained unconverted:

To you that were the constant auditors of the deceased minister. Consider how indulgent and favourable God has been to several of you, even in this dark Dispensation: He has removed one that was ripe for Heaven; but how dismal has been your state, if he had called you that are unprepared! If you drop into the grave while you are unprovided for eternity, you sink beyond the reserves of mercy. O Adore the patience and long-suffering of God, that you are yet alive, and have one call more from this pulpit, and another very awful one from the grave of that person who used to fill it. His death calls upon you to repent, and turn to close with Christ, and make sure of Heaven. Surely you cannot but feel some emotions in your breasts, when you think you shall never see nor hear your painful minister more. And methinks the rocks within you should flow, when you think that he preached himself to death, and you have not yet entertained that Jesus whom he preached. 'Tis true, God gave him several seals of his ministry, which was the joy of his heart, and will be his crown in the Day of the Lord.

But if you who were only hearers will continue so, he will be a swift witness against you in the Day of God. For tho one place held you and him in this world, you'll have very different habitations in the next. He shall eternally solace himself in boundless rivers of pleasure; but you shall be eternally plunged into a bottomless Lake of Fire. But let me intreat you by all that is sacred, by the joys of Heaven and the torments of Hell, by the interest of your never-dying souls, by Christ's bloody sweat in the Garden, and his agony on the Cross, that you immediately close with Christ, and receive him as offered in the Gospel; submitting to his Scepter, as well as depending on his Sacrifice; that you may eternally be lodged in the bosom of his Love.⁶²

This type of evangelistic preaching was characteristic among the Particular Baptists until the

⁶²Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 196-97.

ministry of John Skepp which began in 1710.⁶³

Hercules Collins. Piggott comments upon the evangelistic zeal of Hercules Collins by saying that “no man could preach with a more affectionate regard to the salvation of souls.”⁶⁴ He later called the regular attenders of the Wapping-street 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 used to warn and persuade you.”⁶⁵ Piggott then began to plead with the lost present himself 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 with these forceful words:

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 wrapped in his shroud, and confined to his coffin; and the lips that so often dispersed knowledge amongst you, are sealed up till the resurrection. Here’s the body of your late minister; but his soul is entered 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 say; bot to ministers and people, but “Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh?”⁶⁶

Once again, as in his funeral sermon for Thomas Harrison, Piggott’s passion for souls is clearly visible in the way in which he addresses the unconverted.

William Collins. Although Collins was eminently qualified to speak upon any subject

⁶³See Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, 3:262-67.

⁶⁴Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 236.

⁶⁵Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 240.

⁶⁶Ibid.

he desired, he insisted upon the clear presentation of the gospel. Piggott asserts that the main content of his sermons were related to gospel:

The subjects he ordinarily insisted on in the course of his ministry, were the great and important truths of the gospel, which he handled with great judgment and clearness. How would he open the miseries of the fall! And how moving a manner would he discourse of the excellency of Christ, and the virtues of his blood, and his willingness to save poor awakened burdened sinners!⁶⁷

This was the message that was central in the preaching of the seventeenth-century Particular Baptists.

Summary

In chapter 26 of the *Second London Confession of Faith* (1689), the following view of pastoral ministry is stated: “The work of Pastors being constantly to attend the Service of *Christ*, in his Churches, in the Ministry of the Word, and Prayer (Acts 6:4, Hebrews 13:17), with watching for their Souls, as they that must give an account to him.” Given that both Hercules and William Collins signed this Confession of Faith and that William Collins himself may have been one of its chief architects, this statement provides a good summary of the view of ministry held by these men. It is clearly consistent with what is said of their lives in their funeral sermons. It is also apparently the view of ministry held by both Thomas Harrison, given the description of his ministry given by his friend John Piggott. It is equally apparent from these funeral sermons that this was a view of ministry with which Piggott himself was sympathetic. Finally, it can be assumed that this view of ministry is representative of that held by all the Particular Baptists living in seventeenth-century England. May God grant a revival of this view of ministry among twenty-first century American Baptists!

⁶⁷Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 280-81.

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