

## Foreword

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“As his name is, so is he.” Thus says 1 Samuel 25:25, words appropriate for the subject of this book. Hercules Collins was indeed a mighty man of God. Though his name is not well known among his spiritual heirs, his labors for the kingdom of God continue to bear fruit. This little volume is evidence of the ongoing usefulness of the works of this seventeenth-century London pastor.

Like most of his Particular Baptist brothers, Collins faced a multitude of disadvantages and troubles. Since the English Universities were closed to dissenters, he had no formal preparation for his ministry and yet he proved to be a careful student of the Scriptures. For much of his pastoral life, he served an illegal church, outlawed by the oppressive regime of the royally established Church, but that congregation never missed a Lord’s Day’s worship, even when Collins was imprisoned. Faithful, persevering, dedicated—these terms well describe him.

By all accounts, he was driven by a love for Christ, His people, and His church—or we might say, as this book is aptly titled, he was devoted to the service of the temple. The writings here, taken from five or six representative works of Hercules Collins, provide us

with a useful selection of his thoughts. But they are useful in two ways. For historical theologians, they provide a glimpse into the doctrinal world of one of the leading London pastors from that era. Perhaps more importantly, they are useful to every thoughtful Christian. They are full of rich teaching—and the right kind of instruction—doctrine that moves the soul to Christ. This is no dry book of ancient divinity; rather it is a living expression of true Christianity. It is meditative and devotional theology, designed by its original author, and arranged so wonderfully by its editors, for the glory of God, the good of the souls of believers, and the growth of the Lord's temple.

We are indebted to Michael Haykin and Steve Weaver for these carefully chosen selections (and look forward with great anticipation to the promised appearance of a critical edition of Collins's *The Temple Repair'd*). For too long Baptists have had little access to the richness of their theological tradition. We have a great past, and many able servants have given their lives to the cause of our churches, and yet so few of their works have been reprinted. This book continues a very encouraging recent trend, in which the best works are being restored to print. May the Lord bless this book, and the efforts of its editors.

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