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Benjamin Keach and the Baptist Singing Controversy: Mediating Scripture, Confessional Heritage, and Christian Unity

James C. Brooks
Florida State University

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

BENJAMIN KEACH AND THE BAPTIST SINGING CONTROVERSY:
MEDIATING SCRIPTURE, CONFESSIONAL HERITAGE, AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

By

JAMES C. BROOKS

A Dissertation submitted to the
Program in the Humanities
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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The members of the Committee approve the dissertation of James C. Brooks defended on March 27, 2006.

Charles Brewer
Professor Directing Dissertation

Walter Moore
Outside Committee Member

David Darst
Committee Member

Michael Corzine
Committee Member

The Office of Graduate Studies has verified and approved the above named committee members.

To Mary Alice,
without whose undying love and unwavering support
this project would not have been possible

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AFD* Isaac Marlow, *An Appendix to the Former Discourse*. (London: 1691)
- BD* Isaac Marlow, *A Brief Discourse Concerning Singing*. (London: 1690)
- BR* Benjamin Keach, *The Breach Repaired in God's Worship*. (London: 1691)
- CC* Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 6th ed., 3 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1931; reprinted Baker Books, 1998)
- Crosby* Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, 4 vols. (London: 1738-1740)
- CSBE* Isaac Marlow, *The Controversie of Singing Brought to an End*. (London: 1696)
- CSPD* *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Charles II*. (London: Public Records Office, 1860-1947)
- DNB* H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 60 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)
- Institutes (HB)* John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), 2 vols. Trans. Henry Beveridge. (London: James Clarke and Co., 1949)
- Institutes (FLB)* John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), 2 vols. Trans. Ford Lewis Battles. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960)
- NP-1689* *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly . . . of the Baptized Churches . . .* (London: 1689)

- NP-1690 *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly . . . of the Baptized Churches . . .* (London: 1690)
- NP-1691 *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly . . . of the Baptized Churches . . .* (London: 1691)
- NP-1692 *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly . . . of the Baptized Churches . . .* (London: 1692)
- Tappert *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959). All quotations from the Augsburg Confession are from the Latin translation.
- TSD Isaac Marlow, *Truth Soberly Defended*. (London: 1692)

ABSTRACT

Benjamin Keach (1640-1704) was an influential leader among Particular Baptists throughout the seventeenth century. As a prominent nonconformist leader and a prolific writer, he helped shape the theological development of the Particular Baptists as they struggled through persecution and finally emerged under legal toleration near the end of the century. He did not avoid controversy, eagerly engaging luminaries such as Richard Baxter and topics such as Quakerism, sabbatarianism, laying on of hands after baptism, a paid ministry, and religious liberty.

Keach is best known for his introduction of hymns into the worship service of his congregation at Horsleydown around 1673. This decision eventually sparked a very public discourse on whether or not singing was appropriate in worship, and if so, on the types of song that God found acceptable. When this controversy has been studied in the past, coverage has generally been relegated to a description of the events that happened. Unfortunately, recognition and interpretation of Keach has also been *limited* to the singing controversy, a narrow segment of the activities he undertook. Recently, however, Keach has received attention that goes beyond the singing controversy. Consequently, evaluations of Keach are beginning to change, and Keach is receiving more comprehensive scholarly treatment.

This dissertation joins that trend and offers a new construct for how Keach's activity in the singing controversy may be evaluated. It asserts that he and Isaac Marlow, his primary antagonist, understood themselves as continuing the energy of the Reformation, though removed by 150 years. It refocuses the controversy and concludes that differing approaches to the question of how to interpret scripture when faced with scriptural silence drove the dispute. It places the concerns of both Keach and Isaac Marlow in the context of post-Reformation confessional statements, recognizing that, in terms of worship, many groups had taken a stance and formally described this silence as either permissive or prohibitive. Groups of a Calvinist heritage often term this principle the regulative principle of worship, and the Particular Baptists themselves had formalized this principle in the London Confession of 1689.

The dissertation concludes that Keach's actions were the product of his struggle to be faithful to scripture, to validate his confessional heritage, and to maintain Christian unity. It also affirms that, even though he and Marlow were polarized by

their disagreement, they shared many similarities as they struggled with the implications of implementing doctrines they held dear into the practical life of a fellowship of believers.

CHAPTER 1

ENVISIONING A NEW TYPOLOGY FOR EVALUATING BENJAMIN KEACH

Introduction

Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound)
That sav'd a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.¹

This poem of the slave trader turned curate of Olney, John Newton, and the associated tune may be known as well as any throughout the English-speaking Western world. Its strains are blown by Scottish bagpipe troupes and sung at funerals. It celebrates in moments of joy and comforts in moments of tragedy, particularly being heard in national moments of mourning. It provokes a sense of calm yet maintains the Christian hope of transformation from the sinful, eternally lost “wretch” to the saved believer in heaven.

As a Christian text that addresses the travails of life, it is known by religious and non-religious alike. It is, of course, heard in church services, both high church and low church, as it reflects both high church history and low church ruddiness. People on opposite ends of the theological spectrum embrace it, and it lends itself to various styles of singing, from African-American spirituals, to gospel, to blues, to the traditional white heritage of eighteenth-century English hymns. It has been recorded by multitudes of artists, from rock to country to blues to gospel.² It likely tops all lists of favorite hymns

¹ John Newton, *Olney Hymns* (London: 1779), 53.

² In 1972 the editors of *The Hymn*, the journal of the Hymn Society of America, announced that the recording of “Amazing Grace” by the band of the Royal Scots

and certainly is included on such recorded collections.³ It memorializes fallen heroes of battle, tragedy, disaster, and faith. In short, “Amazing Grace!” may be the consummate English hymn in that it transcends doctrinal differences (many of them major), race, privilege, culture and sub-culture, occasions, and worship style, speaking to humanity, if just momentarily, at the level of the human spirit.⁴

Dragoon Guards had topped the charts in April of that year; see “Amazing ‘Amazing Grace,’” *Hymn* 23 (1990): 93.

³ In his biography on Newton, William Phipps cites a survey of over 10,000 newspaper readers conducted by religion columnist George Plagenz that named “Amazing Grace!” as the most popular hymn in America; William E. Phipps, *Amazing Grace in John Newton: Slave-Ship Captain, Hymnwriter, and Abolitionist* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2001), ix.

⁴ In addition to the flexible appeal of the hymn itself, the title “Amazing Grace!” is frequently employed as a metaphorical description in literature. For example, *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation* (New York: Crown, 1995) by Jonathan Kozol uses the familiar hymn as a descriptive metaphor for a study of America’s poor children that calls on the nation’s conscience. Similarly, it is used to describe the missionary heritage of the Seagrave family’s devotion to missionary work in Burma/Myanmar; see Beverlee Everett, “Amazing Grace: Twentieth-Century Guardian of the Seagrave Missionary Legacy,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 18 (1999): 383-88. In *Amazing Grace: Evangelicalism in Australia, Britain, Canada, and the United States* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1993), editors George A. Rawlyk and Mark A. Noll use the hymn title as the unifying metaphor of a study of evangelicalism in the larger English-speaking world, and the hymn title is characterized as a “spiritual national anthem” in Mary Rourke and Emily Gwathmey, *Amazing Grace in America: Our Spiritual National Anthem* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Angel City Press, 1996). Appropriately, the hymn title is likewise applied to studies of the hymn itself and studies of its author, John Newton, especially in popular, as opposed to scholarly, literature. Cf. the biographical sketches of Newton in Phipps, *Amazing Grace*; Chris Armstrong, “The Amazingly Graced Life of John Newton,” *Christian History and Biography* 18 (2004): 16-24; John Pollock, *Amazing Grace: John Newton’s Story* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981); the analysis of Newton’s understanding of “costly grace,” rather than “cheap grace,” in William E. Phipps, “‘Amazing Grace’ in the Hymnwriter’s Life,” *Anglican Theological Review* 72 (1990): 306-12; and the biography of the song apart from Newton and its integration into popular culture in *Amazing Grace: The Story of America’s Most Beloved Song* (New York: Ecco, 2002), by Steve Turner, and in the Bill Moyers documentary, *Amazing Grace*, prod. and dir. Elena Mannes, 80 min., Public Affairs Television, Inc., 1990, videocassette.

Other hymns similarly known, even if not quite so therapeutic, include “Joy to the World!” and “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” Isaac Watts’s “Joy to the World!” exemplifies his Christianization of the Psalms, being taken from Psalm 98, and Charles Wesley’s “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” illustrates the evangelical emphasis of his hymnic poetry. Worshipping congregations still sing these hymns today, although the tie to the Christmas season and their pervasiveness in secular celebrations surely contribute to their recognition, for the unchurched or nominal Christian would still recognize the tunes and associate the texts with Jesus Christ. The significance of “Amazing Grace!” is beyond this. Yet it wasn’t always this way.

There have been religious songs for centuries—millennia, in fact—that speak to dimensions of the human condition. But the religious reformations of the sixteenth century led European Christianity down paths divergent in ritual, thought, value, ceremony, and theology, slowly creating populations that held differing ecclesiology, christology, and soteriology. Whatever uniformity of religious expression had existed in the late-medieval English world was shattered,⁵ and the Reformation left the Church of England struggling for direction under the head of monarchs too often swayed by political concerns and personal ambitions.

In the late sixteenth century the Church of England continued in its tradition of cathedral music and promoted the emergence of the English verse anthem, a distinct new genre which descended from the antiphon and developed, in large part, to accommodate shifting theological influences on music practice.⁶ The history of this development itself directly resulted from the English Reformation. In crude terms, the English verse anthem could be considered a “sanitized” antiphon.⁷ Often called a “votive antiphon” and frequently sung in veneration of Mary, the votive antiphon’s theological value dates to the thirteenth century as a form of intercession for a soul in

⁵ This point is debatable. Significant scholarship pertaining to how the English Reformation is viewed will be surveyed in Chapter 2.

⁶ Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. 1, *From Cranmer to Hooker, 1534-1603* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), 391-404.

⁷ Nicholas Temperley, “Anglican and Episcopalian Church Music,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, 2004; available from <http://www.grovemusic.com>; accessed 21 May 2004.

purgatory.⁸ By the fifteenth century this devotion to the virgin Mary was established as a distinct ceremony of daily observance.⁹

For the majority, however, who typically could not afford an endowment for such a private memorial, membership in a religious guild secured votive masses and antiphons to shorten the soul's time in purgatory. Henry VIII's suppression of monasteries between 1536 and 1540 practically ended this practice, jeopardizing alike the souls of those already departed and Catholics still living who could not plan intercession for themselves during their anticipated wait in purgatory. Eamon Duffy emphasizes the significance of being remembered after death; if no one remembered the deceased, the journey through purgatory would be slowed:

For medieval people, . . . to die meant to enter a great silence, and the fear of being forgotten in that silence was as real to them as to any of the generations that followed. But for them that silence was not absolute and could be breached. To find ways and means of doing so was one of their central religious preoccupations.¹⁰

But the English Reformation curtailed this practice, and the service music shifted from the veneration provided by the votive antiphon to texts usually derived from the Bible or the Book of Common Prayer.¹¹

Religious changes in the seventeenth century only intensified the divide in church music practice.¹² Seventeenth-century England was marked by growing

⁸ Michel Huglo and Joan Halmo, "Antiphon," *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, 2004; available from <http://www.grovemusic.com>; accessed 25 October 2004.

⁹ John Harper, "Anthem," *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, 2004; available from <http://www.grovemusic.com>; accessed 25 October 2004.

¹⁰ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-c. 1580* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 328. Despite the orthodox teaching that there was no communication between the living and the dead, Duffy argues that the people felt a need to bypass this teaching. See Duffy, 328-37. Cf. J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 20-39, for a discussion of the theological value of religious fraternities and their function in servicing the spiritual connection of the doctrine of purgatory.

¹¹ Peter Le Huray and John Harper, "Anthem," *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, 2004; available from <http://www.grovemusic.com>; accessed 25 October 2004.

¹² For a discussion of the initial principles that would lead to the solidifying of diverse practices, see Davies, 1:377-404. Also see idem, vol. 2, *From Andrewes to Baxter*,

separatist movements and politico-religious tension that revolutionized the English monarchy and the Anglican church. The Anglican church was singing cathedral music and the metrical psalmody of Sternhold and Hopkins; separatist and nonconformist groups, grappling with the heritage of two worship traditions (separatist and Puritan) took several approaches.¹³

Worship for these groups was a blending of the two traditions, and they were blended differently by different groups and at different times; some sang metrical psalms, some admitted only charismatic solos, and some did not sing at all. The separatist opposition to set forms of prayer dates to the 1580s and 1590s and influenced the views of the General Baptists and Society of Friends/Quakers. Theoretically, both groups allowed singing and acknowledged it as a function of the Holy Spirit, but in reality the attitude was generally hostile and neither group sang much, if any. There certainly was no organized congregational singing; any song in worship had the nature of a charismatic solo, the spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of individual Christians. Independents generally agreed with the Puritan acceptance of metrical psalmody, and Presbyterians in England used the Scottish Psalter of 1650. Particular Baptists and Congregationalists supported individual church autonomy and the issue of singing was resolved differently by different congregations. It is in these latter groups that the transition from hostility toward congregational song to its acceptance is found.¹⁴

In the midst of these tangled religious fractures is the story of the English hymn, not only the seeds of what we understand today as a hymn—a religious text, typically a poem, set to music—but even the creation of some of the very hymns still sung in the English world today.

However, the following pages relate neither the story of the English hymn nor its development as a genre. Rather, they analyze a key moment in such a story. Isaac

1603-1690 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 253-285, for a summary description of worship music of the seventeenth century.

¹³ Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, vol. 1, *From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 305.

¹⁴ Watts, 306-308; William J. Reynolds and Milburn Price, *A Survey of Christian Hymnody*, 4th ed. revised and enlarged by David W. Music and Milburn Price (Carol Stream, Ill.: Hope Publishing Company, 1999), 52-53; Louis F. Benson, *The English Hymn: Its Development and Use in Worship* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915; reprint, Richmond: John Knox Press, 1962), 91-106 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

Watts has been characterized as the father of the English hymn¹⁵—and from a literary perspective this designation is well deserved, for it was Watts who first excelled at the art of writing stimulating hymns with plainness and clarity and who successfully appropriated the Psalms to the Christian life.¹⁶

But the key moment of interest does not belong to Watts. It belongs to the Particular (Calvinistic) Baptist pastor Benjamin Keach (1640-1704), who introduced regular congregational hymnody to his nonconformist church in London. Many have written on Keach's boldness in introducing hymns into the Particular Baptist churches,¹⁷ and he justly deserves such accolades. The practical result was a wider acceptance of hymns among churches of the separation and the subsequent proliferation of hymn texts in nonconformist groups. Still, it took over a century for hymnody to gain official authorization in the Anglican church.¹⁸ The event—Keach's choice to embrace congregational hymnody—however, is significant not because he introduced such hymns into worship, or because of the tension he ignited, but because this event challenged the fundamental worship principles of the broad separatist movement to which Keach's Particular Baptists belonged. In Keach's choice and the ultimate acceptance of such hymns is an unnatural reconciliation of Calvinist and Lutheran interpretive principles and, consequently, a unique blending of historical forces. The hymn controversy stands as a metaphor of English dissent, demonstrating its Reformation origins, marking the transformation of small radical separatist groups to seedling and emerging denominations, and revealing shifting principles of interpretation and their practical implementation in the life of a church body. It also serves as a focal point to observe that Keach and his adversary, Isaac Marlow, struggled to reconcile the theoretical guidelines of a confessional statement with the practical

¹⁵ John Julian attributes this appellation to Lord Selborne. See John Julian, *Dictionary of Hymnology* (New York: Dover Publications, 1957), 343. Cf. *DNB*, s.v. "Palmer, Roundell."

¹⁶ J. R. Watson, *The English Hymn: A Critical and Historical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 137-43, 148-60.

¹⁷ 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); Hugh Martin, *Benjamin Keach (1640-1704): Pioneer of Congregational Hymn Singing* (London: Independent Press, 1961); Robert Hexter Young, "The History of Baptist Hymnody in England from 1612 to 1800" (D.M.A. diss., University of Southern California, 1959); W. T. Whitley, *Congregational Hymn-Singing* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1933), 94-101, 121-23; Benson, 96-107.

¹⁸ Temperley, "Anglican and Episcopalian Church Music."

implementation of singing, which they both understood as a required element of worship.

Background and Significance

Benjamin Keach was a prominent nonconformist leader in late Stuart England and a prolific writer of pamphlets and books dealing with subjects such as baptism, singing, the laying on of hands, and a paid ministry, all of which helped define theological boundaries among young Christian denominations of the late seventeenth century. He devoted his career to the pastorate of the Particular Baptist church at Horsleydown, Southwark (London), and to the promotion of the Particular Baptist movement as a traveling preacher. Throughout his life Keach also maintained vocations as a tailor, bookseller, and salesman of medical remedies.

Keach was born into a poor family on 29 February 1640 at Stoke Hammond, Buckinghamshire, and was baptized at the parish church on 6 March. During his childhood or adolescence he adopted General (Arminian) Baptist views and was baptized in 1655 by John Russel, General Baptist minister in Chesham, Buckinghamshire. Keach began preaching in 1659 and in 1660 became the pastor of the General Baptist church in Winslow. In 1668 Keach moved to London and joined the Baptist church in Southwark. By 1672 he had adopted Particular Baptist tenets, a change that owes much to the influence of long-time Particular Baptist leaders Hanserd Knollys and William Kiffin.¹⁹

For a self-taught man Keach was well read, and he eagerly entered into printed debates on issues of no small religious significance. He attacked Puritan divine Richard Baxter, the Quakers, and sabbatarianism.²⁰ He defended the laying on of hands after baptism, a paid ministry, and religious liberty.²¹ He wrote several allegories, one of

¹⁹ Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, s.v. "Keach, Benjamin"; *DNB*, s.v. "Keach, Benjamin."

²⁰ Benjamin Keach, *Gold Refin'd* (London: 1689); idem, *The Counterfeit Christian* (London: 1691); idem, *The Progress of Sin* (London: 1684); idem, *The Jewish Sabbath Abrogated* (London: 1700).

²¹ Benjamin Keach, *Darkness Vanquished* (London: 1675); idem, *The Gospel Minister's Maintenance Vindicated* (London: 1689); idem, *Zion in Distress* (London: 1666); idem, *Distressed Sion Relieved* (London: 1689).

which antedates Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* by five years.²² He also advocated childhood education and held radical political sympathies.²³ The early Baptist historian Thomas Crosby, who married one of Keach's daughters, categorizes Keach's works as practical, polemical, and poetical.²⁴ These categories are helpful, yet they should not be viewed as mutually exclusive, for Keach's polemical work influenced the practical issues of church, worship, theology, and Christian living that Keach addressed. Among his approximately fifty published works, believer's baptism is the most prominent enduring theme, especially in his *Tropologia* (1681) and *Gold Refin'd* (1689).

Yet Keach's most controversial act was the introduction of congregational hymnody at Horsleydown around 1673. In seventeenth-century England congregational singing was a mark of distinction among Christian groups. Acceptable texts, musical forms, and participants varied from one religious group to another. Puritans restricted congregational song to metrical psalmody, while the Anglican tradition embraced a rich heritage of cathedral music. This divergence was much more than a matter of differing tastes. Reformed influence in England rejected, in principle, elements of worship for which there was no scriptural warrant. The Psalms were viewed as God's provision for song within the religious community and, consequently, uninspired texts—which hymnody would be—were disallowed. Metrical psalmody was only one step removed from God's scripture, an accommodation of the Psalms for musical purposes.²⁵ Use of the psalter, as of the English Bible, extended far beyond worship and infiltrated all aspects of English life.²⁶

But seventeenth-century England was also a hotbed of Christian fragmentation, and the Psalms were not universally welcomed in all budding Christian groups. Presbyterians used the psalter, but most separatists did not. Quakers excluded all singing. General Baptists rejected metrical psalmody on the basis that it introduced a set form into worship and squelched the Holy Spirit's activity in the worship service. They accepted only spontaneous, charismatic singing—song that was not limited to pre-determined forms—and applied this rationale to other set forms of worship as well, such as the Book of Common Prayer. Seventh-Day (sabbatarian) Baptists and early

²² Benjamin Keach, *The Progress of Sin*; idem, *The Travels of True Godliness* (London: 1684).

²³ Benjamin Keach, *Instructions for Children* (London: n.d.); idem, *The Child's Delight* (London: 1702).

²⁴ Crosby, 4:310-14.

²⁵ Davies, 2:253-263, 268-277.

²⁶ Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1994).

Independents opposed singing the Psalms for the same reason, although Independents soon shared the Presbyterian affinity for metrical psalmody.²⁷

Congregational singing practices varied among Particular Baptists, and the emergence of congregational singing within the group mirrored the growth of Particular Baptists and added to their distinction from General Baptists in the seventeenth century. The nuances of this distinction as it relates to singing will be further explored in Chapter 5, but for the Baptists they proceed from one of their early leaders, John Smyth. In a treatise written in 1609 that outlined the distinction of separatists from the official Church of England, Smyth's opening summary explicates three points that pertain to worship:

1. Wee hould that the worship of the new testament properly so called is spirituall proceeding originally from the hart: and that reading out of a booke (though a lawful ecclesiastical action) is no part of the spirituall worship, but rather the invention of the man of synne it beeing substituted for a part of spirituall worship
2. Wee hould that seeing prophesiing is a part of spirituall worship: therefore in time of prophesiing it is unlawfull to have the booke as a helpe before the eye
3. Wee hould that seeing singinging [*sic*] a psalme is a parte of spirituall worship therefore it is unlawfull to have the booke before the eye in time of singinge a psalme.²⁸

Further clarification of Smyth's thinking on psalm singing is presented in another tract, *Certayne demaundes from the aunicyent brethren of the Seperation*:

Whither as in prayer & prophesy one alone speaketh, & the rest pray & prophesy by consent. I cor. 11.4. so in a Psalme one onely must speak, & the rest must co[n]sēt. I cor. 14.16.

Whither in a Psalme a man must be tyed to meter & Rithme, & tune, & whither voluntary be not as necessary in tune & wordes as in matter?

Whither meter, Rithme, & tune, be not quenching the Spirit?

²⁷ Benson, 73-107; Davies, 2:268-277.

²⁸ John Smyth, *The Differences of the Churches of the Seperation* [*sic*] (Middelburg, R. Schilders: 1608), table of contents.

Whither a psalme be only thanksgiving without meter, Rethme or tune,
yea or nay?²⁹

In essence, Smyth opposed the use of books in singing and the singing of more than one person together, and he considered the use of meter and rhythm as constraints on the activity of the Holy Spirit. General Baptists would maintain these principles during the controversy on hymn singing at the end of the century, as Keach published a hymnal and advocated for congregational singing and for the use of material that was considered “predetermined,” “prestinted,” or “precomposed,” in that it had been prepared beforehand in rhythm and meter and then presented to the congregation to sing.

R. H. Young has effectively proven that evidence of congregational singing in Particular Baptist churches dates to the early 1650s and probably earlier, as does a dispute on the particulars of appropriate singing.³⁰ Not until the 1670s did congregational singing become more widespread, and various congregations introduced it during the next fifteen years. Under Keach’s leadership at Horsleydown, hymns were originally sung after the Lord’s Supper. Gradually they were used on special days of thanksgiving and then later after the Sunday sermon. Keach’s implementation of singing infringed on Particular Baptist worship practice in two ways. First, it broke with other separatist groups, which generally prohibited all singing. Second, he used hymns of human composition rather than the Psalms.

Not everyone in Keach’s congregation supported this new worship device, as the congregation previously had prohibited all singing. An open controversy, first in the congregation and then extending to Baptists at large, erupted around 1690 and evolved into a virulent printed debate. Isaac Marlow, Keach’s chief antagonist (and a member of the congregation at Horsleydown), published *A Brief Discourse Concerning Singing* in 1690. Keach responded in 1691 with *The Breach Repaired in God’s Worship*, his most extensive apology of congregational singing as an ordinance from God. That same year he also published the first, and largest, collection of personal hymns in *Spiritual Melody*.

The question of singing within the congregation in general, and the matter of song in particular, had been raised by other Baptists in the previous two decades. Of nearly two dozen works that address this controversy of the 1690s, other noteworthy relevant contributions include Thomas Grantham’s *Christianisimus Primitivus* (1678), Hercules Collins’s *An Orthodox Catechism* (1680), E. H.’s *Scripture Proof for Singing*

²⁹ W. T. Whitley, ed., *The Works of John Smyth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 2:325.

³⁰ Young, 19-24.

(1696),³¹ and Richard Allen's *An Essay To Prove Singing of Psalms* (1696). The controversy eventually resulted in a split of the congregation at Horsleydown, with those who opposed Keach establishing the church that would become the Maze Pond congregation.³²

The consequences of this controversy also left their mark in the American colonies through Keach's son, Elias. The younger Keach arrived in the colonies in 1687 and preached in and around Lower Dublin (Philadelphia), Pennsylvania, for five years. The *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association* attribute the formation of the church at Lower Dublin to Elias Keach's influence.³³ The congregations of "these colonies of Pennsylvania and the Jerseys" gathered into a structured organization named the Philadelphia Association (1707),³⁴ generally accepted as the first (and thus the longest-surviving) Baptist association in the United States.³⁵

From their inception, the deference of the colonial Baptist churches to their English counterparts on statements of faith is clear. In 1724, the Philadelphia Association relied on the Second London Confession, endorsed in England by the General Assembly of Particular Baptists in 1689,³⁶ as guidance on a matter brought

³¹ The identity of E. H. is unknown.

³² "Annals of an Ancient Church. Chiefly Extracts from 'The Record of Minutes Taken of the Proceedings of the Church of Christ Meeting at The Maze Pond, Southwark,'" (reprinted from "The Freeman"; London: Yates and Alexander, 21, Castle Street, Holborn, E.C.), 8-9.

³³ A. D. Gillette, ed., *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, from A.D. 1707, to A.D. 1807; Being the First One Hundred Years of its Existence* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1851) 11.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁵ W. J. McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1911), 293.

³⁶ NP-1689, 18. This General Assembly was the first formal gathering of Particular Baptist church leaders under the newly granted religious toleration of 1689. The actual confession endorsed by the Assembly was a modified form of the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), altered by Baptist leaders in 1677. It was published again in 1688 in a second edition with an appendix on baptism, although when reprinted in 1689 the appendix was removed. Cf. McGlothlin, 215-218; *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: 1677); *A Confession of Faith, Put forth by the Elders and Brethren of many Congregations of Christians,*

before it. This confession is again referenced as “our Confession of Faith” or “the Confession of faith” in the Philadelphia Association’s meetings of 1727 and 1729.³⁷ Thus, the Philadelphia area Baptist churches had been using the Second London Confession as an unofficial statement of faith for at least two decades, and it should be no surprise that when, on September 25, 1742, the Association found it “needful and likely to be very useful” to have a written statement, it ordered the reprinting of this same London Confession.³⁸ To the 1689 London Confession, however, the Association incorporated articles addressing the singing of psalms and the laying of hands upon baptized believers;³⁹ these two articles were verbatim copies of articles Benjamin Keach had added to the Second London Confession in 1697 when he prepared a faith statement for his congregation at Horsleydown.⁴⁰ The controversy that had divided London area churches and had led the elder Keach to articulate a formal statement on singing now found its product incorporated into the formal faith statement of the first Baptist association in America.

Previous Research

Previous evaluations of Keach generally fall into two broad categories: church history, specifically Baptist, and music history, specifically studies of hymnody or Protestant worship music. Rarely, Keach has also been mentioned within the context of theology, especially as it relates to music or worship. When these assessments are examined on the basis of their specific purposes, they fall into four general groupings. Working from the broadly focused to the more narrowly focused, these groups include studies of hymnody or church music, studies of Baptist church music, histories of Baptists, and work concentrated specifically on Keach.

(Baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country. With an Appendix concerning Baptism (London: 1688).

³⁷ Gillette, 27-30.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 45-46; quote 46.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁰ McGlothlin, 295-297; cf. *The Articles of the Faith of the Church of Christ, or Congregation Meeting at Horsley-down, Benjamin Keach, Pastor, as asserted this 10th of the 6th Month, 1697* (London: 1697), 23-24, 27.

Studies of Hymnody

Histories of hymnody or church music usually approach Keach on the basis of two premises. These assumptions shape both the structure of the writing and the resulting conclusions. First, it is assumed that, since he introduced hymns into a church and, more broadly, into a tentatively unified and fairly young religious movement that had questioned the role of hymns and even psalms in worship, he somehow fits into a comprehensive scheme of transitioning from psalmody to hymnody; thus, he must be located within this shift. This notion may explain why, in two survey studies of hymns, Erik Routley limits his mention of Keach to the context of the transformation from psalms to hymns⁴¹ and the observation that Keach provided hymnic material by publishing an English hymnal in 1691.⁴²

Second, such histories of hymnody or church music consider those figures who have offered a lasting contribution to hymnody or church music, especially one of a tangible nature, more deserving of attention. Consequently, Isaac Watts, whose hymns continue to be sung today, receives attention and distinction; this standard may account for the omission of Keach by several authors as well. C. Henry Phillips, writing from the perspective of a “high Anglican,”⁴³ understandably focuses on the music of the official church to the near exclusion of other groups. He mentions hymns and hymn collections of the seventeenth century, correctly noting that such music at this time was not intended for congregational worship. This would have been an opportune moment to mention Keach’s affiliation with the transition of hymns to congregational usage. However, Phillips squanders away the opportunity to mention Keach when he incorrectly comments that “Baptists discouraged hymn-singing in favour of the more scriptural psalms”;⁴⁴ this observation is only true during part of the seventeenth century, because Baptist views lacked uniformity. He attributes the modern hymn to Independents (Congregationalists), citing their 1694 *Collection of Divine Hymns* which points toward Watts and eventually toward the Wesleys.⁴⁵

In reading Charles Etherington’s volume on Protestant worship music, it appears he did not know where to situate hymnody at all. His disparaging comments about

⁴¹ Erik Routley, *The Music of Christian Hymnody* (London: Independent Press, 1957), 85-86.

⁴² Erik Routley, *Hymns and Human Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 148.

⁴³ Arthur Hutchings, forward to C. Henry Phillips, *The Singing Church*, new and rev. ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), 7.

⁴⁴ Phillips, 129.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 128-29.

Puritans and the consequence for worship music, that the Cromwellian Commonwealth represents the “low point” in worship music, suggest that hymns should be omitted all together. In the Commonwealth he sees the culmination of the Reformation: English church music of the past was suppressed and reemerged years later as the “product of a new age.”⁴⁶ However, tucked away in a section on the Baroque Period is a short mention of the various approaches that nonconformists took to worship music. Like Phillips, Etherington attributes the modern hymn to the Independents/ Congregationalists, though disclaiming that Watts did not write the first hymn in English. His limited comments about the Baptists do include two key points: congregational liberty led to differing worship forms, and the issue of music in general, and hymns specifically, created serious dissension among congregations.⁴⁷ It is clear that he knows of the Keach-Marlow dispute and recognizes its significance, yet he never mentions Keach by name.

Friedrich Blume’s outstanding synthesis of Protestant church music takes a holistic approach to the music of post-Luther and post-Calvin Europe. He tries to work through the complexities of Protestant church music and the ambiguity of its definition. Contributing author Watkins Shaw notes the various objections to music among nonconformists and then turns to the Independent Watts as exercising “a liberating influence by encouraging singing.”⁴⁸ Again, Keach receives no mention. Likewise, Robert Stevenson’s effort at tracing the musical traditions of various Protestant denominations devotes considerable space to hymns, but he starts with Watts and curiously omits any mention of the flurry of nonconformist activity in the later seventeenth century.⁴⁹

To omit Keach on the basis of his work product (and thus include Watts, the Wesleys, and others) is understandable. His work has been unjustifiably termed

⁴⁶ Charles L. Etherington, *Protestant Worship Music: Its History and Practice* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 110.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 136-139.

⁴⁸ Watkins Shaw, “Church Music in England from the Reformation to the Present Day,” in *Protestant Church Music: A History*, ed. Friedrich Blume (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), 725.

⁴⁹ Robert M. Stevenson, *Patterns of Protestant Church Music* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1953). The only acknowledgment of pre-Watts hymnic activity is as follows: “The distinctive achievement of Dr. Watts was not his fathering of the English hymn; hymns by Herbert, Herrick, Donne, Ken, Baxter, many of them suitable for congregational singing, had been written long before Watts issued his first volume of *Hymns in 1707*” (p. 93).

“doggerel” (though neither should it be called stellar), an adjective used repeatedly over many decades.⁵⁰ However, he should not be ignored when discussing the particulars of bringing hymns into worship, especially given the awareness of nonconformist challenges to their use.

Fortunately, some authors have not held tightly to these assumptions. Consequently, within studies of hymnody and church music, Louis Benson, C. E. Spann, and J. R. Watson provide the most incisive analysis of Keach. Though written nearly a century ago, Benson’s study of the English hymn continues as a standard reference tool to this day. In a broad essay on psalmody and hymnody, he designates congregational song as the “liturgical expression” of Protestantism,⁵¹ an estimation that blends with his later reflections on Keach’s contribution.⁵² Although he leaves the impression that Particular Baptists began singing only in the 1670s,⁵³ he attributes to Keach a role in establishing a liturgical purpose for hymns and the distinction of differentiating hymnody from psalmody. Spann carries this reasoning further,

⁵⁰ The location of the earliest known usage of this description that was found as it pertains to Keach’s own writing is in C. E. Whiting, *Studies in English Puritanism from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660-1688* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931), 563: “Keach’s piety was better than his poetry. He wrote some dreadful doggerel at times.” Whiting also refers to Keach as the “most popular of the Nonconformist verse writers,” p. 562.

In the preface to his hymnal, Roundell Palmer (the first Earl of Selborne, presumably the Lord Selborne mentioned by Julian) also uses the term, not speaking of Keach but about hymns in general: “A good hymn should have simplicity, freshness, and reality of feeling; a consistent elevation of tone, and a rhythm easy and harmonious, but not jingling or trivial. Its language may be homely; but should not be slovenly or mean. Affectation or visible artifice is worse than excess of homeliness: a hymn is easily spoiled by a single falsetto note. Nor will the most exemplary soundness of doctrine atone for doggerel, or redeem from failure a prosaic style.” Roundell Palmer, ed., *The Book of Praise*, 2d ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1866), i-ii.

⁵¹ Benson, 21.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 96-101.

⁵³ Drawing from the records of the church in Bristol (the “Broadmead Records”), Benson states that there is no account of congregational song among Particular Baptists from 1640-1670. To his credit, Benson does state that there were “considerable differences of sentiment and practice among the Particular Baptists”; Benson, 96-97; quote 97. As noted previously, however, Young has proved that Particular Baptists sang as early as the 1650s, if not earlier; see above, p. 11.

suggesting that the hymn singing controversy encouraged the ecumenical tendency toward the poetic development of hymns and that Keach's introduction of hymns was a matter of practical worship,⁵⁴ a theme on which James Barry Vaughn's 1989 dissertation later builds.⁵⁵ Watson's fresh, new study examines hymns as literature, attempting to validate hymns as a genre that has earned its own place both within and also apart from religious function.⁵⁶ Within this context, Keach is depicted as using hymns to vary worship and to explain scripture, as both a liturgical and instructional device useful for the purposes of "observation, opening, and application" of scripture.⁵⁷

Studies of Baptist Church Music

Studies focused specifically on Baptist church music, the second categorization of research, generally assume that the hymn is a valid—and thus valuable—means to accomplish the required worship act of singing. Keach, standing firmly in the Baptist tradition, is certainly acknowledged.

W. T. Whitley and B. R. White dominated the field of Baptist history in the twentieth century. Each wrote extensively, and historians of the Baptist faith will long be indebted to them for their interpretive thinking as well as for the primary resources they made accessible. Whitley's *Congregational Hymn-Singing* provides a broad overview of congregational hymn singing, specifically in England.⁵⁸ Although he branches out beyond Baptists and considers German influences on hymn singing, as well as the activity of Methodists and Anglicans, he is a Baptist historian. In a discussion of the revival of hymns, he identifies Keach as the one who recognized and appreciated the potential of the hymn as a serious homiletical device in addition to Keach's utilization of the hymn in formal worship. Additionally, Whitley casts Baptists not as the opponents of hymn singing, but as its pioneers.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Carry Edward Spann, "The Seventeenth Century English Baptist Controversy Concerning Singing" (M.C.M. thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1965), 212, 219.

⁵⁵ James Barry Vaughn, "Public Worship and Practical Theology in the Work of Benjamin Keach (1640-1704)" (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Andrews, 1989).

⁵⁶ Watson, 1-21.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 110-114; quote 111.

⁵⁸ Whitley, *Congregational Hymn-Singing*, 242.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 94-101.

R. H. Young joins Whitley's effort to recover the reputation of Baptist contributions in the field of hymnody.⁶⁰ He surveys four aspects of Baptist hymnody: 1) the attitudes towards psalmody and then hymnody (and the defenses used) held by persons instrumental in the formation of Baptists, by governing Baptist bodies, and by specific congregations or preachers; 2) the non-Baptist texts and tunes that Baptists used; 3) the influence of Baptist hymnists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and 4) the continuation of this influence in England and America. His lack of focus on any one aspect results in little depth in any area, producing a work that is a survey in nature; Keach plays a prominent role in the survey, especially in a discussion of the activity during the controversy, but this survey is devoid of significant analysis of Keach.

Studies of Baptist church music, the second category, are at their best both critical and apologetic but not dishonest. Thus, David Music can examine the literary features of Keach's hymns and their content and conclude that they deserve neither a poor reputation nor profound attention.⁶¹ Music expands our understanding of Keach's hymnal by examining the sources that inspired Keach's writing. Keach appropriated the themes, metaphors, and phrasing of John Patrick, William Barton, John Mason, Richard Davis, Sternhold and Hopkins, and even himself, as he included altered forms of his own previous material, yet Music's final analysis is that, despite his borrowing, most of Keach's material was original. As a hymnist, however, Keach's influence was small and quickly supplanted by works of higher quality.

At its worst, this kind of literature is survey in nature. Topically, James P. Carnes' thesis⁶² could be considered here or as literature about Baptists or even about Keach, but regardless of its placement, it lacks argumentative value. He sweeps a wide path with generalizations of political events and religious groups of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, and his summaries of Keach's writings serve well to inform but not to articulate analysis of Keach's influence on congregational singing.

⁶⁰ Robert Hexter Young, "The History of Baptist Hymnody in England from 1612 to 1800" (D.M.A. diss., University of Southern California, 1959).

⁶¹ David W. Music, "The Hymns of Benjamin Keach: An Introductory Study," *The Hymn* 34 (1983): 147-54.

⁶² 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).

Thinking historically, the issue at the heart of measuring recognition for Keach is precisely approached by Hugh McElrath.⁶³ Keach's activities are identified as the first of ten significant turning points in Baptist music. McElrath's bold conclusion is that Keach deserves recognition by Christians at large: not only Baptists, but all Christians, are indebted to the "trail-blazing efforts of this irrepressible pioneer."⁶⁴ For a proper evaluation of Keach, McElrath's determination is significant: to the historian, the issue then becomes *should* Keach receive such historical recognition that all Christians that sing hymns are indebted to him?⁶⁵ Thus far he has not received such credit. If it be justified, then why has Keach been neglected?

Studies of Baptists

Baptist histories, the third categorization of research, vary in their treatment of Keach, some recognizing his introduction of hymnody as his crowning achievement and others providing a more balanced discussion of his other activities. Thomas Crosby, Keach's son-in-law, undertook the first broad effort at writing a history of Baptists. His four-volume study on Baptists traces them to the early church by the distinctive feature of baptism in an effort to legitimize their association as a religious group. "Baptists" (here understood as those who practice adult, believer's baptism by immersion), he wrote, have suffered throughout history, and he attempted to situate the young denomination of the eighteenth century against the canvas of time.⁶⁶ As a fellow Baptist and relative of Keach, it is not surprising that Keach is presented favorably and occupies a significant portion of Crosby's volumes, at least in relationship to the coverage given other prominent Baptist leaders. Crosby's writing is perhaps the closest

⁶³ Hugh McElrath, "Turning Points in the Story of Baptist Church Music," *Baptist History and Heritage* 19, no. 1 (1984): 4-16.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁵ The significance of this determination is realized when Spann's methodology is considered. Spann's procedure turned to the origins of Baptists as a group and then considered their use of singing. In deference to Spann, his thesis was narrowly focused on the Baptist hymn-singing controversy. However, this approach does not easily lend itself to retrospective conclusions. His approach is common, and it may provide proper evaluation when looking only at the seventeenth century, but we must ask if it is proper methodology, yielding appropriate criticism and retrospective synthesis, for posterity. In other words, does it explain why the controversy has mattered for the last three hundred years?

⁶⁶ See preface to vol. 2 in Crosby.

effort (certainly the earliest) at a biography of Keach until the research of the last decade. Crosby extended Keach beyond the singing controversy, reported his wider role in Baptist developments, and rightly depicted Keach as continually engaged in controversy throughout his life. Crosby considered the matter of the singing controversy moot after it had been presented to an assembly of representatives from Baptist congregations and the assembly had rendered its judgment,⁶⁷ though the record of writings on this matter is not so generous.⁶⁸

Another work by the Baptist historian W. T. Whitley, *A History of British Baptists*,⁶⁹ brilliantly summarizes Keach, whom he considers a significant leader among London Baptists of the later 1600s. Keach is portrayed as a tireless author, writing regular biblical expositions yet limited by his tendency to be regularly involved in controversy. Furthermore, Whitley criticizes Keach as disinterested in working with others because cooperation threatened or limited his control, the hallmark of those who “prefer to withdraw and rule their smaller coterie.”⁷⁰ On the matter of hymn singing, Whitley interprets Keach as taking advantage of the press to enrich worship through

⁶⁷ Crosby, 3:266-71. The original source of the assembly’s decision is found in NP-1692, 9-13.

⁶⁸ Details of Keach’s and Marlow’s activities between 1692 and 1696 are sparse; information that is known is discussed in Chapter 3. However, Marlow’s publication of CSBE in 1696 ushered in a new round of discourse on the singing controversy, including Lewis Awdeley, *The Axe at the Root of the Innovation of Singing* (London: 1696); E. H., *Scripture Proof for Singing of Scripture Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (London: 1696); Richard Allen, *An Essay To Prove Singing of Psalms with Conjoined Voices* (London: 1696); idem, *A Brief Vindication of an Essay To Prove Singing of Psalms* (London: 1696); William Russel, *Some Brief Animadversions upon Mr. Allen’s Essay* (London: 1696); Hercules Collins and others, *A Just Vindication of Mr. William Collins, and of several other Elders and Ministers, from the unjust Reflections of Mr. Isaac Marlow* (1697); *Singing of Psalms Vindicated from the Charge of Novelty* (London: 1698).

⁶⁹ W. T. Whitley, *A History of British Baptists* (London: C. Griffin and Co., 1923).

⁷⁰ Ibid., 177-78; quote 178. This characteristic may not have been personal or have belonged to Keach alone but may have been intrinsic to the protectionist tendencies arising from the pressures upon a nonconformist group of believers that had struggled against authorities for legal toleration. See Murdina D. MacDonald, “London Calvinistic Baptists 1689-1727: Tensions within a Dissenting Community under Toleration” (Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1982) for a study of community-wide dynamics within the Particular Baptists that shaped their institutional organization.

the publication of hymns.⁷¹ Ultimately, he writes, “Keach is thus a fair type of what Baptists were to be for long; earnest, self-educated, intensely evangelical and orthodox, the outlook narrowed to the denomination, and almost to the congregation.”⁷² Other recent histories of English Baptists include B. R. White’s short and sweeping *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*.⁷³ Since it pays ample heed to Keach’s position among Particular Baptists, it is puzzling that White omits mention of the hymn singing controversy, given Keach’s prominence in the struggle to introduce hymns into the regular worship of the Particular Baptists. Keach does, however, receive more balanced coverage in Leon McBeth’s comprehensive, superbly-documented study: while his endurance in the 20-year process of bringing singing into his congregation is the main focus of McBeth’s mention of Keach,⁷⁴ McBeth does acknowledge Keach’s role in other religious and political struggles, particularly those of believer’s baptism and religious liberty.⁷⁵

Studies of Keach

It is in the fourth research categorization, the literature narrowly focused on Keach, that we should expect—and we do find—the best analysis of Keach’s life, work, and contribution. In 1953, W. E. Spears wrote the first modern thesis devoted to Keach.⁷⁶ This study is valuable for the sole reason that it attempts to analyze, rather than merely report on, the British Baptists and Benjamin Keach. Keach stands as the filter, the eyes for this assessment, and Spears situates Keach as a successful pioneer for the Baptists on issues beyond congregational singing. On the matter of singing, Spears

⁷¹ Ibid., 152.

⁷² Ibid., 178.

⁷³ B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, rev. and expanded ed., A History of the English Baptists, ed. Roger Hayden, no. 1 (Didcot, Oxfordshire: Baptist Historical Society, 1996).

⁷⁴ H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman Press, 1987), 94-95, 150, 167.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 79, 116-17, 121.

⁷⁶ W. E. Spears, “The Baptist Movement in England in the Late Seventeenth Century as Reflected in the Work and Thought of Benjamin Keach, 1640-1704” (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1953).

makes McElrath's point three decades earlier. Keach was ahead of his time, but all of Protestant Christianity is unknowingly indebted to him.⁷⁷

Hugh Martin's pamphlet disappoints, in similar fashion to the aforementioned work by Carnes, sticking mainly to a survey of Keach's life and his participation in the hymn-singing controversy.⁷⁸ He acknowledges indebtedness to Keach for introducing hymnody into worship,⁷⁹ but by nature of his design there is no compelling rationale to understand *why* Keach's introduction of hymn singing was important or should matter three centuries later. This is exactly the problem with many investigations of Keach that must be corrected.

The limited scholarly recognition and partial interpretations of Keach of the last century may be slowly changing as Keach has received recent scholarly notice and the recent work is trending toward a more complete treatment of him, offering explanations as to why knowledge of Keach *does* matter three hundred years after his death. Barry Vaughn's dissertation seeks to explain Keach as a practical theologian.⁸⁰ He takes a what/why approach to Keach's theology, attempting to understand the factors, many of them historical, that shaped Keach's theology with the goal of better assessing why Keach applied his theology as he did. Vaughn's thesis is an effort to revive interest in Keach by demonstrating the significance of the man that Vaughn considers the most important practical theologian of the seventeenth-century Particular Baptists.⁸¹ As have others, Vaughn characterizes Keach's life as marked by controversy to the extent that it "divided and disorganized" the London Particular Baptists.⁸² Interestingly, Vaughn does not discuss the hymn singing controversy concurrently with the other controversies of Keach's life (specifically laying on of hands and the seventh-day Sabbath),⁸³ but rather in terms of Keach's hymns.⁸⁴ This must have been a structural decision, intending to cite Keach's hymns as evidence of his practical theology.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 234, 239.

⁷⁸ Hugh Martin, *Benjamin Keach (1640-1704): Pioneer of Congregational Hymn Singing* (London: Independent Press, 1961).

⁷⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁸⁰ James Barry Vaughn, "Public Worship and Practical Theology in the Work of Benjamin Keach (1640-1704)" (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Andrews, 1989).

⁸¹ Ibid., i-ii.

⁸² Ibid., 139.

⁸³ Ibid., 66-85.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 125-183.

For details of the hymn singing controversy Vaughn relies heavily on MacDonald's thesis. He appropriately notes misplaced or even erroneous judgments about Keach's hymns. Rather than relegating to Keach the legacy of merely stirring up trouble, Vaughn desires to show that Keach's hymns, despite their lackluster quality, *are* important in an evaluation of Keach as a religious leader and his significance to Baptist history. In the hymns, Vaughn sees content that anticipates Wesley but, more importantly, he sees Keach's writing as demonstrating the challenges faced in the group transitioning from "being a sect to being a church."⁸⁵ This point has elements of Watson's thesis that we shortchange hymnody as a genre when we limit our appreciation of it to its religious function and do not consider it as literature.

Following the framework established by his dissertation, Vaughn also contributed an article on Keach to a recent compilation by Timothy George. George and co-editor David S. Dockery include Keach in a study of four centuries of Baptist theologians whom they believe crucial to the heritage and evolution of Baptist theology today.⁸⁶ Their inclusion of Keach in this broader structure speaks as loudly as, or even more so, than the actual article by Vaughn, for it again forces us to ask if Keach is relevant today, and how so. Vaughn's article surveys Keach along the four dimensions of soteriology, baptism, corporate hymn singing, and religious education.⁸⁷ On the matter of singing, Vaughn considers Keach a passionate "leader and innovator for English Protestantism in general, and not for the Baptists alone. It is not too much to claim that on March 1, 1691, when Keach's church voted to sing a hymn each Sunday following the sermon, the great tradition of English Protestant hymnody began."⁸⁸ It must be remembered that, in this revived attention on Keach, he is being portrayed as multi-dimensional in his work and relevant today for more reasons than merely using hymns to create a controversy.

The Edwin Mellen Press has recently published a holistic treatment of Keach by David Copeland—the first non-thesis work of its kind—in its series on religion and society.⁸⁹ A large part of this study is devoted to the hymn singing controversy, but

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 345-347; quote 345.

⁸⁶ Timothy George and David S. Dockery, eds., *Baptist Theologians* (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman Press, 1990), 704.

⁸⁷ James Barry Vaughn, "Benjamin Keach," in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), 49-76.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 67-68.

⁸⁹ David Copeland, *Benjamin Keach and the Development of Baptist Traditions in Seventeenth-Century England*, *Studies in Religion and Society*, vol. 48 (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001).

Copeland presents a better understanding of its relevance than did previous scholarship. He examines the role of Keach's hymns in his personal life and in the worship of his church. Copeland concludes that it was not just Keach's persistence, but also a function of it being the right time, that led to the successful establishment of congregational singing.⁹⁰ Furthermore, like Music, he seeks to rehabilitate the reputation of Keach's hymns: not all of them deserve to be dismissed as "doggerel" of the past. Historically, Copeland considers Keach vital to the development of free-church worship.⁹¹ This observation, coupled with the work of Vaughn, begins pushing interpretations of Keach in a new, more comprehensive direction.

The most recent treatment of Keach was published just over one year ago. In *The Excellent Benjamin Keach*, Austin Walker provides the first complete biography of Keach.⁹² His treatment of Keach is both detailed and balanced. He presents Keach as a diligent and excellent preacher, yet challenged by a hot temper; a contemporary with John Bunyan and John Milton, though not as talented; and one who worked hard for unity, love, truth, and peace, both within and outside of his fellowship. Walker's work is scholarly and well-documented, yet his writing is easily readable by the general public. Walker's biography demonstrates the value of becoming acquainted with multiple dimensions of Keach's various roles as husband, father, preacher, church representative, and friend. To date, it is the most comprehensive treatment of Keach, and its nature again testifies that new assessments of Keach are expanding his importance beyond a focus on the hymn-singing controversy.

A New Construct

Despite his prominence in his own times among nonconformist groups, it is not unfair to say that modern scholarship has largely ignored Benjamin Keach. Coverage and interpretations of Keach do vary, but the depths of his work and its immediate and future implications remain largely unexplored. The more substantial scholarly concern is *how* the extant research on Keach has failed. It is not merely inadequate because

⁹⁰ Ibid., 156.

⁹¹ Ibid., 3, 158.

⁹² Austin Walker, *The Excellent Benjamin Keach* (Dundas, Ontario: Joshua Press, 2004).

facets of Keach's life and work remain untapped. It is true that some evaluations do not focus exclusively on Keach, but virtually all of them are deficient in how Keach is placed historically and in his significance as a figure of study. In other words, *why* should a historian three hundred years later care about Keach? Interpretations rarely move beyond recognizing Keach for the act of introducing hymns. The scant exceptions to this appraisal include the recent works by Vaughn, Copeland, and Walker and the importance acknowledged by George and Dockery. The most promising current study of Keach is the forthcoming dissertation of David Riker.⁹³ Riker is arguing for accurate placement of Keach within historical theology. He claims that Keach is a Reformed theologian as distinct from a strict biblicist or a Calvinist. Riker evaluates Keach on the doctrines of covenant, justification, and baptism, finding Keach squarely within his theological tradition on the former two and in sharp disagreement on the latter. These exceptions testify to the more urgent concern mentioned above, the failure of current research to adequately study Keach's relevance today.

Structurally, this failure could be described in terms of typology or construct. Until now, the typology for Keach has largely been limited to discussing his activity in the hymn-singing controversy and the people or writings that influenced positions Keach held. Consequently, interpretations of Keach have failed on several accounts. First, previous scholarship fails by relegating Keach's position strictly to the introduction of hymns. As already noted, this interpretation may be slowly changing, as the works of Vaughn, Copeland, George and Dockery, Walker, and Riker all seek to expand the rationale for recognition of Keach, his contribution to Baptists past and present, and his extended appeal across various Christian groups.

Second, previous scholarship considers Keach as entrenched within the Baptists. His affiliation with Baptists is accurate, of course, yet such a focus lends itself to a narrow interpretation of Keach. In his early life Keach was affiliated with the General Baptists, but as his ministerial, pastoral, and theological activities, including his writing, increased, he embraced Particular Baptist soteriology. Yet he remained "mixed," theologically speaking, as he held positions of both groups that were generally thought mutually exclusive.⁹⁴ Furthermore, the Baptists were just one facet of nonconformist

⁹³ David B. Riker, "A Catholic Reformed Theologian: Federalism and Baptism in the Thought of Benjamin Keach, 1640-1704" (Ph.D. diss., University of Aberdeen, 2006), forthcoming.

⁹⁴ For example, Keach believed and taught the laying on of hands after baptism, a position held by General Baptists but not Particular Baptists.

groups that shared roots in the separatist movements from earlier in the century.⁹⁵ Thus this view, while correct, is also limited. Furthermore, it is possibly anachronistic—one of the worst misdeeds of historical interpretation and understanding—because Baptists of today, while connected to the Baptists of the seventeenth century in name, principles, and theology, are not identical to their ancestors; many seventeenth-century Baptist leaders would certainly disagree with positions of today's Baptists. Even to speak of Baptists today risks imprecision because of sundry Baptist affiliations in the twenty-first century. Finally, knitting Keach too tightly to Baptists does not account for the independence with which Keach viewed the congregational body, and it implies that he defined the Christian community commensurate with Baptists as a group.

Spann's thesis amply illustrates the limitations of scholarship that restricts Keach to Baptists. To evaluate Keach, for example, he turns to Baptist origins as a group and their use of singing. This methodology is a common approach that much previous work on Keach has utilized, and out of fairness, it was appropriate for Spann, for the title of his thesis announces its focus specifically on the Baptist singing controversy. This technique may properly evaluate Keach within the seventeenth century, but does it yield proper results, with appropriate criticism and retrospective synthesis, for posterity? In other words, does this technique reveal Keach's importance for the last three hundred years?

Third, previous scholarship does not link Keach with hymnic development among nonconformist churches. Nor does it firmly associate Keach with the establishment of hymns as a function of the liturgy or an expression of the Christian in groups growing from the English Calvinist heritage of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. On the contrary, Keach is but viewed as a false start, one of several isolated efforts with limited fruition before Isaac Watts.

Fourth, previous scholarship assumes a contextual understanding of the Reformation's contributions—religious, cultural, intellectual, academic, social, and political—to Keach's post-Reformation context. However, it does not identify as part of that milieu a post-Reformation, post-Restoration, and still separatist *concept* of worship, which truly is that which was evolving. Copeland's observation of Keach's relationship to evolving free-church worship hints at this development, but this relationship has yet to be addressed adequately. This context uniquely shapes the hymn singing controversy in ways that would not have occurred before the Reformation, the Restoration, or the separatist movement. It is evidenced in Keach's and Marlow's

⁹⁵ Murray Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints: The Separate Churches of London 1616-1649* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

writings, especially in their attention to forms and the interpretive principles with which they approached and applied scripture.

Fifth, as a consequence of assuming the contextual understanding of the Reformation, previous scholarship does not recognize the intellectual shift found within Keach's thinking and teaching, a blending of historical and theological forces, and how this shift affected worship behavior. In terms of worship practice, nonconformist churches were forging a post-Reformation theory of worship that was evangelical in nature and that grappled with the status of the unredeemed person and the worship service. This latter issue strikes at the very heart of the separatist movements, efforts that redefined the religious community in terms more specific to personal belief and behavior rather than the geographical location of the parish-based community. On the matter of singing, these concerns raised questions such as the following: Should psalms or hymns have an evangelical character? Is a non-Christian permitted to sing?

Given these shortcomings, it is appropriate to devise a new typology or construct for understanding Keach. Riker's forthcoming thesis presents such a model from a theological standpoint; the following chapters also seek to introduce elements of a construct to be applied more narrowly to Keach's introduction of hymnody and Marlow's response. The proposed construct operates in two dimensions. First, it understands Keach in terms of body or community. The broader understanding draws on links to and effects of the Reformation. Moving toward Keach's time, it turns next to separatist movements and then finally to Keach's congregation specifically, examining questions of unbelievers in the community, singing as a threat to the community, and essentials of unity in doctrine and practice, questions with which Keach and Marlow both struggled. Second, this typology understands Keach in terms of practice or behavior as Keach's introduction of hymns penetrated the contemporary understanding of proper worship as defended by Isaac Marlow. Specifically, this axis questions how form, as evidenced in the imitation of the primitive church and biblical patterns, and then interpretive principles, as applied to worship, were integrated into an evolving concept of worship.

The following pages seek to introduce elements of the new construct and demonstrate how it may be useful in evaluating both Benjamin Keach and Isaac Marlow. This new typology will better shape our understanding of a journey that Keach walked, a journey that evolved worship practice so that congregations then and now could sing of the spiritual journey that Newton so poignantly summarized and synthesized in the words of "Amazing Grace!"

CHAPTER 2

CAPTURING THE ENERGY OF THE REFORMATION

In the 1690s, Benjamin Keach and Isaac Marlow exchanged passionate and pointed tracts over the matter of singing, and despite the passage of 150 years they repeatedly invoked the Reformation as justification to continue their public disagreement. They used the Reformation not so much to lend credence to a doctrinal position but to provide a rationale for disagreement, hopefully persuading the opposition. Interestingly, though seeking opposite practical outcomes, both Keach and Marlow advocated the same general thesis in embracing the Reformation: the church must be reformed and purity achieved. Singing, for Keach and Marlow, was merely the matter *du jour*.

Scholarly literature on the hymn-singing controversy, however, largely limits the dispute to the context of late seventeenth-century Baptists. Based on the language Keach and Marlow used repeatedly in their printed debate, the analysis of this controversy must be reoriented and the controversy placed in the context of the English Reformation. Properly contextualizing Keach and Marlow includes examining the repercussions of the English Reformation and understanding methods of scholarly discourse for analyzing this period. Even as late as the 1690s, the Reformation continued to exert energy as a movement and provide a guiding force as nonconformist church leaders wrestled with issues facing their congregations.

Validating the Reformation Appeal

In England, appealing to the Reformation as grounds for a quarrel was not far fetched, even in the 1690s. This kingdom had endured a tug-of-war over Protestantism throughout the same 150 years, in the process executing one king and effectively forcing the abdication of another. The Keach-Marlow debate took place within a freshly

granted religious liberty under the Act of Toleration of 1689, a consequence of the Reformation that had been long in coming. While the Act of Toleration brought welcomed relief from religious and penal laws of the realm, it did not put all non-Anglicans on equal footing. At best, it required the “toleration” of dissenting Christians who met certain conditions: they were Trinitarian and Protestant, they signed loyalty oaths, and they had their practice “certified” by the state.¹ Catholics and non-Trinitarians were specifically excluded. Even those newly tolerated dissenters were not granted civil equality, for religious tests were still being imposed upon those who desired public service.²

Thus whatever liberties had been achieved, there was still ground to be gained, purity of the church to be sought. But Keach and Marlow (and other contributors to this controversy, for that matter) should not be faulted for summoning the consciousness of the Reformation. It is natural that religious leaders of the later sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries would cite authorities of the Reformation era.

However, Keach and Marlow cited the Reformation itself, the movement, as a force of momentum that justified undertaking the issue at hand. Consider Keach’s comments on the restoration of congregational singing as an ordinance of worship: “‘Tis not a falling away from Truth, to restore a lost or neglected Ordinance of the Gospel, (as you I perceive dare not deny, but this of Singing is); The main difference is about the Manner, or what Singing is. We say it is going forward in the glorious Work of Reformation.”³ In Keach’s mind, introducing singing was totally congruent with the Reformation goal of returning to that which the past had forsaken. This point becomes even more clear when Keach’s comments are set in the context of the church’s struggle to emerge from the errors of the Catholic Church: “. . . the Church is but newly come out of the Wilderness, or Popish Darkness; and not so fully neither, as to be as clear as the Sun, as in due time she shall.”⁴

On the other hand, Marlow spoke of the Reformation with equal fervency, particularly contending that Keach threatened the purity that the church had achieved as a consequence of the Reformation. He was specially concerned, he argued, because

¹ The Act’s formal title is revealing of its limited scope: “An Act for exempting their Majesties’ Protestant Subjects Dissenting from the Church of England from the Penalties of Certain Laws.” See David C. Douglas, ed., *English Historical Documents*, vol. 8, 1660-1714, ed. Andrew Browning (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 400-403.

² Watts, 259-260.

³ *BR*, 112.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

the Reformation took hold due to the willingness of saints and martyrs to embrace the authority of scripture and reject ceremonies and other humane inventions of men not specifically commanded by the word of God. "Now consider," he wrote,

That it clearly appears from these Instances before recited, that the Reformation from Popery brake forth, and was maintained by the Light and Authority of the Holy Scriptures, which the faithful Saints and Martyrs of Christ embraced, in opposition to all the Ceremonies and Inventions of Men, rejecting all things in the Worship of God and Administration of Gospel-Ordinances, which they believed were not prescribed in his Word.⁵

Without such a rule, the Reformation could not have rejected "gross Idolatry, false Doctrines, Traditions and Superstitions, that were repugnant to the express Prohibitions in the Holy Scripture."⁶

In one of his many responses to Keach, Marlow again affirmed that the purity of post-Reformation churches was at stake. He pleaded that those involved in the controversy

will make conscience seriously to examine, and not to rely on them, but on the Word of God, for what is Truth; that so your Faith and Obedience may not stand in the Wisdom or cunning Craftiness of Men, but in the Power of God; and that you may, neither through Ignorance nor wilful Negligence, bring the Displeasure of God upon us, for letting in of false Worship, and a Flood of Errors amongst the most reformed and purest Churches of these Nations.⁷

Unfortunately, the scholarly literature on the hymn-singing controversy does not encourage an understanding of the relationship of the conflict to the Reformation. Instead, it tends to embrace associations with the past that are limited only to Baptists, a heritage that dates only to the early seventeenth century. For example, the theses by Spann, Carnes, and Young do not explore connections to the Reformation. It could be argued, based on the intended scope of their projects, that Carnes and Young intentionally were working within limits that excluded the Reformation. But such

⁵ CSBE, 53-54.

⁶ Ibid., 54.

⁷ Marlow, *Truth Cleared* (London: 1691), 29. Some works erroneously cite Silvanus Heathcoate (or Heathcote) as the author. This situation will be explained in Chapter 3.

restrictions merely illustrate the point: associations with the past are encouraged only as far as they extend to the Baptist movements. Even when the literature extends beyond Baptists, it returns to authorities such as Luther and Calvin for their understandings of music in the church. Luther and Calvin are symbolically representative of differing views of how to interpret and apply scripture, but theirs are differences of process. The consequences of how scripture is approached *is* vitally important to this discussion and will be examined in Chapters 3 and 4, but the names of Luther and Calvin are merely cited in the literature as symbolic of the theology unfolding from the Reformation, not as representatives of the energy of the Reformation as a movement. The failure of scholarly literature to relate this controversy beyond the Baptists suggests an underlying assumption, either that a contextualized understanding of the English Reformation exists, or that at most a cursory understanding of the English Reformation is all that is necessary.

Consequently, literature on the Keach/Marlow hymn-singing controversy must be reoriented to the Reformation as the rightful context of the dispute. Articulating the significance of the Reformation in this dispute is not a matter of chronology but a matter of discovering and grappling with the thinking, the assumptions, and the goals found in the primary literature of the quarrel. First, Keach's and Marlow's discussions illustrate the legacy of ambiguity left by the English Reformation. Because of what the English Reformation had, or had not, accomplished, the later sixteenth century saw the continual emergence of Protestant fellowships (or sects, in the eyes of the Church of England) that were struggling to define themselves in the midst of fluctuating legal opposition. Second, the Reformation shapes the context of this controversy because of how Keach and Marlow viewed themselves and the goals they sought. They framed their arguments in Reformation terms and utilized humanist methodology for Bible study. Third, as will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, Reformation is the context because Keach and Marlow were actually debating a Reformation principle of scriptural authority that had been variously codified in the previous 150 years. In the 1690s, Keach and Marlow struggled specifically with how to apply this principle to the issue of congregational singing in the church.

Historiographical Perspectives: Describing the Reformation in England

At the end of his analysis of the English Reformations, Professor Christopher Haigh writes, “While politicians were having their hesitant Reformations, while Protestants were preaching their evangelical reform, parish congregations went to church: they prayed again to their God, learned again how to be good, and went off home once more. That was how it had been in 1530; that was how it was in 1590. Some Reformations.”⁸

If only it were that simple. There are points in history when multiple forces, sometimes unrelated, converge and introduce change that is much greater than the sum of its parts. Analysis defies simple explanation, yet a complex untangling of forces can deconstruct the main event to the point that its monumental impact is neglected. Such a time was the English Reformation.

It cannot be called just a religious movement, yet efforts to limit it to a political event fall short of capturing its profound religious and cultural implications, both immediate and long-term. The effect on the people of England was enormous. The English Reformation introduced intense change to English life, politics, culture, and, yes, religion. It fundamentally altered parish religion and the communal nature of the parish and, by extension, the church. It turned communities against each other. It introduced political and intellectual changes to English life, though it took decades, even centuries, to measure their impact. It fragmented Christian society in the name of reform, yet it had Protestantized very little of the island by 1560. It also left a heritage that still exacts ordering principles on many parts of the world today.

But the English Reformation is not the topic at hand, and any overview of this era would join the woefully inadequate superficial overviews currently extant in the literature on Keach. This chapter will not provide more than a cursory overview of the English Reformation either, if even that. The point of argument is not about the particulars of the events, however important they were, but about historiography, *how* these events are understood. The intricacies of the English Reformation *per se* are not directly relevant to this discussion. However, an awareness of the aftermath of the English Reformation, and particularly how the English Reformation is analyzed and how analytical approaches shape understanding of this aftermath, *is* vital to grasp the religious situation in England on the eve of the seventeenth century and to properly contextualize Keach and Marlow.

⁸ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society Under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 295.

Scholarly Approaches to the English Reformation

The last half-century has produced a colossal amount of scholarship on the English Reformation. The once standard accounts of the English Reformation as a response to a dwindling late-medieval religion have given way to revisionist claims that the common people of English parishes never desired religious change. These two approaches reflect how different sources and methods of evaluation yield starkly different accounts of the English Reformation.

Geoffrey Elton and A. G. Dickens best represent the political and constitutional historiography of the English Reformation.⁹ Elton stands as modern scholarship's patriarch in this line of thinking. Often considered—and more frequently a pejorative backhanded slap of arrogance—the Whiggish interpretation, this school of thought works from the acts of state beginning in the 1530s and develops a progressive story of reform. This interpretive construct embraces the hierarchical structure of government as an effective agent of religious transformation. It depicts an unpopular, late-medieval church as the vestige of a Catholic Christianity that was preached away, the Catholic demise and the Protestant engagement occurring with equal alacrity. A. G. Dickens attempted to explain *how* Protestantism had taken hold in England, supplanting Elton's constitutional story with information from local archives, initially those of York. He concluded that the Reformation was both desired and embraced by the people.

These characteristics—an unpopular church that could disappear with no consequences, and a wide-spread excitement for Protestant theology—are the very ones that the detractor Professor Haigh, quoted earlier, identifies as problematic when he writes, “That was how it had been in 1530; that was how it was in 1590. Some Reformations.”¹⁰ The political and constitutional story told “from above,” he argues, manifests a misplaced criticism, too readily delineating progressive forces in the change from the “bad old past” to the “brave new future.”¹¹ It assimilates mounting troubles in the late medieval church into a boiling crisis and fashions the story of the Reformation around the series of reforms spurred on by Protestant criticism and codified by acts of

⁹ G. R. Elton, *England Under the Tudors* (London: Methuen, 1955); idem, *Reform and Reformation: England, 1509-1558* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977); A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 2d ed. University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989. Hereafter, references to Dickens will be to the 2d ed.

¹⁰ Haigh, *English Reformations*, 295.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

Parliament.¹² These reforms, Haigh believes, were not desired by the people; rather, the people of England were coerced into accepting a state-structured Christianity.

Such challenges to the political-constitutional approach of Elton and Dickens date back to works published by John Bossy and Christopher Haigh in 1975. Bossy's account of post-Reformation English Catholicism argued that by 1568 the medieval English church had died; English Catholicism was now a burgeoning group, out of conformity with Anglican leadership and laws, and was redefining its own community and internal leadership.¹³ That same year, Haigh formulated his own challenge to Dickens, yet his thesis did not view post-Reformation English Catholicism as starting from scratch. Using Dickens' method of studying local archives, Haigh reached a conclusion opposite from Dickens: there was both local support for pre-Reformation Catholicism and resistance to the growing Protestantism under Elizabeth I.¹⁴ He then extrapolated his regional analysis to conclusions about the whole of England. As his scholarship progressed, Haigh also questioned the extent of the "death" of pre-Reformation English Catholicism that Bossy had advocated.¹⁵

Over the last three decades such revision of the political-constitutional story has put forth a socio-biographical perspective as a more authentic characterization of the English Reformation. This approach favors personal accounts rather than government records as an organizing principle in an effort to more faithfully reflect the common English experience. England experienced a culmination of choices, small choices each within an important context, and to adequately understand the Reformation in England the Reformation must be deconstructed and the small choices examined. Only then will the story of Reformation, as experienced by the English people, be written accurately.

In 1984 J. J. Scarisbrick effectively challenged Dickens in an account of the English Reformation that was about the mindset of the English people in the face of

¹² Ibid., 15-16.

¹³ John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1975).

¹⁴ Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

¹⁵ Christopher Haigh, "The Fall of a Church or the Rise of a Sect? Post-Reformation Catholicism in England," *Historical Journal* 21 (1978): 181-86; idem, "The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation," *Past and Present* 93 (1981), 37-69; idem, "From Monopoly to Minority: Catholicism in Early Modern England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 31 (1981), 129-47; idem, "Revisionism, the Reformation and the History of English Catholicism," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985): 394-405.

shifting religious practices rather than about specific events.¹⁶ He sought to trace how and why English society responded as it did to the religious changes of the sixteenth century that he categorically charged were implemented “from above.” “On the whole, English men and women did not want the Reformation and most of them were slow to accept it when it came.”¹⁷ Eamon Duffy lent further confirmation to Haigh’s and Scarisbrick’s view of a vibrant pre-Reformation Catholicism with his magnum opus in 1992.¹⁸ In a significant reconstruction of late-medieval parish religion, Duffy argues for a complex, vibrant, and thriving pre-Reformation Catholic Church.

While the revisionist perspective seems to have receded from its high watermark, it has effected a monumental shaping force on how the English Reformation is understood. Simply put, scholars have tried to describe the degree of coercion, rather than voluntary change, experienced by the English people. Most recently, there has been a flurry of inquiry into Catholicism in the late sixteenth century in an effort to redefine post-Reformation English Catholicism.¹⁹ Additionally, local record offices are providing a trove of archives yet to be explored for historians interested in writing microhistories,²⁰ a sub-genre that has gained popularity no doubt as a consequence of

¹⁶ J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

¹⁷ Scarisbrick, 1.

¹⁸ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-c. 1580* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992).

¹⁹ Andrew R. Muldoon, “Recusants, Church-Papists, and ‘Comfortable’ Missionaries: Assessing the Post-Reformation English Catholic Community,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 86, no. 2 (2000): 242-57; Lucy E. C. Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000); Michael Questier, “What Happened to English Catholicism after the English Reformation?” *History* 85 (2000): 28-47; Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Antichrist’s Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists, and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002).

²⁰ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Caroline Litzenberger, *The English Reformation and the Laity: Gloucestershire, 1540-1580* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Robert Whiting, *Local Responses to the English Reformation* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998); Patrick Collinson and John Craig, *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640* (New York: St. Martin’s Press); Robert Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England: Politics and Political Culture, c. 1540-1640* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale

revisionist historians and their graduate students. (Ironically, it was the structuralist Dickens who introduced this sub-genre to modern scholarship.) Thus, study of the English Reformation owes a great debt to the prevalence of the revisionist structure, even from its opponents, for it has clarified the difficulty in writing a singular accounting that accurately and adequately describes the English Reformation.

Perhaps the tragedy of the English Reformation is the deterioration of religion and the spiraling into conformity or indifference prevalent by 1570. Revisionist historians have convincingly argued that the people of England were not clamoring for a Reformation. But by 1570, argues Robert Whiting, both models of looking at the Reformation had failed.²¹ The forward-marching Protestantism that Dickens embraced was struggling for preachers and had slowed to a crawl, and the fervently Catholic populace described by Haigh had lost its identity. By 1570 only a limited minority of Englishmen were “committed Protestants” or “committed Catholics,” regardless of how devotion is measured or how the Reformation is analyzed. Catholic devotion had been suppressed, but a strong positive Protestantism outside limited geographic areas had not clearly replaced it.

Consequently, the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603) provides a point of cohesion for evaluating the English Reformation, but only because of its longevity rather than the ease of widespread generalizations. With a reign that lasted over four decades, Elizabeth accomplished what neither of her predecessors could do: she enforced a politico-religious vision. Her methods were not markedly different than any tried before, but she incorporated a sensitivity to opposing forces that Edward VI and Mary had not granted. Her success, originally political and then slowly religious, resulted as much from this approach and her devotion to uniting the realm as it did from her longevity; had she died after five or six years, like her predecessors Edward VI and Mary, indeterminacy would likely have reigned again.

Thus when Dickens writes of Elizabeth’s reign, his emphasis shifts to the advantages of the Anglican compromise. Elizabeth clearly sought to reverse the Marian religious direction, yet competing for her attention, and consequently her care in theological decisions, was a fractured domestic scene and tenuous foreign relationships. England was still at war with France and allied with Spain, both Catholic states. The French were supporting Mary Stuart’s rival claim to the English throne and, if needed,

University Press, 2001); Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Clive Burgess, “London Parishioners in Times of Change: St. Andrew Hubbard, Eastcheap, c. 1450-1570,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53, no. 1 (2002): 38-63.

²¹ Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 267-68.

Elizabeth could tap Lutheran states as prospective allies to ward off potential French aggression. Her personal theological preferences—some favoring Protestant thinking, some favoring Catholic ritual—helped shape the religious settlement she fashioned in 1558-59 and the resulting, enduring Anglican church.²²

As an institution, the church's favorable acceptance of the principles of *adiaphora*, things indifferent, and *via media*, a middle way, allowed religious liberty and toleration to manifest themselves as never before welcomed. Anglicanism was English, patriotic, and not firmly Calvinist. As Scarisbrick writes, "It rejected the doctrinaire biblicism (in its eyes 'bibliolatry') of the hard-line Protestant in favour of a more broadly based appeal to tradition, reason, and history – as well as Scripture."²³ It embraced *adiaphora* and came to tolerate various Church polities. Dickens concludes that the concept of *adiaphora* is one of the most important achievements of the Reformation.²⁴ The toleration that it produced may have been a necessary development once European states established themselves as religiously authoritative. Practically speaking, the Reformation destroyed the pragmatic advantages of persecution once the Roman church had fractured into an assortment of national churches and dissenting groups.²⁵

The influence of *adiaphora* and *via media* on the people of England and their value to English religious history is found not only in the environment immediately sought by Elizabeth but also in what they would allow in the long-term. Dickens argues that the Reformation marks a stage of a larger social transformation that embraced freedom of thinking and toleration in a movement toward multiplicity of religions in society,²⁶ an inevitable progression of sorts. The significance of these concepts for the people of England and English religious history is found in the aspirations and structural values they transmitted to later nonconformist groups, values such as active belief, voluntary participation through adult decision, congregational autonomy, and separation of the church from political controls.²⁷ By the mid-1550s these values formed the seeds of

²² Dickens, 349-51.

²³ Scarisbrick, 185-87.

²⁴ Dickens, 396. The concept of *adiaphora* had specifically English implications, but it was not an exclusively English issue. *Adiaphora* was widely discussed on the continent during Edward's and Mary's reigns and was a central philosophical position in the Augsburg Interim, the Leipzig Interim, and the Peace of Augsburg.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 380.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 392.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 268. Dickens' comments are based on Ernst Troeltsch's analysis of sectarianism, found in *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Allen and Unwin, 1931).

seventeenth-century English Congregationalism and Independency. These ideas emerged both in the exiled congregations, especially at Frankfurt, and in the remaining underground Protestant congregations in England; Dickens argues that such ideas naturally arise in free contexts, that is, circumstances devoid of externally imposed controls. The future importance for England would be that the forum for 'radical' ideas had shifted. They were now surfacing among opinionated, educated, socially upscale and politically savvy people, rather than among unaccepted groups—outcasts, really—such as Lollards or Anabaptists.²⁸ This religious atmosphere had profound historical consequences. It allowed the growth of various nonconformist groups and the development of Puritan thought, which itself would create an atmosphere conducive to political developments that likely would not have happened in a Catholic society.²⁹

Rivaling this Anglican Protestantism under Elizabeth was an enduring Catholicism. Elizabeth had not extinguished the Catholic faith, and her centrist religious policies encouraged its sustenance among nominal Anglicans. Yet these Catholics faced a major dilemma, the conflict between religious conviction and political obligation. The potential for this dilemma had long existed among the prelates, who had been accustomed to a blend of political authority and spiritual responsibility. Now it spread to the masses, and in 1569 Catholicism played the unifying factor for popular support of the Northern Rebellion.³⁰ While unsuccessful, the rebellion signaled that Catholics would use violence.³¹ Haigh speculates that this conflict formed the basis of Catholic response, some attending Protestant services and refusing communion, and others turning to recusancy. For many, religious loyalty supplanted state loyalty.³²

Recusant activities strengthened in the 1570s and 1580s, but the underground Catholic Church faced a crisis as Elizabethan policy evolved in the 1580s in tandem with increasing recusancy and the influx of seminary priests from the continent. Many Catholics gradually conformed and became "church papists," and the remaining Catholicism became an aristocratic sect.³³ Scarisbrick objects to the characterization of post-Reformation Catholicism as a seigniorial religion on the grounds that there is no clear distinction between lay and clerical activity and that it poorly describes the

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 302-3, 347-48. Cf. Watts, 14-26, 94-99.

²⁹ Dickens, 372.

³⁰ Haigh, *English Reformations*, 253-58.

³¹ Scarisbrick, 147.

³² Haigh, *English Reformations*, 258-60.

³³ *Ibid.*, 263-64.

economic status of recusants.³⁴ However, the gentry and the country manor *were* vital to the sustenance of the Catholic faith. Jesuit and seminary priests focused on the gentry, especially in the Southeast, so that a Catholic ruling order could be prepared for Catholic restoration. Emphasis on the Southeast left fewer priests to sustain northern loyalty; most priests who remained in the North served those who could provide for and protect a Catholic clergyman. The Reformation did not eliminate Catholicism, yet it did force a social and geographic constriction, and consequently by 1603 Catholic recusants were numerically insignificant. It is in the transition to an aristocratic sect that Haigh finds the true Catholic defeat.³⁵

“Religion” in Transformation

Symbolically, metaphorically, and philosophically, the Reformation effected changes that cut at the relationship between religion and culture. For example, it reduced the number and diversity of authority figures and consequently narrowed how the average man and woman conceived of religion. The pope, the interplay between living and dead, the saints—these established elements of religion no longer stood. The Reformation eliminated dedications to Mary and public responsibilities for women, who previously had gained entry into the structure of religious power and leadership upon taking religious vows. The ideas of depravity, helplessness, and dependence on God cut off families from their ancestors spiritually and left people exposed. Pilgrimages disappeared. Whatever authority figures remained, either temporal or spiritual, now held increased importance in a world with a new sense of discipline.³⁶ Scholasticism no longer ordered this world. The struggle to reconcile scholasticism and Christianity had begun breaking down in the fourteenth century,³⁷ and by the end of the Reformation most medieval assumptions were foreign. Duffy’s intricately constructed worldview that blended secular and sacred had disappeared and with it the elaborate system of lifelong theological education that had been integrated into so much of daily existence.³⁸

A consequence of rival religious mentalities was the breakdown of a shared faith and the division of Christian community. These changes developed in the midst of a vast transformation of religion and society, a transformation acutely experienced in

³⁴ Scarisbrick, 153-59.

³⁵ Haigh, *English Reformations*, 264-67.

³⁶ Scarisbrick, 170-75.

³⁷ Dickens, 16-20.

³⁸ Cf. Duffy, 494-96, 591-93.

London. In the 1560s, London became the center of a movement to accomplish a truly reformed church. Despite its accomplishments, Elizabeth's broadly accommodating church had not completely satisfied the urge to purify the church, and nowhere was this unquenched thirst for purification felt more strongly than in London. In reaction to Elizabeth's compromises, unacceptable and even threatening to those with strong Protestant convictions, the 'godly' moved among parishes seeking one that was more than half-reformed. Puritan movements and separatist tendencies found vitality among the varieties of faith in the city. Believers now faced choices, not only about how to reach salvation, but where, and with whom, they could consciously commune.³⁹

The new religion had new demands, and not just in ritual and theology. It obligated adherents to a new way of thinking about religion and its place in life, and new theological principles favored an internalization of faith tenets rather than prescribed rituals. Scarisbrick describes this process as the simplification of religion:

It effected a shift from a religion of symbol and allegory, ceremony and formal gesture to one that was plain and direct: a shift from the visual to the aural, from ritual to literal exposition, from the numinous and mysterious to the everyday. It moved from the high colours of statue, window and painted walls to whitewash; from ornate vestments and altar frontal to plain tablecloth and surplice; from a religion that, with baptismal salt on lips, anointings and frankincense – as well as image, word and chant – sought out all the senses, to one that concentrated on the word and innerliness. There was a shift from a religion that often went out of doors on pilgrimage and procession to an indoor one; from the sacral and churchly to the familial and domestic; from sacrament to word . . . ; from the objectivity of *ex opere operato* and Real Presence, for instance, to the subjectivity of 'feeling faith' and experience.⁴⁰

The process could also be described as a change of thought, that is, to move from a ceremonial to a more intellectualized religion. Religious reformers, Protestant and Catholic, wanted to make all Christians think. For Catholic reformers, the unthinking could still be Christians. For Protestants, however, Christianity and salvation depended heavily upon an intellectual process. The theological proposition of justification by works had been much more favorable to the unthinking than justification by faith, and Haigh argues that the result was an exclusive Christianity:

³⁹ Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 633-39.

⁴⁰ Scarisbrick, 163.

There were no alternative patterns of piety, no concessions to variety of talents or opportunities, no choices of ways to the Lord. If the Christian would be saved, he or she must be a thinker: a sermon-goer, a catechism-learner, a Bible-student, an earnest prayer, a singer of psalms; indeed, to be a real Christian at all required sermon, catechism, Bible, prayer, and psalms. It was not enough—it was not much at all—to go to church and recite prayers; it was worthless to live charitably with one’s neighbours, unless good living came from right faith.⁴¹

Habitual and ritualistic behavior simply could not change one’s place in the scheme of salvation—nor could programs of contemplation, self-mortification, confidence in images, or any other method of encountering God. The traditional ways to God gave way to the single route of faith brought by the written word. Habitual Christians must change or risk salvation; many could not meet this new burden.⁴²

Consequently, the Reformation had produced a Protestant nation, but not immediately a nation of Protestants. Catholic behaviors and doctrines had been removed from worship via political statute, but Catholic views of life and salvation took time to die out.⁴³ Haigh classifies English Christians into four categories after the Reformation: Godly Protestants, recusant papists, parish anglicans, and old Catholics. Parish anglicans formed the majority of English people: they were “conformists, but not *mere* conformists”; “de-catholicized but un-protestantized”; “‘parish’, because they stressed communal values of village harmony and worship and objected to the divisiveness of the godly; ‘anglican’ (but not yet ‘Anglican’), because they stressed Prayer Book rituals and objected to the nonconformity of the godly.”⁴⁴

And so it was on the eve of the seventeenth century.

⁴¹ Haigh, *English Reformation*, 286-87.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 286-88. Duffy argues that late-medieval Catholics *did* think; their thoughts were stimulated and facilitated by ritual reenactments, images, pictorial representations of stories, and repetition of formal and informal liturgical tools rather than the printed page.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 280-84, 288-89.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 290-91.

Keach: Continuing the Reformation

As the previous pages reveal, there is no concise formula that accurately describes how the Reformation took hold in England. Archival sources continue to lead scholars to hedge against and shade past generalizations of the English Reformation. In the 1690s—despite the passage of one century plus a half, the growth of nonconformist and separatist groups, and the ongoing battle to legalize toleration—Keach and Marlow both asserted that *whatever* the Reformation had accomplished, there was still much to be done.

For both Keach and Marlow, Reformation as a concept embodied both a time period and a mantra of identity that sought, as its ideal, reform to a previous, purer state of the church—to the “original” or “primitive” state. Thematically, the writings of both on the topic of hymn singing testify to concerns that go far beyond the music sung in church. Emerging in the seventeenth century were various efforts to fill what many still believed a religious void left by the English Reformation, efforts that developed into groups called nonconformists and separatists, generally negative terms in contemporary seventeenth-century England.⁴⁵ Their standing before the government,

⁴⁵ Initially these terms were not interchangeable. They are two of several designations, including Anabaptist, Brownist, sectary, Dissenter, and Free Churchmen, that were applied to Englishmen who worshipped outside of the Church of England, it being the standard of orthodoxy. Michael Watts clarifies the definitions and implications of these two terms:

Separatist was “used of small groups of extreme Protestants who, impatient of Puritan hopes of reforming the Church of England from within, repudiated the ordinances and discipline of the established church and met in secret conventicles in the reigns of Elizabeth I and the early Stuarts. . . .

“Initially the term ‘Nonconformist’ indicated neither Separatist nor Dissenter. It was used in the reign of Elizabeth of Puritans who were in communion with the Church of England but who declined to conform to certain practices prescribed by the Prayer Book of 1559. Only after 1662, when the state required of its clergy their ‘unfeigned assent and consent’ to everything in that Prayer Book did the word Nonconformist come to mean separation from the Church of England. And it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that ‘Nonconformist’ came to replace ‘Dissenter’ as the usual designation of those Protestants who worshipped outside the established church, the term popularized by Edward Miall’s newspaper, *The Nonconformist*, founded in 1841” (Watts, 1-2).

and the thresholds that determined favor or disfavor, changed continuously and often unpredictably throughout the century.

Both Keach and Marlow stood in this Protestant but not Anglican tradition. The thematic issues that pervade their writings exhibit their struggle and concern in resolving dilemmas associated with the development of worship in their separated churches. Chapter 1 surveyed Keach's various interests and the issues which his writings addressed. Marlow was much less loquacious as a writer—though equally passionate. Of his dozen or so published works, most defend his opposition to Keach or others in the singing controversy, although he did write treatises on sabbatarian worship and the doctrine of the trinity.⁴⁶

Keach perceived and approached the issue of singing, specifically the failure of the church he pastored to practice it, as another step in completing the full Reformation of the church. However, it is not only in his literature on the use of singing that this mind set is found. The goal of purifying and reforming the church, totally and completely, shaped Keach's approach to ministry in general.

For example, *The Child's Delight*, Keach's primer for children, reveals in clear terms Keach's antagonism to the corruption, as he saw it, of the Catholic Church. First published in 1664 as *The Child's Instructor*, this handbook stirred up a controversy and landed Keach at the Assizes in Aylesbury before Lord Chief Justice Hyde on the charge of violating the 1662 Licensing Act, the law regulating the content of printed books. Keach eventually served two weeks in prison and saw the primer burned in an effort to purge the land of heresy. Among other things, the Licensing Act forbade the printing of "any heretical, seditious, schismatical or offensive books or pamphlets, wherein any doctrine or opinion shall be asserted or maintained which is contrary to the Christian faith or the doctrine or discipline of the Church of England."⁴⁷ Apparently, Keach's arrest was instigated by a letter from Thomas Disney to Luke Wilkes, yeoman of the king's wardworbe, in which he complained that Keach's primer taught a "new-fangled way"; he begged for the archbishop to be informed, lest the "schismatic and heretical matter" poison the people.⁴⁸

Reportedly, Keach's primer violated orthodox teaching on the following counts: "That Infants ought not be baptized; That Laymen may preach the Gospel; That Christ

⁴⁶ Marlow, *A Tract on the Sabbath Day* (London: 1694); idem, *A Treatise of the Holy Trinunity [sic]* (London: 1690).

⁴⁷ "An Act for Preventing the Frequent Abuses in Printing Seditious, Treasonable and Unlicensed Books and Pamphlets, and for Regulating of Printing and Printing-Presses" in Douglas, 8:67-69; quote 67.

⁴⁸ *CSPD, 1663-64*, 595.

shall reign personally upon the Earth in the latter day.”⁴⁹ The account of his trial suggests that Judge Hyde had his mind made up on the verdict before the trial formally opened. Mockingly, Judge Hyde asked Keach, “What have you to do to take other Mens Trades out of their hands? I believe you can preach as well as write Books. Thus it is to let you, and such as you are, have the Scriptures to wrest to your own Destruction.”⁵⁰ To the jury, before even presenting the indictment, the judge said, “He is a base and dangerous Fellow; and if this be suffered, Children by learning of it will become such as he is. And therefore I hope you will do your Duty.”⁵¹

The original primer is nonexistent today, but Keach pledged to rewrite it and presumably *The Child’s Delight* (1702) and *Instructions for Children* contain the essential content of the original primer.⁵² While these books extended beyond religious education and incorporated teaching on the alphabet, beginning reading, and mathematical and business concepts, such as bonds, receipts, wills, and weights and measures, Keach stated his religious positions clearly.⁵³ As found in the third edition, *The Child’s Delight* admonished children to learn God’s word by heart, for the papists can burn the Bible but never take away God’s word.⁵⁴ This handbook of basic principles sought to catechize children, both formally and informally, in a clear Protestant approach to the world.

It is interesting to note which issues Keach chose to be of fundamental importance in writing the primer. He presented lessons on the character of God, the child’s place before God, and a series of Solomon’s proverbs. He also set the Ten Commandments into verse form for ease of learning.⁵⁵ Part II of the manual’s catechism refuted the Roman church, teaching a rejection of any priest or vicar other than Christ

⁴⁹ *A Compleat Collection of State-Tryals* (London: 1719), 1017.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1017.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1017.

⁵² The date of 1702 refers to the 3d edition of *The Child’s Delight*. There is no date or edition number attached to my copy of *Instructions for Children*, although it did go through at least 30 editions. Because *Instructions for Children* is nearly twice the length of *The Child’s Delight*, Vaughn surmises that *Instructions for Children* is an elaboration of *The Child’s Delight*. See Vaughn, “Public Worship,” 240. See *ibid.*, pp. 237-253, for an in-depth analysis of the content of the primers.

⁵³ Vaughn postulates that religious education may be the guiding principle behind all of Keach’s writings. See Vaughn, “Public Worship,” 237.

⁵⁴ Keach, *The Child’s Delight* (London: 1702), 9.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 11-18.

and of the sacrifices by priests of the Roman church.⁵⁶ He also touched on worship, taking a strict constructionist view of acceptable worship: elements of worship are acceptable only as long as they are directly authorized by scripture.⁵⁷ It is probable that his comments are written with the Roman church in mind, especially since the closing advice he gives to children in the form of a grandfatherly letter is mainly a rejection of the Roman church.⁵⁸ However, his view of worship is interesting, given his later interest in singing and the intellectual route taken to justify songs written by man. His purpose for writing, as professed in the opening, was to “Establish young People in God’s Truth, in opposition to Error in these perilous Times.” The times to which Keach refers likely included the seventeenth century struggle over the form of the official church and the ever-changing legal regulations for dissenting churches. This was a period of uncertainty for those who did not conform to the Church of England, with limited toleration being granted to nonconformists only in 1689. However, Keach’s religious positions, heavily Protestant and unashamedly anti-Catholic, are clear. His pro-Reformation writing may not differ much from other separatists and nonconformists of the time, but he was clearly operating from the mentality of the Reformation as the most important guiding force in recent history—a force that he seeks to appropriate and continue.

The Breach Repaired, Keach’s exposition to prove congregational singing, serves as another example of how he intertwined the Reformation with his aim of purifying the church. When Keach wrote *The Breach Repaired* in 1691, twenty-seven years after his initial primer appeared, he explicitly affirmed the vitality and relevance of the Reformation to his cause. He depicted the church as still in the process of Reformation, “newly come out of the Wilderness, or Popish Darkness; and not so fully neither, as to be clear as the Sun, as in due time she shall. Reformation, ‘tis evident, is a hard and difficult Work, and ever was; ‘tis no easy thing to restore lost Ordinances.”⁵⁹ In this treatise, he sought to *correct* the church from the error of a lost ordinance, congregational singing. He took a logical approach, carefully analyzing several facets of the practice—including its antiquity, whether or not it was a moral duty, singing as an ordinance of Christ, the testimony of Old Testament saints, prophets, and the early Christians, and the form singing should take—all in an effort to affirm the validity of singing as a required ordinance of the Christian church.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 27-28.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 29-30.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 51-84.

⁵⁹ *BR*, 2.

Consequently, Keach believed that the restoration of singing was a continuation of the Reformation. In his own congregation, he viewed the fundamentals of faith as sound, yet they still lacked perfection. There was still work to be done, understanding to be gained. For Keach, the restoration of singing made continued reformation necessary as purity for church ordinances, of which he considers singing, was sought. The ultimate goal of a continuing Reformation was purifying the church. Keach recognized that singing was not the only area where the church needs improvement; the laying on of hands after baptism, as described in Hebrews 6:1-2, was another ordinance not practiced, and Keach engaged in a controversy on this topic during his life as well.⁶⁰ As in *The Child's Delight*, Keach emphasized in *The Breach Repaired* the tie to the Roman church: carnal ordinances had been "imposed on the People till the Time of Reformation."⁶¹ Even in the late seventeenth century, his goal was to purify more perfectly the church, to continue the unfinished Reformation.

Significant to the effort of purifying the church and restoring lost ordinances was an understanding of *truth*. Keach's definition of truth would be opposed by his detractors, but he made the search for truth central to his rhetoric on the controversy of singing. How to determine this truth in regards to ordinances of worship and valid biblical patterns to follow was also one of his major frustrations. He believed the example of Christ singing with his apostles at the Last Supper sufficient as a pattern to be followed, yet he was greatly troubled that his opponents claimed Christ left an insufficient directive. He wrote, "O how hard is it to bring Men off from their own conceited Opinions, or to receive a Truth they either are prejudiced against, or else not willing to have it to be received as an Ordinance of God!"⁶²

This matter of following the truth was not a priority only for Keach; Marlow used it as a succinct argument against Keach's teachings. Marlow implied that singing, as an ordinance, was "no less than a falling away from the Truth."⁶³ Given that, previously in his life, Keach also opposed congregational singing, he understood

⁶⁰ Ibid., 112. See Keach, *Darkness Vanquished*; idem, *War with the Devil* (London: 1675); and idem, *Laying on of Hands upon Baptized Believers* (London: 1698).

⁶¹ BR, 168.

⁶² Ibid., 89-90.

⁶³ Ibid., 111. Keach is referencing Marlow's *BD*, 3-4. Marlow's actual wording is slightly different. The context of Marlow's statement is that the scriptures maintain truth, and the "purest Churches in our Age" have testified "against the humane prescribed and precomposed Forms of Prayers" and "singing of David's Psalms, and other Hymns or Songs precomposed by Man."

Marlow's fervor.⁶⁴ He refused, however, to be deterred. In *An Answer to Mr. Marlow's Appendix*,⁶⁵ Keach admonished his readers not to be dissuaded by Marlow's use of charged words such as "error, apostacy, human tradition, prelimited forms, mischevous error, carnal forms, [and] carnal worship," dismissing such language as tactics intended to scare followers from the truth of the ordinance of singing.⁶⁶

Conclusion

Thus in the 1690s, Benjamin Keach and Isaac Marlow stood, unknowingly, at a threshold that, once crossed, would shape Baptist and also nonconformist worship practices. The issues—purifying the church, restoring lost ordinances, faithfulness to scripture, understanding truth—were of no small significance. To solve these issues, and to shape the theological character of their church, Keach and Marlow both believed the energy of the Reformation was vital as a guiding force.

However, as the next chapter will show, the principle at the heart of their dispute had nothing to do with singing. The casual reader will assume that at the core of this disagreement were drastically different views on appropriate singing. The question of defining appropriate singing—Keach and Marlow had their own answers—was merely the result of how they answered the much more significant philosophical question of principles of biblical interpretation on matters of scriptural silence. This question, itself, was also a matter of the Reformation.

⁶⁴ *BR*, 3-4. Keach's opposition to congregational singing will be covered in Chapter 3.

⁶⁵ Keach, *An Answer to Mr. Marlow's Appendix* (London: 1691).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

CHAPTER 3

REFOCUSING THE CONTROVERSY

The tension between Benjamin Keach and Isaac Marlow reached its apex in a representative assembly of Particular Baptist churches in 1692. The assembly focused its attention on the dispute and thus assured its public nature. However, the assembly never addressed the details of the fracas; instead, it concentrated on cultivating unity in the fragile association of churches.

To understand the crux of the conflict over singing, one must be familiar with how Keach and Marlow shaped their own comments over a period of six years. Only then does the question more fundamental to the controversy, the question of appropriate interpretive principles for dealing with scriptural silence, begin to emerge. By 1696, Keach and Marlow could neither agree on the fundamental nature of their disagreement nor resolve it because their individual positions resulted from differing assumptions on how to approach scripture.

1692 Assembly of Particular Baptist Churches

In 1692, representative leaders from most (if not all) of 107 Particular Baptist churches met in a national General Assembly in London.¹ These meetings were only in

¹ It is difficult to determine accurately the exact number of representatives present at the meeting. There are 107 congregations listed in the "Name of Churches and Ministers," yet twenty-three congregations are listed without a minister or messenger. It is unclear if this list were an account of those who attended the meeting or a listing of the known congregations and their ministers. Above the list is the statement "We Want the Names of several Pastors and Ministers," yet this comment does not clarify the exact nature of the list that follows it. Similar lists were included

their fourth year, having been initiated in 1689; it had, after all, only been three years since the royal government legalized toleration of Protestant nonconformist worship.

The 1692 meeting took a different tone from the three previous gatherings. The first meeting, in 1689, had taken a tone of mutual support and interdependence as delegates examined pressing problems within the Particular Baptist fellowship and contemplated remedies. The 1689 narrative of the assembly's actions reports that the purpose of the gathering was to deal with spiritual decay within the Particular Baptist movement and to seek ways, with God's guidance, to heal internal divisions and recover the former strength of the movement.² The 1689 assembly carefully distanced itself from any authoritarian role, intending to provide counsel and advice in understanding and applying the teachings of Christ yet maintaining complete and total autonomy of the various Particular Baptist congregations.³ The 1689 gathering did respond to fifteen questions touching on numerous matters presented to it by several congregations.⁴

In 1690 and 1691, the gatherings focused mostly on the use of a communal fund that had been voted into existence on 5 September 1689.⁵ The purpose of the fund was to support preachers at congregations unable to be self-supporting, to send out preachers, and to assist in educational training.⁶ The record of the 1690 meeting reveals

with the accounts of meetings in 1689, 1690, and 1691, but they do not clarify the nature of the names appended to the 1692 document. In 1690 and 1691, the narratives only list the names of association member churches, grouped geographically (generally by county). In 1689, however, the list included names of churches and key people at the congregation. The heading above the 1689 list describes it as the congregations "that sent either their Ministers, or Messengers, or otherwise communicated their State in our General-Assembly at London." Therefore, I tend to conclude that the names on the list in the 1692 narrative—at least most of the names—are names of attendees at the assembly. Crosby stated that 107 churches participated in the assembly but that there were many others of the same fellowship that did not attend. On the number of attendees, he implied that each church sent a minister and two messengers. Thus, the total number of attendees could have surpassed three hundred. Cf. *NP-1689*, 19-25; *NP-1690*, 10-12; *NP-1691*, 13-15; *NP-1692*, 14-19; Crosby 3:271, 273.

² *NP-1689*, 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 13-18.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

the need for itinerant, circuit-riding preachers in the “Eastern Parts,” which was judged to be receptive to the Particular Baptist message.⁷ The record also indicates that not all congregations were equal participants in the fund; the assembly’s concern was that lack of participation possibly indicated the need for regular contact between the congregations. Thus, the assembly established a process to encourage regular, inter-congregational contact and formulated guidelines to boost contributions to the fund.⁸ The 1691 assembly similarly devoted much energy to the fund and its use, although it did also address the serious questions of circumstances pertaining to withdrawal and reinstatement of fellowship within a congregation.⁹ As far as can be deduced, the mood in both assemblies was one of friendship and unity.

In 1692, however, the assembly was dominated by the stirrings produced by the introduction of congregational hymn singing by Benjamin Keach at Horsleydown. As previously detailed, Keach himself was a notable leader in the recovering Particular Baptist movement. Keach’s introduction of singing led his detractors, a minority of his congregation, to challenge him on “will-worship,” the introduction of a man-made element into the worship service. Twenty-six members left the Horsleydown congregation, including the wife of Isaac Marlow.¹⁰ A respected layman as well as a delegate to the General Assemblies and the treasurer of the assembly’s fund, Marlow launched a pamphlet war on the matter. Keach and Marlow, as well as supporting pastors on both sides of the issue, exchanged public pamphlets and private letters in support of their causes. These documents display reprehensible actions and the dispute degenerated into unkind, even unchristian, accusations toward each other. Thus in 1692, the assembly had just cause to attend to the dispute.

The assembly focused its attention on four books written during the controversy and the charges within. Upon the agreement of both parties, that is, those on opposing sides of the issue, the matter was referred to a committee of seven people within the assembly. The four books under examination included *A Sober Reply* by Thomas Whinnel, *A Serious Answer* by William Kiffin, and *Truth Soberly Defended* and *Truth Cleared*, both written by Isaac Marlow.¹¹ The specific parties of the dispute who agreed

⁷ NP-1690, 5.

⁸ Ibid., 7-9.

⁹ NP-1691, 11-12.

¹⁰ “Annals of an Ancient Church,” 8; TSD, viii.

¹¹ The list is found in NP-1692, 13. Cf. Thomas Whinnel (also spelled Whinnell), *A Sober Reply to Mr. Robert Steed’s Epistle Concerning Singing* (London: 1691); William Kiffin, *A Serious Answer* (London: 1692); TSD; and Isaac Marlow, *Truth Cleared* (London:

to the arbitration included William Kiffin, Edward Man, George Barret (also spelled Barrett and Barrette), William Collins, Benjamin Keach, Robert Steed, and Richard Hollowell.¹² Interestingly, even though Isaac Marlow authored two of the books under consideration, his name is not on this list. Presumably, he did not agree to this process.

The record reflects that the committee examined at least two of the four books, *A Sober Reply* and *A Serious Answer*. In each, the committee identified specific troublesome statements. Its assessment reflected concern with matters of tone, or language, and accuracy, and its various conclusions charged that these books contained

1691). Other signatories to *A Serious Answer* included Robert Steed, George Barrett, and Edward Man.

There is confusion as to the correct authorship of *Truth Cleared*. In *Some Brief Remarks* (London: 1692), written by Marlow in response to the report issued by the committee, Marlow said he had two books before the committee and then directly claims authorship of *Truth Cleared*. Cf. *Some Brief Remarks*, 5.

Unfortunately, Marlow is not always cited as the author of *Truth Cleared*. Attached to Marlow's document is an "inspection" into and reflection on Keach's and Marlow's books by a group of nine men, led by Silvanus Heathcoate (or Heathcote). These men were discontented members of Keach's congregation at Horsleydown, and their observations were intended to vindicate Marlow from Keach's "abuses, falsehoods, and misrepresentations." The error in citations is that the title of Marlow's work, *Truth Cleared*, has been cited as being penned by Heathcoate. Edward C. Starr's *Baptist Bibliography* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1947-76) lists it as such (K354), and even the recent outstanding work by Austin Walker does as well.

Fortunately, most who have written on Keach have correctly cited Marlow as its author. This is the case with Carnes, Copeland, Spann, and Spears. Copeland cites both *Truth Cleared* and the appended document written by Heathcoate under Marlow's name. Spann and Spears list *Truth Cleared* as being written by Marlow, but their citations do not include the attached document written by Heathcoate. Young mentions Heathcoate's document separately. Carnes provides separate entries for the works, entries that are consistent with the information provided by Spann, Spears, and Young. It is likely that, originally, these works were published separately: Marlow wrote *Truth Cleared*, and Silvanus Heathcoate wrote *A Brief Detection of Several Falshoods*. Both were published in London in 1691 and later that same year they were published together.

¹² NP-1692, 9. The names of Man, Barrett, and Hollowell are actually listed as Br. [Brother] Man, Br. Barrett, and Br. Hollowell; based on the records of ministers present at these meetings, as discussed in footnote #1, as well as the signatories of *A Serious Answer* (see previous footnote), it is reasonably concluded that their actual given names are those inserted into the text above.

“unbrotherly Censures,” “unsavory Expressions,” “Needless Recitals of Names,” “An uncharitable Insinuation,” false and ungrounded charges of forgery, and “unchristian Reflections,” among others.¹³

These charges applied to parties on both sides of the singing controversy, and a reading of the concluding determination written by the committee clarifies its overarching concern. Of utmost importance was the maintenance of charity toward fellow brothers and unity among the congregations. The committee “unanimously concluded, That those Persons who have been concern’d in this Controversy, have on both sides err’d in most of the Particulars that were laid before us.”¹⁴ It admonished both parties that their treatment of each other was “unlike to Jesus Christ, and the Holy Commands he hath given for Brotherly Love” and that they had fallen short of behaving with “true Charity” toward each other. Even had the charges of unkindness such as “unbrotherly Censures” and “An uncharitable Insinuation” been true, the committee believed these men should have handled the matter more privately, so as not to reflect poorly on themselves as individuals or on God.

The committee proposed a three-pronged solution to the problem, which, for the committee, had more to do with behavior than it did solving the disputed worship practices: first, that “God would make you all sensible of your Errors, humble you for them”; second, that the people involved no longer proceed in method or manner as before; and third, that the books be disposed of.¹⁵ The broader resolution for all of the churches was that no member “buy, give, or disperse any of these Books aforesaid underwrit, nor any other that have those uncharitable Reflections in them against their Brethren; and that no Person do sell them, or give them to others.”¹⁶ Thus, while the committee focused only on four books, it clearly knew that others existed and prescribed a general admonition to Particular Baptists against the writings. Pursuing the singing controversy—at least under the terms and behavior as before—simply was not profitable for the overall health of the Particular Baptists.

It is noteworthy that the committee never addressed the problem at hand, at least not the problem that the authors of these books addressed. The committee had other interests. The narrative never reflects any discussion on the merits or demerits of the argument concerning singing, whether it was right or wrong, helpful or harmful, required or voluntary. The committee’s concern was one of process: the character of

¹³ Ibid., 9-10.

¹⁴ Ibid., 11.

¹⁵ Ibid., 12.

¹⁶ Ibid., 13.

the discussions, the inflammatory remarks therein, their public nature, and the consequent reflections on individuals, congregations, and God.

Isaac Marlow and Benjamin Keach Respond to the Committee

Isaac Marlow's response to the committee's assessment was less than gracious. He believed he had been slighted and wronged, and he authored *Some Brief Remarks* as a defense of his books and a criticism of the committee after the 1692 assembly's narrative was published. Evidently, Marlow saw a copy of the assembly's narrative and the included report on the dispute before it was published, because he wrote a short note of response to be added to the assembly's narrative.¹⁷ Based on the committee's report, Marlow believed that it never actually examined his two books that were on its list. As noted above, the record only definitively indicates that the committee reviewed two of the four books, neither of which was Marlow's. Marlow's note, in part, read, "I do by the Advice of several Friends hereby testifie and declare, that so to publish the names of both my Books among the others, will be a great abuse and wrong to me, and a corrupt imposition on the Churches."¹⁸ Apparently, this note was delivered to Benjamin Keach, who was responsible for publishing the 1692 narrative.¹⁹ However, the published narrative did not contain Marlow's comments. It seems that Marlow's note, upon reaching the committee or assembly, was torn in pieces by somebody and thus not included in the final narrative, possibly against the wishes of even Keach himself.²⁰

Marlow's reaction to the committee may have been valid, at least in part. The committee's findings reflect that it certainly examined *A Sober Reply* (by Thomas Whinnel) and *A Serious Answer* (by William Kiffin). The report identifies several references in each of those books by page and line number and censures their authors for penning such words.²¹ However, no such examination of Marlow's two books before the committee is presented. Therefore, Marlow concluded that his books were

¹⁷ Marlow, *Some Brief Remarks*, 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

²¹ NP-1692, 9-10.

never reviewed.²² To support this conclusion, he cited not only the absence of any critique of his books but also the committee's own comment that there were some books with reflections similar to those it had examined that had not been seen.²³ The committee's actual statement is as follows: "The Names of the Books, some of which we have seen, and all others that have such Reflections, though not seen, are . . ." and then a listing of the four books follows.²⁴ Does this wording mean it had not seen some of the four books it enumerated? Or is it a general acknowledgement that, in addition to the four books before it, there were others that also contained similar content? Given that the admonition not to "buy, give, or disperse any of these Books aforesaid underwrit, nor any other that have those uncharitable Reflections in them against their Brethren"²⁵ immediately preceded the comment Marlow questioned, the second alternative posed above—that of a general acknowledgement that other similar, yet unseen, books existed—seems more plausible. However, whether or not the committee actually read and reviewed Marlow's books (notwithstanding its absence of any comment on them) remains uncertain. Clearly, Marlow believed his books had neither been analyzed nor deliberated.

Since Marlow's note of rebuttal was omitted from the printed narrative of the 1692 assembly, he published a short pamphlet in reply to the whole process and to vindicate himself from what he believed an injustice. First, as previously noted, he believed that by including his books on the list of censored works the committee had done him a moral wrong. Not only did he feel treated unjustly because his books were included without any specific reason, but he felt that he was being stripped of the right to defend himself, while works produced by the opposition that leveled stinging criticism at Marlow were left untouched by the committee. Specifically, he cited Keach's *The Breach Repaired*, Joseph Wright's *Folly Detected*, and *Truth Vindicated*, written by S. W[right], J[ohn] C[hristopher], and J[ohn] L[oader], as works of his opponents that disparaged him. "What reason is there," he wrote, ". . . that these should not without being censured for it, have liberty to be answered in just vindication of my self from their abuses"?"²⁶ He provided several examples of indictments these uncensored books charged against him:

²² Marlow, *Some Brief Remarks*, 5, 10.

²³ *Ibid.*, 5; cf. *NP-1692*, 13.

²⁴ *NP-1692*, 13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Marlow, *Some Brief Remarks*, 11.

As a Person not fit to meddle with Divine Things: As one that plays the part of a Sophister; as justifying the Quakers silent Meetings; rendring my self but little better than a meer Enthusiast; as a mischievous Person, who to Fire his Neighbour's House, burns down his own: As a Ridiculous Scribler; Brasen-Forehead, Non-Churcher, Ranter, Quaker, Nonsensical, Novice, Ignoramus, and Conceitedly Zealous.²⁷

Marlow felt marooned, for the specific books censured by the committee replied to and defended himself against these accusations. Yet even though the committee requested his books to be turned in, Marlow reported that Richard Adams, whom the committee appointed to collect the offending books, said that none of Marlow's books had been surrendered.²⁸

In addition to self-vindication, Marlow wrote his response because he feared that the committee's action could set a dangerous precedent of stifling the quest for truth. Members of the churches, wrote Marlow, should have the liberty to purchase books or pamphlets relevant to struggles of the congregation in an effort to seek for themselves guidance in determining true and accurate resolutions. He called on the churches to reflect on the committee's actions and questioned whether such censures, the prohibition of free inquiry, might actually be more harmful than helpful and result in individuals using such a process to advance personal agendas and ultimately, through such abuse, discredit the conclusions of any such special committees. To maintain respect for any future committees, he wished for his censured works to be given a fair hearing and for those in charge either to point out the error or unjust reflections or to clear his works and remove them from the committee's report.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid., 11-12. The specific accusations are found scattered among four books. In these documents, Marlow is called some of these names; in others, the statement is comparative in nature rather than actually "name calling." Marlow's citation of these charges, however, is accurate, save two accounts. Keach never wrote that Marlow was "not fit to meddle with Divine Things," but rather simply stated that Marlow *did* "meddle with Divine Things." Wright's actual wording is that Marlow's allegations were "no better than those of the Non-Churchers." Cf. *BR*, 13, 14, 122-124; Keach, *An Answer to Mr. Marlow's Appendix*, 25; Joseph Wright, *Folly Detected* (London: 1691), 3, 17, 35, 71, 76; and S. W[right], J[ohn] C[hristopher], and J[ohn] L[oader]'s *Truth Vindicated* (London: 1691), 14, 23.

²⁸ Marlow, *Some Brief Remarks*, 12.

²⁹ Ibid., 18-19.

While Marlow's distaste for the committee's actions and report, and his quest for purity of truth, are admirable, it must be remembered that all along he believed his position in the singing controversy to be correct:

And if I am branded with the mark of one that sows Divisions, because I plainly tell them the Truth, and when all I have done directly tends to preserve the Peace and Unity of the Churches, and to establish the Minds of weak Christians in those very Principles which they have received, and wherein they have walked together in sweet Agreement for many years, I must learn to be contented, and suffer for the Truth: And I hope that whatever of this nature I may meet withal, or false Aspersions may be thrown upon me, yet the God of Truth whom I serve herein, and labour to please more than Man, will maintain that peace and satisfaction I have always had in this undertaking, and in his time will make his People truly sensible, who are indeed the Troublers of our Churches.³⁰

In 1740, Thomas Crosby concluded that the committee's resolution ended the trouble over the matter of singing;³¹ clearly, for Marlow, it did not.

Benjamin Keach did not respond to the censure of the committee in an overtly public manner. He did not publish additional polemical works on the controversy of singing after the 1692 assembly met. Keach's activity that can be confirmed is that he continued in his characteristic leadership as a preacher and writer. Between 1692 and 1694, he did not avoid controversy. In 1692, he published a collection of sermons defending particular (Calvinistic), as opposed to general (Arminian), atonement.³² In 1694, he followed up on these sermons with an exposition on the doctrine of grace as he understood its relationship to atonement.³³ During those same three years, he also defended the Baptist practice of adult believer's baptism. In 1692 and 1693, he published two books on the unlawfulness of infant baptism,³⁴ and in 1694 he responded to the attacks of Gyles Shute, who had argued that "Anabaptists" (practitioners of adult believer's baptism) were counterfeit.³⁵

³⁰ Ibid., 21.

³¹ Crosby, 3:270-71.

³² Benjamin Keach, *The Marrow of True Justification* (London: 1692).

³³ Benjamin Keach, *A Golden Mine Opened* (London: 1694).

³⁴ Benjamin Keach, *The Rector Rectified and Corrected* (London: 1692), and idem, *The Ax laid to the Root*, parts 1 and 2 (London: 1693).

³⁵ Benjamin Keach, *A Counter Antidote* (London: 1694).

Keach also published two collections of hymns. In 1692, his *Banqueting-House* was a reprint of his 1691 collection of three hundred hymns, *Spiritual Melody*, republished with a new introduction that defended congregational singing.³⁶ The particular date of publication during 1692 is not certain, but there is no mention of the 1692 assembly or Marlow's post-assembly publication, so it is logical to presume that it predates the gathering. In 1696, he published *A Feast of Fat Things*, another collection of scripture songs and hymns, but it contained no further commentary on the singing controversy.³⁷

In 1692, it is doubtful that Keach considered the singing controversy resolved—especially since the committee did not address the particulars of the argument—but he apparently attempted to follow the spirit of the committee's admonition. Unfortunately, extant information on Keach's reaction is severely limited. Marlow alluded to a confession made by Keach in response to the committee's determination.³⁸ This was an apology for events surrounding the singing controversy, yet Marlow complained that it was not widely disseminated and was woefully inadequate.³⁹ He found Keach's confession insubstantial, perhaps even disingenuous, and wrote that

the principal part whereof appears as much if not more, a covering of his transgression, than a confessing and forsaking of it; for the same matter of Slander he cast on the first Baptized Churches, which he now owneth to be a wrong to them, he hath transferred to some other Churches of a later date, to excuse or justifie himself.⁴⁰

Beyond questioning the sincerity of Keach's apology for his part in carrying on the singing controversy in such an opprobrious tone, Marlow remained personally offended at Keach's confession.

Had his Confession proceeded from a real Sence of his Sins and true Repentance, with a sincere desire to satisfie all whom he hath wronged; I cannot believe he would have passed over, as he hath with silence, the publick wrong he hath done to me; and therefore, till he hath made me some publick, reasonable and

³⁶ Benjamin Keach, *The Banqueting-House* (London: 1692); cf. idem, *Spiritual Melody* (London: 1691).

³⁷ Benjamin Keach, *A Feast of Fat Things* (London: 1696).

³⁸ Marlow, *Some Brief Remarks*, 21.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

equitable satisfaction, he cannot appear to be an honest Man in Religious Things.⁴¹

Fortunately, Keach's letter of apology still exists, yet it is conspicuously absent from much recent work on Keach.⁴² Taken at face value, it reveals an obvious tone of contrition. Keach wrote,

I have, dear Brethren, passed under the hardest Dispensation of late, that ever I met withal since I have been in the World; but I hope I can say my Sorrow or Grief is chiefly because the Name of God hereby suffers, and his People are exposed to Reproach. I desire to live no longer than to promote Peace and Union to my Power in all the Churches of the Saints; though I am represented as one that hath not indeavoured after it, because of my Writing in the Defence of Singing the Praises of God. . . . I am grieved in my very Soul that this Ordinance should be deemed to have such a Tendency.⁴³

Keach was clearly touched and hurt by the discord, the recent controversy having taken an emotional toll on him. He acknowledged that the assembly was justified in its concern over the spirit of the discord and affirmed that he willingly deferred to the committee's judgment.⁴⁴

The bulk of Keach's letter addresses comments made in *A Sober Reply*, one of the four books before the committee. In *A Serious Answer*, Kiffin had charged Keach with being its actual author (as well as the "chief Promoter of this Controversy),⁴⁵ and Keach's comments in this letter of apology virtually confirmed his authorship of the book published under Whinnel's name. Keach systematically reviewed the determination of the committee, and each time responded with a statement of contrition. The apology is replete with phrases such as "I do now acknowledg [*sic*] my Error in this matter," "These words the seven Brethren call unbrotherly Censures: to which Determination I submit," and "The seven Brethren call this a Weakness and Over-sight; . . . To this I yield and consent also."⁴⁶ Such comments appear approximately eleven times over the course of a seven-page letter.

⁴¹ Ibid., 22.

⁴² See a complete transcription of the letter in Appendix A.

⁴³ Benjamin Keach, *To all the Baptized Churches* (London: 1692), 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 2-4.

⁴⁵ Kiffin, *A Serious Answer*, 5-6; quote 5.

⁴⁶ Keach, *To all the Baptized Churches*, 2, 5, 6.

The committee had also examined *A Serious Answer*, signed by William Kiffin, George Barrette, Robert Steed, and Edward Man. Keach's letter indicates his expectation that these men, likewise censured by the committee, would also produce a letter of contrition. They did, but its tone was not as gracious as that of Keach's letter:

[We] have agreed and declared that we (as well as our Brethren) should in Print, or otherwise, acknowledge that wherein they judge we have exceeded the Bounds of Moderation or Verity in that matter; which we are ready to comply withall as far as we can with a good Conscience.⁴⁷

Several events troubled Kiffin, Barrette, Steed, and Man. First, they were unhappy that Keach chose to print an apology. Instead, they had desired to meet in person so that no further offense would come from printed material. The wish had apparently been communicated to Keach.⁴⁸ Second, by way of two messengers Keach had delivered a summons for them to appear before his congregation's leaders. Kiffin, Barrette, Steed, and Man took exception to this approach, responding with a request for a meeting of four representatives from each side. This request, they reported, was met with "Rancour and Bitterness."⁴⁹ Third, they did not believe Steed's original book, to which Whinnel (or Keach) had replied and which the committee had censured, had been provocative.⁵⁰ Fourth, they, like Marlow, doubted that Keach's letter of apology had been disseminated widely enough, complaining "we fear that retractation, such as it is, or rather excuse, is not sent abroad so far as the Books are wherein that Accusation is inserted. We are apt to think by the scarcity of them, that there are hardly enough to inform the Churches in this City."⁵¹ Fifth, they charged him with continuing to print the books the committee had censured and complained that Keach's admonition in his letter to send all such books to Richard Adams, in keeping with the committee's directions, was disingenuous.⁵²

⁴⁷ William Kiffin and others, *To the Baptized Churches* (London, n.d.), 1-2. From the context of this letter and the contemporary events, it can be presumed that it was published in 1692 in London. A complete transcription of the letter is provided in Appendix B.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*; cf. Keach, *To all the Baptized Churches*, 7.

It is only after reading two-thirds of Kiffin, Barrette, Steed, and Man's response that we find a hint of an apology: "But as for what we have Charged on Mr. *Keach* in our Book, we are not as yet conscious to our selves that any thing of it is untrue, as to the substance of it; although in our Answer there might be too much severity in Reflecting on Him, which we desire to own."⁵³ The next paragraph again questions whether they "can arrive to any sence of our Miscarriages or Mistake."⁵⁴ The pages that follow this comment contain a mild re-phrasing of a comment or two, but mostly the text explains *why* Kiffin, Barrette, Steed, and Man charged Keach with forgery,⁵⁵ a charge the committee found baseless.⁵⁶ There is also a generalized apology for "harsh Expressions" toward Keach and Whinnel,⁵⁷ but nothing reflective of the contrition Keach's letter demonstrates.

Ultimately, Keach's letter did not placate either Marlow or Kiffin, Barrette, Steed, and Man. At the end of Keach's apology, he issued a one-sentence reaffirmation of his support for congregational singing.⁵⁸ This comment may not have pleased Kiffin, Barrette, Steed, and Man, but it is likely that the next sentence Keach wrote alarmed them more. Keach indicated that he might *republish A Sober Reply*, adding to it in some places but removing the offending portions.⁵⁹ This possibility disturbed Kiffin's group, who recalled that at the 1692 general assembly, Keach had voluntarily promised "that he would write or meddle no more about the Argument concerning Singing; which Speech of his (hoping He would be as good as his word) was the very reason that some of us submitted to be determined by the Seven Brethren."⁶⁰ They feared he would continue his publications on the singing controversy, and they vowed to keep responding.⁶¹

Kiffin, Barrette, Steed, and Man may have been justified in their concern. However, the record of Keach's activity after the 1692 assembly reveals that he devoted his attention to concerns other than the singing controversy. As did Keach, Kiffin and

⁵³ Kiffin et al., 5.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 5-7.

⁵⁶ *NP-1692*, 10.

⁵⁷ Kiffin et al., 7.

⁵⁸ Keach, *To all the Baptized Churches*, 7.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Kiffin et al., 7.

⁶¹ Ibid., 7-8.

his group also put the matter to rest. While they might not have agreed with each other, and possibly have even felt some continued tension, it was not put on display for all to see. Both Keach and Kiffin, Barrette, Steed, and Man largely abided by the committee's admonition to cease publication of materials with such pugnacity. Unfortunately, Isaac Marlow, who had never subscribed to the committee process, continued writing on the singing controversy, publishing five works on the matter after the committee issued its judgment.⁶²

Identifying the Fundamental Disagreement

Regardless of Keach's apparent contrition, and notwithstanding Marlow's public castigation against the committee's process for unfairly including his books in the list of censured works, the fact remains that the committee's review of the controversy focused on tone and attitude and not the actual matter of congregational singing. However, the passionate defenses Keach and Marlow wrote of their positions, and also the contributions of other supporters on both sides, emphasize that something vitally important was at stake. One reason Marlow responded to the committee in such a public nature in *Some Brief Remarks* was that he believed it would be impractical to reunite the committee members for a private hearing because of where they lived.⁶³

Marlow, however, was likely not reticent about an ongoing public discussion, exactly the development the committee did not want. As described in Chapter 2, both Keach and Marlow valued this controversy as a continuation of the Reformation. They also viewed it as a demonstration of seeking and finding truth and correctly implementing this understanding in worship. Yet Keach and Marlow characterized the underlying controversy in varied terms throughout the life of the disagreement, identifying several possible issues as the rationale for the dispute. A close reading of their polemical works, however, reveals one fundamental quarrel: they could not concur on how to approach matters of scriptural silence. By 1692, this divergence had merely manifested itself in the practice of congregational singing.

⁶² Marlow, *Some Brief Remarks*; idem. *The Purity of Gospel Communion* (London: 1694); CSBE; idem, *A Clear Confutation of Mr. Richard Allen* (London: 1696); and idem, *An Account of the Unjust Proceedings* (London: 1697).

⁶³ Marlow, *Some Brief Remarks*, 26.

Marlow Describes Points of Contention

In at least five different publications released over the course of six years, Isaac Marlow used various language to describe the points of contention at the heart of his dispute with Keach. Consequently, the development and changing shape of Marlow's thinking is easier to observe than it is with Keach, who did not continue issuing publications.

In *A Brief Discourse* (1690), Marlow's opening salvo in what would become a heated dispute with Keach, he spoke of longing to restore perfect Christian unity in Christ. The difficulty was that, while various groups proclaimed the Bible as the rule for personal and collective faith and church practices, they did not share the same understanding of God's will as revealed in scripture.⁶⁴ Thus, perfect unity was hindered by various conceptions of God's mind and his will.

Interestingly, Marlow conceded that negotiable matters did exist—but the matter of singing was not one of the “divers Things of lesser moment in which we differ”;⁶⁵ in other words, it was a weightier matter of division, not an acceptable issue of difference. The purest churches were those that opposed man-made forms of prayer, singing the Psalms, and any hymns or other songs composed by man.⁶⁶ In his quest to prevent apostasy, the guiding question for Marlow in 1690 was “Whether *David's* Psalms, or any humane prescribed, or precomposed Matter, may or ought not to be vocally sung by all the Church together, as part of the publick, constant and ordinary Worship of God, instituted in his Gospel-Church.”⁶⁷

In *A Brief Discourse*, and the *Appendix* that succeeded it, Marlow revealed three individual criteria that he valued as interpretive guidelines to determine worship practice: pattern, example, and command. Whether discussing the Psalms, or hymns composed by man, or the singing of women, or many other facets he found relevant for evaluating the issue of singing, he regularly depended on these criteria as essential to the process of resolving the question at hand.

⁶⁴ *BD*, 3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 5. In the first few pages of this book, it appears that four pages were added after the book had been typeset or perhaps even printed. Four pages were inserted in between pages 4 and 5, and they are numbered as follows: (5), (6), (7), (8). The page 5 cited above refers to the *second* page 5 in *BD*, the one *not* enclosed by parentheses.

When Marlow posited whether or not the Psalms of David provide authorization for the Christian church to sing, he concluded, for several reasons, that they did not. He claimed that singing the Psalms was “no where instituted, ordained, or practised, either by Christ or his Holy Apostles.”⁶⁸ One argument he advanced is that the Old Testament did not provide a pattern for a congregation of God’s people to sing together. Singing was restricted to the Levites, and thus there was no warrant for the whole church to sing.⁶⁹ The Levites represented only a portion of God’s chosen people, not the entirety, so their singing was not an adequate precedent for a Christian church to sing. Simply put, Marlow sought a pattern to follow but found none.

Marlow also devoted considerable attention to whether or not singing was commanded in the New Testament, much of which he set forth plainly in the *Appendix*, issued in 1691. He examined three passages of scripture that proponents of singing often used as authorization and concluded that singing was *not* commanded to the Christians of the New Testament. The first passage presented is I Corinthians 14:15, 26:

What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

In dissecting these verses, Marlow set the bar at the level of a positive command as opposed to an example to be followed (which, presumably, *could* be how a pattern, another of his criteria, was communicated). Verse fifteen, he wrote, provided a mere example, not a command, and verse twenty-six did not include a positive command for utilizing the extraordinary gifts mentioned in the passage.⁷⁰ He wrote, “Neither is there any colour of Reason to think that the Psalm should be vocally sung by all the Church together, any more than that the Doctrine, and the Revelation, and other Gifts of the Holy Spirit, should be delivered or said vocally together.”⁷¹

⁶⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 14-15.

⁷⁰ *AFD*, 20.

⁷¹ Ibid..

The second passage presented is Ephesians 5:18-19:

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and
making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Marlow interpreted *speaking to yourselves* as an inward action of the heart rather than vocal speaking. He argued that even *if* the text's *intended* meaning were for vocal singing, it still did not *command* the practice. Singing, as understood by Marlow, could not be separated from being filled with the Holy Spirit, and any focus on forms, that is, *how* singing occurs, defrauded the *spiritual* acquisition of gifts.⁷² Thus the goal he sought was to be filled with the Holy Spirit, not to correctly implement a form of worship.

In taking this position, Marlow set up a contrast between a *form* of worship and its *function*. Accurate replication of the correct form, if such can be determined, did not necessarily lead to attainment of the form's intended function. Whether his interpretations of these passage are correct or not, he advocated, in principle, that the function (which he believes *can* be accurately determined)—in this case, to be filled with the Holy Spirit—guide the Christian worshipper.

The third passage he considered is Colossians 3:16:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and
admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with
grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Marlow's exposition on this passage was that the apostle Paul, the author of the epistle to the Colossians, intended to encourage the church at Colosse to strive for the spiritual gift of singing.⁷³ In other words, the passage described a *mindset*, not a commanded activity.

Later in the *Appendix*, Marlow wrote against another argument that advocates of singing had advanced, that singing was a moral duty. Strictly speaking, his response falls outside of addressing the issue identified earlier, that of whether scriptural silence is permissive or prohibitive; however, the conclusions he proffered are relevant in principle. The moral argument simply states that it is in man's spiritual nature to sing praises to his creator; as a line of thinking, it transcends scripture's positive commands because it reflects on the created nature of man. Marlow believed that advocates of the

⁷² Ibid., 21-22.

⁷³ Ibid., 22.

moral argument put it forth because they could not substantiate singing as duly instituted by a positive command. “Their flying to the moral Law seems virtually to confess” that there is no New Testament foundation for singing.⁷⁴

Two of his arguments against the moral law are of interest to this discussion. Inherent in the moral law Marlow found its major fallacy as man’s trust in himself. He wrote that men have historically depended on the “dictates of their own hearts” to determine worship practices, rather than God’s will as revealed in the written word.⁷⁵ The second argument states the correction of this error. Obedience, Marlow argued, must follow “Gospel-Qualifications.” If prayer or praise is “not done in Gospel-manner, according to Gospel-Institutions, and in a New-Testament-Spirit, it is no more accepted of God, than it was under the Law” to follow ceremonial rites.⁷⁶ The implication of Marlow’s thinking is that, when considering the question of scriptural silence being permissive or prohibitive, man’s judgment is guided by his desire—a process that leads to error. Consequently, Marlow’s arguments leave little, if any, room for scriptural silence to authorize permission to man’s determinations.

For all of his emphasis on fulfilling the commands of scripture, it is unclear if Marlow believed the “primitive pattern” were ever achievable through reliance on scripture alone. Singing, he wrote, should be guided by the Spirit, an agent whose availability increases over time. Marlow wrote that it is only after the Spirit is suitably available for man that the “primitive pattern and perfection of Divine Worship” would be achieved.⁷⁷

Marlow also wrote *Prelimited Forms* in 1691. Here he reiterated two of his previous arguments. He expressed grave concern that churches could be corrupted by erroneous forms and manners of praise for which there were no biblical examples.⁷⁸ As of this writing he counted two churches as singing congregationally, a practice he found as “declining from the Truth and Spirituality of Gospel-Worship.”⁷⁹ His main criticism was that there is no “positive Command of Jesus Christ” for singing⁸⁰ Instead, congregational singing was a chasing after the traditions of men.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Ibid., 27.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 30-31; quote 31.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 45-46; quote 46.

⁷⁸ Marlow, *Prelimited Forms* (London: 1691), 4.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 4-5; quote 5.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 6.

⁸¹ Ibid., 7.

Later, he described man-made traditions as markers in a transition from spiritual worship to natural, or moral, worship. In response to a tendency toward natural worship, he posed three questions:

1. Can *nature* inform how mankind should worship God, and is it an appropriate rule for worship under the Gospel?
2. If natural worship has no gospel institution, is it pleasing to God?
3. Is singing justified both by *nature* and by *gospel instructions*, and if it be only from one, how can it be justified by the other?⁸²

Reading a bit further in *Prelimited Forms* clarifies Marlow's driving concern as one of flesh (one who is not filled with the Holy Spirit) versus Spirit (one who has cast off man's unspiritual flesh). He asserted that a fleshly man could not worship by the Spirit, and one in the Spirit could not worship according to the flesh.⁸³ Thus, his three questions sought to differentiate a mutually exclusive dichotomy.

It is interesting to observe his logical process in this pamphlet and especially to compare it with *A Brief Discourse* and the *Appendix*. In *Prelimited Forms*, he expressed concern about corruption when biblical examples were lacking; by implication, this thinking opens the door to biblical example as an acceptable means of determining worship practice. As noted previously, when he wrote *A Brief Discourse* and his *Appendix*, even an example did not meet his threshold of instructional authorization.

According to the record Marlow provided in *Truth Cleared*, also issued in 1691, he and Keach had exchanged a considerable amount of private correspondence. These private letters passed between the men in addition to the slew of published works they and their compatriots generated. It is in *Truth Cleared* that Marlow framed the nature of the issues in response to Keach's comments:

1. Keach is correct that the issue is *not* about singing.
2. Keach is mistaken when he claims the issue is not about singing with others, and Marlow addresses it as a matter of communion: "Generally and chiefly our Dissatisfaction did lie there at that time, and from that Principle; and for that very reason it was, that we would have kept this publick Singing out, because we could not see that the Church and the World might have such

⁸² *Ibid.*, 15-16.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

close and high Communion together, as to unite their Voices in singing the Praises of God.”

3. Keach is mistaken when he claims the dispute only concerns singing on the Lord’s Day, for this would imply Marlow was only dissatisfied with the day and not the practice of singing itself.⁸⁴

In 1692, Marlow’s *Truth Soberly Defended* introduced yet another component to the dispute on singing. In this book he moved beyond the issue of authority for singing in worship and addressed it in terms of what was required and what was superfluous. Elements that were required had been biblically instituted or ordained (and thus were considered *ordinances*); elements not required by God to accomplish the true function of worship ordinances were called *accidents* or *circumstances*. Singing, to Marlow, qualified as a circumstance of worship, an extraneous element. In explaining why singing was a circumstance and not exclusively a moral duty required of all men, he wrote that the true moral duty for *all* men was by plain voice, because all have this ability, whereas all do not have the ability to sing. As a method of praise and thanksgiving, singing, consequently, was an accidental and circumstantial duty.⁸⁵ In other words, he believed that God would not place a requirement on *all* men that some could not keep.

Yet it is not *all* singing that Marlow was addressing, only singing as understood by Keach. As seen previously, Marlow was deeply concerned that Christians allow the Spirit to work completely to bring out all spiritual functions (rather than natural, or man-made, functions) of worship. However, he recognized that the spiritual functions that comprised his focus were also related to man’s ordinary abilities. In *Truth Soberly Defended*, he admitted that there were *no* ordinances manifested through the Spirit that could not also be performed ordinarily (that is, without the working of the Spirit); as for singing, it was Keach’s understanding that “does not so continue to be an Ordinance.”⁸⁶ Singing, as *Keach* understood it—congregationally or from forms—was never a duty of the New Testament church, Marlow claimed. Furthermore, singing of any kind was not indicated for regular, constant use, but only for circumstantial use on certain occasions or when specific people had the gift.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Marlow, *Truth Cleared*, 39-41; quote 40-41.

⁸⁵ *TSD*, 8-12.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 88-90.

Marlow Writes His Conclusion to the Controversy

In 1696, Marlow attempted to close all discussion on the controversy of singing, and he published *The Controversie of Singing Brought to an End*. As noted in Chapter 1, this book did anything but end the dispute; a flurry of polemical works by several interested parties soon followed.

In this work Marlow did not construe the conflict as whether or not the New Testament urged vocal singing. Instead, he asked 1) whether it was exercised as an extraordinary gift or as a constant ordinance, 2) whether the manner of performance was by way of predetermined forms or the immediate inspiration of the Spirit, and 3) whether the minister alone sang, or the whole assembly, both men and women together.⁸⁸

Many of Marlow's arguments presented in 1696 are restatements of thoughts he had advanced during the previous six years. In *The Controversie of Singing Brought to an End*, however, Marlow's writing is clearer and better synthesized.

From the beginning of this book, Marlow returned to the role of examples and commands in determining worship practice. Beginning with the Law of Moses instituted in the Old Testament, he argued that there was no example or command for ministers and people, men and women, to sing together.⁸⁹ Some of the claims Marlow made seem far-fetched, as though he was perhaps willing to stretch and shape biblical events for his purposes. For example, he wrote that when Moses and the children of Israel sang, they did so out of joy rather than the dictates of an instituted form of worship, and the women who danced were separated from the whole group, not integrated with the men.⁹⁰ In the example of Deborah and Barak singing, recorded in the Old Testament book of Judges, chapter 5, he found no evidence that they sang in unison, especially since he considered it improper for Barak to have sung the parts of Deborah's song that specifically pertained to her or that were directed at Barak.⁹¹ In the Psalms, any command one cited for singing he dismissed as not binding on the Christian church; Psalms that spoke of singing under the Law of Moses were no longer binding, and prophetic psalms—those that used language of singing in the future—he applied either to the primitive Christian church or to the perfected church of a forthcoming millennial reign of Christ. On the off chance that the Psalms *did* refer to the present Christian age, he claimed that clapping hands, shouting, and singing, along

⁸⁸ *CSBE*, sig. A2v and sig. A3r.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

with a trumpet, must not describe a *literal* activity; instead, they referred to a *metaphorical* joy.⁹² In sum, singing together had no Old Testament example or instruction.⁹³

Marlow also evenhandedly dismissed New Testament passages that the pro-singing advocates cited for support and, in so doing, remarked that Keach and his supporters did not follow the example of the early Christians, because—as Marlow understood the Bible—these songs were not predetermined but were given immediately by the Holy Spirit.⁹⁴ Thus, even when Keach believed he was instituting a practice that had the authorization and precedent of scriptural example, he was in error.

The best rule that Marlow could deduce from the New Testament regarding the practice of singing is that there was no rule to authorize regular, ordinary singing (as opposed to singing that is extra-ordinary, or prompted by the Holy Spirit). It was generally accepted that bringing forth a Doctrine—in today’s language, a sermon—was limited to one person at a time so that decency and order be maintained. This understanding came from I Corinthians 14:26-31, 40:

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. . . . Let all things be done decently and in order.

Marlow understood these verses to be listing acts of men provoked by the Holy Spirit—doctrine, tongue, revelation, and so on—and he questioned why the *psalm* could be exempted from a reading that applied an extraordinary nature to the other acts. How was it that this passage restricted the *psalm* to an ordinary (or regular), collective act of the congregation?⁹⁵ To Marlow, this passage did anything but describe the psalm, or singing, as a regular, congregational activity.

⁹² Ibid., 4-5.

⁹³ Ibid., 5.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 6-7.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 11-13.

Marlow did find a rule that regulates women's singing. I Corinthians 14:34 reads as follows:

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

And in I Timothy 2:11-12, the scripture reads:

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

Based on these passages, Marlow concluded that women's singing in the church violated a positive command of scripture.⁹⁶

The two New Testament passages that were most frequently used to support singing in the Christian church were Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, both of which were quoted previously. Marlow claimed that Keach misunderstood these verses and proceeded to offer his own explanation:

These words, *Eph. 5.19. speaking to*, (or, as *Pool's Annotations* reads it,) Gr. [*in yourselves, in Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*], do no more, nor so much, because of the Gr. [*in*] imply a singing vocally together, than *Jude 20. building up [your selves] in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost*, does imply a Teaching, or Edefying themselves, or Praying with united Voices together.

These words, *Col. 3.16. teaching and admonishing [one another] in Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*, does not prove it a Duty to sing all vocally together, any more than *Heb. 3.13. Exhort [one another] daily*, does prove that the Exhortation ought to be performed with conjoined voices.⁹⁷

In sum, Marlow's own commentary on these passages concluded that Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 were not appropriate justification for *congregational* singing as a regular duty, or ordinance.

Proving the negative was not Marlow's only desire. He asserted that Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 did *not* support Keach's understanding of regular congregational singing but that they *did* support the *spiritual* worship that he advocated. Rather than open the door to any kind of vocal, congregational singing from

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

predetermined forms, Marlow reemphasized the necessity of what he called “spiritual” worship. Those two passages, Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, he claimed, were intended to encourage the saints to strive for spiritual gifts. The act of singing was merely “attached” to another gift. He wrote that it depended upon extraordinary circumstances and was attached to duties that were exercised in conjunction with other ordinances that themselves required gifts of the Spirit, such as speaking in tongues.⁹⁸ Since these have ceased, Marlow concluded that there should be no singing:

But since those Ordinances have ceased to be delivered by the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the extraordinary ways or additional modes of delivering them have also ceased, and those Ordinances themselves still remaining, are now delivered by the ordinary Gifts of the Spirit, and in the ordinary ways of Gospel-worship, and so it is with the Ordinance of Thanksgiving and Praising God, which still remains to be an Ordinance, and is to be performed without the additional mode of Singing, while we have not such an additional gift as the primitive Saints had, till God may please to adorn his Worship again with it by a fresh effusion of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁹

Keach Describes Points of Contention

Given the many works that Marlow published, it is not surprising that he framed the issues of disagreement in different terms depending on which book one examines. Keach, on the other hand, only published two books on the singing controversy. Thus, there are not as many opportunities to discuss or clarify his views on how to determine acceptable worship practices. The advantage of having few books from Keach—and one was more a rebuttal of Marlow than an exposition—is that his “message” remained more consistent. Keach’s refusal to publish repeatedly demonstrates a personal confidence in the strength of his beliefs.

In *The Breach Repaired*, written in 1691, Keach formulated the point of contention in three ways. First, he claimed that the dispute was not over “singing it self, nor singing with others,” but about *congregational* singing on Sunday, the Lord’s Day.¹⁰⁰ Later, he stated it as a matter of recovering an ordinance clearly outlined, he believed, in the Bible to be practiced by Christian churches. The loss of this ordinance, in his mind,

⁹⁸ Ibid., 22-23.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 23.

¹⁰⁰ BR, ix-x; quote x.

had contributed to the decline of the Particular Baptist churches.¹⁰¹ Additionally, he professed that the matter focused on using precomposed, or predetermined, forms to facilitate the singing of a group together.¹⁰²

Some of Keach's positions are to be expected, solely based on his affiliation with the Particular Baptists (and earlier with the General Baptists) and, more broadly, with groups that viewed themselves as separate and distinct from the established church and who had fought for legal religious toleration. Of primary importance is Keach's underlying approach to scripture: as he wrote in his dedicatory epistle, he believed that the words of God and the primitive pattern found within scripture were authoritative.¹⁰³ Later, he expanded this principle with a strong statement on the authoritative nature of biblical patterns and institutions: "For if neither Christ as our Pattern, nor the Apostolical Injunctions contained in the New Testament as our Rule, gives no sufficient Authority as to do what was so practiced and enjoined, what Ordinance can bind us?"¹⁰⁴ In other words, if neither pattern nor command, as found in the New Testament, were sufficiently authoritative to the Christian church, then what was? He also viewed the Last Supper, when Jesus and the apostles sang a hymn, as sufficiently authoritative by means of example.¹⁰⁵

These views of scripture—its singular authoritative nature, its presentation of a pattern to be recovered and followed, and the role of example—are not unique to Keach. Marlow himself supported these same principles. It is in Keach's comments on worship and the juxtaposition of those comments with the principles outlined above that an understanding of his application of such principles, and their evolution, is gained.

The earliest example of Keach's thinking on worship comes from his children's primer. When Keach wrote his primer for children, he presented much of its content as a catechism, or a series of questions and answers to be memorized and recited. Formal catechetical training for children had long been used by the Roman church to teach its doctrines. Keach's catechisms focused, in part, on basic points of biblical theology, and then later on learning answers that rejected teachings of the Roman church.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 99.

¹⁰² Ibid., 160.

¹⁰³ Ibid., iv.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 59.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 88-90.

¹⁰⁶ Keach, *The Child's Delight*, 19-50.

In the catechism he included a section on worship:

Qu. Must nothing be done in the worship of God, but what is written in the Sacred Scriptures?

Ans. Nothing by any means ought to be done in God's Worship, but what is written in the Holy Scripture; Add thou not to his Word; If any Man shall add unto these things, God shall add the plagues that are written in this Book; and if any Man shall take away from the words of the Book of this Prophesie God shall take away his part of the Book of Life, Rev. 22. 18, 12.

Qu. But may not that be done in Christ's Name, or in God's Worship, though it be not commanded, provided it be not forbidden?

Ans. No, by no means; for that which is not Commanded is consequently forbidden, because all Inventions, Invocations, and Traditions of Men are forbidden. *Nadab* and *Abihu* were not forbid the offering of strange Fire, but they did that which God commanded them not, and therefore God destroyed them, Lev. 10. 1, 2.

Simply described, when Keach wrote his children's primer he took a strict constructionist viewpoint of scriptural interpretation and application: only those elements of worship that had a positive scriptural authorization were acceptable. In addition to affirming this strict principle, he also penned a succinct rejection of the loose constructionist view that posited that scriptural silence is permissive. In the primer, Keach's position was that the absence of a forbidding commandment did not consequently provide authorization. In other words, scriptural silence on a matter did not grant permission to introduce an element into the Christian worship of God. This position was identical to the position Isaac Marlow would later advocate in his books on the singing controversy.

At the time he wrote the children's primer, Keach was affiliated with the General Baptists. He also opposed singing. In *The Breach Repaired*, written nearly thirty years later, he advocated singing in worship, arguing that its absence was a breach that man has created in the worship design that God provided in the Bible. In the *Breach Repaired*, he spoke of his former affiliation with the General Baptists, a time when he was prejudiced against churches he believed to be false or to have accepted the innovations of man.¹⁰⁷ Yet now that he had, for nearly twenty years, sought to restore singing as a

¹⁰⁷ BR, 1-4.

lost ordinance, the comments in this book that defended singing and sought to heal the division among Particular Baptists seem more relaxed than those he made in his children's primer.

For example, he argued that singing was a moral duty (contrary to the claim Marlow put forth of it being a spiritual duty) and, as such, an element of natural worship. He supported this line of thinking by making a distinction between *moral* precepts and *positive* precepts. For example, Genesis 4 states that men began to call on the name of the Lord. This event happened long before Moses lived and God's institution of the Levitical Law.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, Keach found "calling on the name of the Lord" a *moral* precept—it was the natural response of mankind toward God. As another example, Keach considered the children of Israel, who sang after they crossed the Red Sea. Their singing was an expression of heartfelt gratitude toward God for deliverance from Pharaoh, not a Levitical ceremony or the result of positive instruction.¹⁰⁹ Even without a positive directive to sing, Keach believed that nature leads mankind to sing—a premise that diverged from the requirement of a positive scriptural warrant, as he had stated in the children's primer.

Keach further expanded these thoughts when he addressed the question of who should sing. Ephesians 5:18-19 and Colossians 3:16, respectively, formed the basis for these comments:

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and
making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and
admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with
grace in your hearts to the Lord.

His reading of Ephesians 5:18-19 and Colossians 3:16 produced a singular, compelling understanding: Paul, the author of both epistles, *expected* Christian churches to sing.¹¹⁰ Limits imposed by scripture, he argued, did not exist in those passages. Keach believed that the expectation was for *all* people to sing, and since he could not find evidence that the Bible *limited* either this directive, or who could sing or at what point of the worship

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 28-30.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 30.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 100-102.

service, then Keach concluded that all Christians have a *duty* to sing.¹¹¹ And even though he recognized that there was no biblical example of a congregation singing, his argument was that, had a limit been intended, then God would have given those restrictions.¹¹² To refocus this conclusion in the language of scriptural silence, permission, and prohibition, Keach is saying that without specific prohibition on the matter of singing, *all* Christians have permission.

The Fundamental Disagreement: Conclusion

A summary of how Keach and Marlow described their disagreement is helpful, especially given Marlow's continued rephrasing and restatement of his positions. Both Keach and Marlow highly valued the scriptures and honestly sought to be obedient to their instructions. Both understood the scriptures as supremely authoritative. Their difference on singing came in how to define singing, in how to understand passages that seemed to permit singing, and in how to determine man's human contribution to singing in Christian worship.

In essence, Marlow sought to determine if anything precomposed by man could be vocally sung as a regular practice in the Christian church. For authorization, he required a biblical command. Sometimes, he was willing to allow an example to suffice as authoritative, but in other passages he considered example alone inadequate. He found Old Testament evidence of singing insufficient for the Christian church, and passages in the New Testament that apparently permitted singing he interpreted spiritually. New Testament scriptures, he claimed, referred to a spiritual act of the heart, not a physical act of the voice. Singing was a spiritual act that only occurred vocally when the Holy Spirit delivered the gift. A forced replication of the form of singing, in the physical sense through precomposed songs, did not necessarily lead to spiritual worship and could even corrupt worship. Vocal singing also could not be justified as a moral duty, or something God universally implanted in man's heart; since some people cannot sing, God would not require of all people a duty that some could not perform. Ultimately, Marlow viewed scripture as lacking any positive instruction to authorize regular, ordinary singing; he viewed the scriptures as silent on the matter, and to him, such silence equaled prohibition.

Keach, on the other hand, sought to introduce regular, vocal congregational singing into the Sunday worship. He believed God ordained the practice for the Christian church. He believed that precomposed forms were an acceptable method of accomplishing this ordinance. Like Marlow, he supported patterns, examples, and

¹¹¹ Ibid., 101-102.

¹¹² Ibid., 103-105.

commands as authoritative. He differed, however, in his definition of singing and on how to relate scriptural passages on singing to these criteria.

In fairness to Marlow, Keach *had* taken the strict view that scriptural silence is prohibitive when he wrote his primer for children. This view is revealed in the primer's catechism. However, when he wrote *Breach Repaired*, he had modified that guideline as it relates to singing. He now advocated that without a specific prohibition, man's precomposed songs—that is, hymns—*were* acceptable in worship. Furthermore, he argued that a moral or natural duty to sing, instilled in man's heart by God, was sufficiently instructive without the positive directive in scripture required by the stricter view that silence was prohibitive.

The Quest for a Guiding Interpretive Principle

In *The Controversie of Singing Brought to an End*, Marlow made the most comprehensive statement of his position on the question of scriptural silence being permissive or prohibitive. Marlow had written several defenses of his position on this dispute, but it is not until six years into the controversy that he recognized and addressed the question that appears to be driving the entire disagreement. It is probable that Marlow firmly engaged the question of scriptural silence because he believed that Keach, at least on the matter of vocal singing, was advocating authorization on the basis of scriptural silence being permissive.

Marlow's comments were mostly made within the context of the so-called natural duty or moral duty to sing. First, he iterated once again the source of authority for how to worship: all manners of worship must "receive their Sanction and Authority for our Obedience from a Supernatural Revelation of the Will of God unto us,"¹¹³ which he later described as gospel evidence.¹¹⁴ Taking the Bible as God's statement of his revealed will, Marlow was essentially stating that all manner of worship must be an obedient response to a scriptural directive. If worship required positive sanction, then scriptural silence had no bearing on how to worship. Consequently, scriptural silence could not be seen as permissive.

A good example of Marlow's application of this principle is found in the section of the book that responds to *An Essay To prove Singing of Psalms with conjoined Voices a*

¹¹³ CSBE, 25.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 27.

Christian Duty, authored in support of congregational singing by Richard Allen in 1696.¹¹⁵ Even though Marlow did not quite use this phraseology, it is within the question of whether scriptural silence was permissive or prohibitive that he found the most dangerous tendency of the singing controversy. His opponents (Allen specifically, but supporters of Keach, more generally) claimed to follow the way of the Old Testament, yet as demonstrated previously, Marlow rejected this assertion. Without New Testament warrant or clear Old Testament evidence, Marlow concluded that the advocates of congregational singing reverted to natural or moral duty as the authority for instituting the ordinance of singing.¹¹⁶ The trouble with this line of thinking is that, as a matter of principle, it opens up a myriad of possibilities that apparently have no controlling guide. Marlow concluded that if an inner, natural force were the determining guide and sufficiently authoritative, then there might be *many* rules and ordinances. If such authority could justify singing in predetermined rhyme and meter, then Marlow claimed that *he* had equal authority to reject such singing!¹¹⁷

While accurate, this conclusion just scratches the surface of the possible implications. Marlow feared that such a notion of individual liberty could create an abundance of rites and modes of worship not instructed in scripture.¹¹⁸ Such a fear likely led Marlow to reduce the controversy to one point of contention:

The whole Controversie of Singing is brought unto, and I think 'tis now confined to this single Point which they assert, *viz.* That Christian Churches (or, a Christian Church) has liberty given them to order many modes of Divine Worship, that are not prescribed in the word of God, so as they shall judge most for Edification.¹¹⁹

In other words, he understood his opponents to argue that liberty was found wherever there was no specific prohibition, a position he could not accept. At the most basic level the entire disagreement with Keach, then, was not about congregational singing, or even prelimited forms of worship, but about the interpretive principle of permission and prohibition as it related to scriptural silence.

To refute this principle of liberty in the face of no exclusionary prohibition, Marlow turned to testimony from the Reformation. John Hus challenged the scriptural

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28-58.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 45-6.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

faithfulness of the Roman church's practices, and then was burned. Ulrich Zwingli's teaching's led the Zurich leaders to reject all of man's traditions in worship, and a similar rejection of traditions, images, and ceremonies followed in Berne and Geneva. The Waldenses required scriptural authorization for all things, and the Anabaptists had suffered for staunchly rejecting infant baptism, a principle for which they could not find scriptural warrant.¹²⁰ Ultimately, Marlow concluded that the Reformation took hold because saints and martyrs of the sixteenth century embraced the sole and limited authority of scripture and rejected ceremonies and other humane inventions of men not directed in or authorized by the word of God.¹²¹ Without such a rule, he wrote, the Reformation could not have rejected "gross Idolatry, false Doctrines, Traditions and Superstitions, that were repugnant to the express Prohibitions in the Holy Scripture."¹²²

It was in the choice of Reformation leaders to reject inventions not positively sanctioned that Marlow found an enduring Reformation principle that should not be sacrificed. Chapter 2 characterized Keach and Marlow as understanding their efforts as a continuation of the energy of the Reformation, specifically in purifying the church (however that standard is determined). Marlow successfully moved the dispute beyond the Reformation goal of purification and described it in terms of a guiding principle in approaching scripture as taught by non-Lutheran reformers.

To demonstrate the more recent and broader validity of this principle, Marlow also appealed to confessional statements of the recent past and their positions on worship:

Furthermore, The Assembly of Divines, or Presbyterians, and Independents, and Baptists *Confessions of Faith*, Art. 21.22. do all assert, in the same words, 'That the acceptable way of worshipping the true God, is instituted by himself, and so limited by (or to) his own revealed Will, that he may not be worshiped according to the Imaginations and Devices of men, or the Suggestions of Satan, under any visible Representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.'¹²³

This statement is not the result of a joint meeting of Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists, as could be inferred from Marlow's wording, for there was no such gathering. Instead, it was a conceptual reflection on the common wording of multiple seventeenth-

¹²⁰ Ibid., 47-53.

¹²¹ Ibid., 53-54.

¹²² Ibid., 54.

¹²³ Ibid., 57.

century confessional documents. The Savoy Declaration of 1658, the closest thing to a confessional statement for Independents, and the 1689 London Particular Baptist Confession of Faith both relied heavily on the Westminster Confession of Faith produced by Parliamentary Presbyterians in 1647. The quoted statement originated in the Westminster Confession of Faith and appeared, nearly verbatim, in the Savoy Declaration and the 1689 Particular Baptist Confession.¹²⁴ In quoting these documents, Marlow was calling for the recognition that at least three confessional-type documents of the recent past asserted a unified position on worship, a stance that reflected and supported the principle behind his opposition to Keach's introduction of singing. Marlow's use of multiple confessional statements reveals his awareness that other groups outside of his immediate fellowship had addressed the biblical principle he found Keach violating.

Ultimately, Marlow arrived at three critical questions for those who embrace liberty granted by scriptural silence and controlled by man's own natural or moral sense:

1. What scriptural evidence supports this principle for the church as established in the New Testament?
2. Does this liberty *create* a rule for other churches? If not, then there could be a proliferation of modes of worship, dependant upon the various desires of man, each assumed to be equally authoritative and equally correct.
3. How does one determine in what areas, or modes of worship, a church has liberty?¹²⁵

In essence, he was asking for a standard to guide a Christian congregation in the exercise of liberty once it was determined that such liberty exists, a desire not unreasonable given the politicization of religions beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.

To be fair to Keach, we must remember that he did not believe himself to be eschewing principles that he and Marlow shared. He believed that scripture was supremely authoritative. On the issue of singing, he did not try to justify it solely on the basis of the moral or natural duty of man. Instead, he viewed it as authorized by positive commands or warrants that appeared on numerous occasions throughout

¹²⁴ Cf. Westminster Confession of Faith (article 21.1), CC, 3:600-675; Savoy Declaration (article 22.1), idem, 3:707-729; *A Confession of Faith* (1688) (article 22.1), 73-74.

¹²⁵ CSBE, 57-58.

scripture, the same criteria Marlow considered authoritative. It is true that, in positing singing as a moral duty, Keach proffered an argument for vocal singing that circumscribed direct command. Rather than indicating disregard for scripture, however, Keach was trying to demonstrate that, if opponents of vocal singing would not accept scriptures he believed supported it, there was another, more transcendent testimony of vocal singing.

Conclusion

The standardization of interpretive principles Marlow sought would never be resolved with Benjamin Keach. With so many points being raised by both Keach and Marlow as the actual matter of dispute, it is not surprising that Keach and Marlow never came to a mutual understanding or resolution. Part of the problem in reaching that point is that, as their own writings show, they did not ever agree on the main point of contention themselves! Furthermore, it seems that when describing the debate they both focused more on consequent or ancillary issues. Their polemical writings and the arguments they advanced lead to the conclusion that the main issue underlying the many secondary issues is a philosophical approach to biblical authority: Is the silence of scripture permissive or prohibitive? Is there a rule that can be adequately devised to answer this question, and how can that rule then be applied to the singing controversy? It is possible that this question of permission or prohibition was never explored by Keach or Marlow because they both had firmly decided their position on this question and its relationship to the ordinance of singing. Thus, they each worked from differing assumptions and tried to resolve a disagreement that was a consequence of their different foundational positions.

However, Marlow was in good company when he issued those three critical questions regarding liberty being granted by the silence of scripture. As asserted in Chapter 2 and demonstrated above, the heart of this dispute centered on a fundamental difference in approaching scripture. This difference itself not only resulted from, but also was rooted in, the Reformation.

CHAPTER 4

RESPONDING TO SCRIPTURE: REFORMATION PRINCIPLES SHAPE THE SINGING CONTROVERSY

Chapter 1 demonstrated the inadequacies of previous research on Benjamin Keach by how he is discussed and how his contributions are examined. It proposed that Keach be analyzed within the context of the Reformation, though removed by 150 years. Chapter 2 determined that the Reformation generated an energy that both Keach and Marlow felt and tried to capture, using it as their operational rationale even at the end of the seventeenth century. In England, in particular, consequences of the Reformation continued to directly influence religion and politics into the late seventeenth century. Chapter 3 elevated the actual controversy over singing between Keach and Marlow beyond the sporadic issues debated and placed it squarely within a question of how to approach scripture. This chapter builds on the reorientation of the singing controversy and locates it within direct worship principles that emerged from the Reformation.

When Benjamin Keach's antagonist, Isaac Marlow, wrote his critique of congregational singing, *A Brief Discourse*, and the subsequent *Appendix*, in 1690 and 1691, respectively, he used six main arguments to make his case. First, the "essence" of singing, a term he contrived, required praising God from within man's soul, an act he considered superior to vocal singing. Second, scripture prohibited women from speaking in the assembly, teaching, or praying aloud. Marlow understood this prohibition to extend beyond speaking and to include singing. Third, singing in the primitive church provided no contemporary precedent, since it resulted from a specific extraordinary gift of the Holy Spirit that was not given to all people alike. Fourth, singing together—congregationally—in unison required precomposed forms. The use of such forms might lead to confidence in the flesh (i.e., in mankind), and Marlow believed it inconsistent to reject forms of precomposed prayer, such as the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, yet accept precomposed forms of singing. Such a choice provided formal, as opposed to spiritual, worship. Fifth, singing that involved the participation of all in attendance was an activity of believers and unbelievers joining together in a worship act that should be reserved for the Christian community only.

Finally, David's psalms, when originally instituted, included vocal singing and musical instruments. If they were to be used in contemporary worship—a position Marlow never clearly embraced—then, he argued, the *complete* form, including tunes, must be used.¹ Although Marlow firmly held to his position that the New Testament spoke of singing only as a spiritual act of the heart, he also articulated reasons that vocal singing by the congregation was not authorized.

As Chapter 3 argued, however, it was not just specific arguments of opposition such as these that led Marlow to reject congregational singing. Marlow and Keach took opposite philosophical approaches to scripture, approaches that shaped Marlow's objections and Keach's responses. Yes, Keach and Marlow argued point-by-point with each other, but the issues with which they wrestled stemmed from a basic disagreement of how to approach scripture.

One major legacy of the Reformation is that Martin Luther and John Calvin articulated incompatible approaches to scripture as it relates to and instructs the Christian worship of God. To summarize, Luther advocated that it was appropriate to worship God in ways not specifically forbidden by scripture as long as the elements of worship remained consistent with biblical teaching.² This philosophy—which has generally been followed by the Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church as well as Lutherans—opens a substantial area of *adiaphora* that may be acceptable in worship. In contrast, Calvin limited the worship of God only to those ways that scripture instituted, prescribed, or commanded.³ English separatists and Presbyterians tended to embrace this philosophy. The contrast is unequivocal: one allows that which is not forbidden; the other prohibits that which is not directly authorized. Or, using the phraseology of Chapter 3, the enduring question of the controversy thus became “Is scriptural silence permissive or prohibitive?”

¹ *BD*, 6-23; *AFD*, 14-48.

² Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (Westminster [London]: Dacre Press, 1948), 19.

³ *Ibid.*, 19-20, 23. Davies elaborates on the necessity of placing Calvin's perspectives in the context of his understanding of the natures of man and scripture. Calvin viewed man as corrupt and scripture as the ultimately authoritative, declared expression of God's will.

Influence of John Calvin on Doctrinal Development in Post-Reformation England

In seventeenth-century England, the teachings of John Calvin shaped most of the century's religious discourse.⁴ Regardless of whether one examines the worship principles as expressed in the writings of small English separatist groups, or in the nonconformists that achieved more mainstream recognition, such as the Baptists, or in the more formalized and organized Presbyterians, it cannot be denied that doctrinal positions held by John Calvin permeated these groups and held enormous sway over them.⁵ Scotland did, after all, follow Calvin's Reformed teachings—and here this term is used in its general characterization of Calvinistic teachings, practices, and behaviors. In England, Calvin's influence had been felt early on in the Reformation and had only strengthened among groups that found the established church and its compromises unsatisfactory. Each group, of course, would claim that its doctrinal positions, especially if clarified in a formal confessional statement, were faithful expositions of biblical teaching (rather than something John Calvin wrote). Yet Calvin did exercise an enormous influence on such groups, even after his death, and it is only fitting to examine basic doctrinal principles he advocated as far as they pertain to worship.

The breadth of Calvin's writings is extensive, including commentaries on much of the Bible, sermons, and a systematic theology. Any attempt here to summarize or analyze his thinking as reflected in his writings would be futile and irresponsible. However, his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, first published in 1536 and which he himself considered as an organizational point into the in-depth study of the scriptures, provides a succinct base for his thinking. Calvin himself revisited this document several times over twenty-three years; he had enlarged it four-fold by 1559 and left for his theological descendants what would become a normative statement of the Reformed faith. Thus, it is not irresponsible to look to his *Institutes* for his articulated, specific, and systematic thinking.⁶ The following excerpts illustrate pertinent comments on worship as Calvin reflects on the knowledge of God, the use of visible forms or idols in worship, and the consequences of man-made laws.

⁴ Watts, 7-26.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7-26.

⁶ Alister McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 3d ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 244-48.

The Knowledge of God

Calvin's *Institutes* comprise four dense volumes of systematic theology, and his entire first book is wholly devoted to the knowledge of God as creator. One question Calvin asked was what it meant to know God and, consequently, the purpose of this knowledge. Broadly speaking, he concluded that knowing God involves a desire for piety, along with the qualities of trust and reverence. Such a man offers a pure and genuine religion to God and works at *not* sinning, not just out of fear of God's wrath, but in response to God's love:

Such is pure and genuine religion, namely, confidence in God coupled with serious fear—fear, which both includes in it willing reverence, and brings along with it such legitimate worship as is prescribed by the law. And it ought to be more carefully considered, that all men promiscuously do homage to God, but very few truly reverence him. On all hands there is abundance of ostentatious ceremonies, but sincerity of heart is rare.⁷

Prescribed worship, Calvin wrote, is a vital element of this religious offering to God.

Later, as Calvin explained that the knowledge of God is evident in the formation of the universe and God's governance of it, he argued that the Holy Spirit will reject worship that is contrived by man:

Hence we must hold, that whosoever adulterates pure religion (and this must be the case with all who cling to their own views), make a departure from the one God. No doubt, they will allege that they have a different intention; but it is of little consequence what they intend or persuade themselves to believe, since the Holy Spirit pronounces all to be apostates who, in the blindness of their minds, substitute demons in the place of God. For this reason Paul declares that the Ephesians were "without God" (Eph. ii. 12), until they had learned from the Gospel what it is to worship the true God. . . .

No wonder, therefore, that all worship of man's device is repudiated by the Holy Spirit as degenerate. Any opinion which man can form in heavenly mysteries, though it may not beget a long train of errors, is still the parent of error. . . . But what right have mortals thus to decide of their own authority in a matter which is far above the world; . . . Since, therefore, in regulating the worship of God, the custom of a city, or the consent of antiquity, is a too feeble

⁷ *Institutes* (HB), I.ii.2, 42.

and fragile bond of piety: it remains that God himself must bear witness to himself from heaven.⁸

The Use of Visible Forms or Idols in Worship

To the common observer, a distinguishing feature of Calvinist-Puritan worship has been the lack of visible images. Whitewashed walls, windows without stained glass images, and the removal of statuary and paintings all characterize a Calvinist-Puritan church building in common parlance. The driving principle behind such austerity has been Calvin's understanding that visible forms (or idols) of God were unlawful. In the *Institutes*, Calvin explored this conclusion from several directions as he argued against the use of *any* image or *any* pictorial representation of God.

One line of thinking considered them superstitious modes of expression:

It is, moreover, to be observed, that by the mode of expression which is employed, every form of superstition is denounced. Being works of men, they have no authority from God (Isa. ii. 8, 31; vii. 57; Hos. xiv. 4; Mic. v. 13); and, therefore, it must be regarded as a fixed principle, that all modes of worship devised by man are detestable.⁹

Another approach of Calvin was to consider what honors God. Calvin desired to acknowledge God with *perfect* honor, and he found images or idols as terribly inadequate: using images *dishonors* God because the superior distinction of the Deity is not maintained. Calvin wrote, "What sort of reverence God requires will be seen elsewhere in its proper place. For by his law it pleases him to prescribe for men what is good and right, and thus to hold them to a sure standard that no one may take leave to contrive any sort of worship he pleases."¹⁰ The context of Calvin's discussion here, as in the chapter regarding superstition, is one of opposition to the Roman church. He was repulsed by religious teaching that depended on images to connect with God. Some may consider his comments as extreme: does having a picture that depicts Jesus in a biblical scene make one guilty of honoring the *image*? It seems that Calvin would affirm that it does. Yet Calvin's motive must be remembered: he sought not to do *anything* that would remove from God the honor rightly due him.

⁸ Ibid., I.v.13, 61-62.

⁹ Ibid., I.xi.4, 94.

¹⁰ *Institutes* (FLB), I.xii.3, 120.

In the second book of the *Institutes*, Calvin devoted significant energy to explaining the Ten Commandments. The second commandment, which prohibits the making or worshiping of graven images, formed the foundation for Calvin's rejection of visible forms or images. Simply speaking, God requires *spiritual* worship. In explaining this commandment, Calvin wrote,

The purpose of this commandment, then, is that he does not will that his lawful worship be profaned by superstitious rites. To sum up, he wholly calls us back and withdraws us from petty carnal observances, which our stupid minds, crassly conceiving of God, are wont to devise. And then he makes us conform to his lawful worship, that is, a spiritual worship established by himself.¹¹

Not only do images, idols, or pictures introduce superstitious practices and challenge the honor due God, but they also represent man-made corruption of spiritual worship.

Consequences of Man-Made Laws

Book IV of Calvin's *Institutes* provides a detailed exposition against the organization, teachings, and practices of the Roman church. Calvin devoted one entire chapter to the making of human laws and their enforcement on the church. Of particular concern was how church laws and traditions, solidified into formal catechetical or governing statements or standard practices, affected the Christian's conscience. As expected, his comments were written within the context of the papal hierarchy of church governance and what he understood as an imposition of extra-biblical teachings. Calvin posed the most basic, fundamental, underlying question as follows:

This is the power now to be discussed, whether the church may lawfully bind consciences by its laws. In this discussion we are not dealing with the political order, but are only concerned with how God is to be duly worshiped according to the rule laid down by him, and how the spiritual freedom which looks to God may remain unimpaired for us.

It has become common usage to call all decrees concerning the worship of God put forward by men apart from his Word "human traditions." Our contention is against these, not against holy and useful church institutions, which provide for the preservation of discipline or honesty or peace. But the purpose of our effort is to restrain this unlimited and barbarous empire usurped over

¹¹ Ibid., II.viii.17, 383.

souls by those who wish to be counted pastors of the church but are actually its most savage butchers. They say the laws they make are “spiritual,” pertaining to the soul, and declare them necessary for eternal life. But thus the Kingdom of Christ (as I have just suggested) is invaded; thus the freedom given by him to the consciences of believers is utterly oppressed and cast down. I am not now discussing the great impiety with which they sanction the observance of their laws, while they teach men to seek forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and salvation from this observance, and while they establish the whole of religion and the sum of piety in it. I assert the one point that necessity ought not to be imposed upon consciences in those matters from which they have been freed by Christ; and unless freed, as we have previously taught, they cannot rest with God. They should acknowledge one King, their deliverer Christ, and should be governed by one law of freedom, the holy Word of the gospel, if they would retain the grace which they once obtained in Christ. They must be held in no bondage, and bound by no bonds.¹²

In articulating his argument against man-made laws, Calvin turned to several letters written by the apostle Paul. In Paul’s letters, he found directions against the admissibility of human ecclesiastical constitutions. Speaking of the second chapter of Colossians, Calvin wrote, “But at the end of the chapter he condemns with greater confidence all self-made religion, that is, all feigned worship, which men have devised for themselves or received from others, and all precepts they of themselves dare promulgate concerning the worship of God.”¹³

The previous comment comes at the end of a section where Calvin had concluded that the church was without authority to establish ecclesiastical constitutions to bind man’s conscience. Consequently, he argued, ecclesiastical constitutions of the Roman church that authorize ceremonies in worship were contrary to scripture and were to be rejected:

Since Paul then declares it to be intolerable that the legitimate worship of God should be subjected to the will of men, wherein do we err when we are unable to tolerate this in the present day? especially when we are enjoined to worship God according to the elements of this world—a thing which Paul declares to be adverse to Christ (Col ii. 20). On the other hand, the mode in which they lay consciences under the strict necessity of observing whatever they enjoin, is not unknown. When we protest against this, we make common cause with Paul, who

¹² Ibid., IV.x.1, 1179-80.

¹³ Ibid., IV.x.8, 1187.

will on no account allow the consciences of believers to be brought under human bondage.¹⁴

Because such constitutions were to be rejected, Calvin concluded that they were meaningless. They prescribed useless, foolish observance, and the pious conscience could not but be terribly oppressed:

But what does Paul say to all this? Does he pluck off those masks lest the simple should be deluded by a false pretext? Deeming it sufficient for their refutation to say that they were devices of men, he passes all these things without refutation, as things of no value. Nay, because he knew that all fictitious worship is condemned in the Church, and is the more suspected by believers, the more pleasing it is to the human mind—because he knew that this false show of outward humility differs so widely from true humility that it can be easily discerned; —finally, because he knew that this tutelage is valued at no more than bodily exercise, he wished the very things which commended human traditions to the ignorant to be regarded by believers as the refutation of them.¹⁵

Lest the reader discount his conclusions because he focused on the Roman church, Calvin pointedly expressed the general applicability of his conclusions:

Though I may not seem to be teaching a permanent doctrine concerning human constitutions, inasmuch as this discourse is applied entirely to our own age, still nothing has been said that would not be profitable for all ages. For whenever this superstition creeps in, that men wish to worship God with their fictions, all laws enacted for this purpose immediately degenerate to these gross abuses. For God threatens not one age or another but all ages with this curse, that he will strike with blindness and amazement those who worship him with the doctrines of men [Isa. 29:13-14]. This blinding continually causes those who despise so many warnings of God and willfully entangle themselves in these deadly snares, to embrace every kind of absurdity. But suppose, apart from present circumstances, you simply want to understand what are those human traditions of all times that should be repudiated by the church and by godly men. What we have set forth above will be a sure and clear definition: that they are all laws apart from God's Word, laws made by men, either to prescribe the manner of

¹⁴ *Institutes* (HB), IV.x.9, 420.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, IV.x.11, 421-22.

worshiping God or to bind consciences by scruples, as if they were making rules about things necessary for salvation.¹⁶

Summary of Calvin's Positions

While these excerpts are few, Calvin clearly believed that scripture taught principles that regulated the worship of God. Although he directed his arguments at abuses he believed to be prevalent in his day, most particularly practices and teachings of the Roman church, he recognized these principles as normative for all ages. Rather than being restrictive, such regulation of worship freed man's conscience from determining how to apply or respond to man-made infractions on what he believed was the well-defined ordinance of man's worship to his Creator.

Reformation Creeds and the Regulation of Worship

It is necessary to look forward only a few decades to appreciate the future significance of Calvin's understanding of scriptural regulation of worship. Likewise, the influence of Martin Luther's opposing view is also evident. By the time Keach defended himself against Marlow's accusations, all formal statements of faith mirrored either the Calvinist or Lutheran predilections toward scriptural directives regarding worship.

Creeds That Share Martin Luther's Approach to Scripture

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the proliferation of creedal and confessional statements as Protestant groups on the continent and in the English-speaking island kingdoms formally defined their doctrinal understandings. For those groups that looked to John Calvin's writings as a guide, his influence is unmistakable. Unfortunately, in the process of formulating statements of belief various religious groups tended to take stands of opposition that were culturally driven. In *The Creeds of Christendom*, Philip Schaff observed that the tragedy of these creeds was that they often enshrined detailed responses to perceived heresies or conflicts of the past in addition to

¹⁶ *Institutes* (FLB), IV.x.16, 1194.

affirmative statements of belief and explanation of doctrine.¹⁷ Examples of such retrospective distinctions embodied in creedal statements include the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist or Lord's Supper, positions on predestination, definitions of the Holy Spirit, and descriptions of the human and divine dimensions of Christ.

One issue that many creedal statements address that is more philosophically fundamental to the understanding of scripture rather than a response to past conflicts or heresies is the matter of scriptural silence. Creeds and confessional statements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries frequently articulated a position on this matter. That a statement regarding the silence of scriptures as permissive or prohibitive regularly appeared in creedal documents points to two conclusions. First, it demonstrates the continual importance of such questions and their capacity to serve as distinguishing markers from other groups. Second, it reveals the enduring nature of this question and its reasonable inclusion—for those groups that proclaim scriptural silence as prohibitive—as a characteristic of Reformed Protestantism, the theological heirs of John Calvin's understanding of and approach to scripture.

In contrast to the Reformed view, the Lutheran answer to the question of scriptural silence is that what is not forbidden by scripture is allowed in worship. The Lutheran view, consequently, defines *adiaphora* in sweeping terms, classifying those things neither commanded nor forbidden as indifferent.

The fundamental statement of the Lutheran Church is the Augsburg Confession of 1530, and it delineates a permissive view toward scriptural silence in several places. In Article 15, "Ecclesiastical Rites," it states, in part,

Our churches teach that those rites should be observed which can be observed without sin and which contribute to peace and good order in the church. Such are certain holy days, festivals, and the like.

Nevertheless, men are admonished not to burden consciences with such things, as if observances of this kind were necessary for salvation.¹⁸

This statement provides freedom, yet the confession includes a word of caution regarding the conscience of man. However, rather than instructing the church to cease a practice to prevent conflict with one's conscience, it teaches that one's conscience should not be burdened as though the matter of concern—that is, the *adiaphora*—were an issue of salvation.

The Augsburg Confession later applies this freedom in three specific areas. In Article 24, "The Mass," the confession affirms solidarity with the traditional mass,

¹⁷ CC, 1:4, 210.

¹⁸ Tappert, 36-37.

including its ceremonies, which “are needed especially in order that the unlearned may be taught.”¹⁹ It should be recalled that Calvin’s comments on the second commandment forbade such ceremonies. In Article 26, “The Distinction of Foods,” the Augsburg Confession addresses New Testament passages that discuss the breaking of customs and religious regulations on food and drink, particularly in the context that violation of these customs may offend one’s conscience or cause one to stumble.²⁰ The confession states that fasts are *not* condemned: the concern is that some people imposed traditions such as fasting upon the conscience as though they were required.²¹ The confession tries to guard against this while preserving what it understands as Christian liberty. It states that such traditions do not bring justification before God; therefore, not following them is not sinful.²² However, “liberty in human rites was not unknown to the [Church] Fathers,”²³ and the Confession’s guiding philosophy is that liberty in such instances should be preserved.

Article 28, “Ecclesiastical Power,” further addresses the relationship between matters of tradition and salvation. It finds teaching the salvific efficacy of traditions contrary to scripture: in doing so, the “glory of Christ’s merit is dishonored.”²⁴ Turning the failure to keep practices borne of tradition, such as fast days or holidays, into sin, is contrary to scripture,²⁵ and bishops cannot require worship that “burden[s] consciences with such traditions.”²⁶ Thus, it is fair to say that the Augsburg Confession attempts to instill a sense of limitation that is bound by reason while preserving a broad freedom. Yet this solution can lead to a dilemma in allowing *any* traditions or ceremonies into the worship of God: how does one choose what to allow or disallow? The principle Calvin upheld avoids some of the problems that the articles of the Augsburg Confession try to address: if something that is not an issue of salvation never becomes a normative feature of worship, then the dilemma of dealing with objections on the grounds of violating the conscience is avoided. The Augsburg Confession recognizes that tradition in ceremonies *could* become excessive and admonishes the bishop to avoid such a

¹⁹ Ibid., 56.

²⁰ Cf. Matthew 15:1-20; Romans 14:17; Colossians 2:16; Acts 15:10-11; and I Timothy 4:1-3.

²¹ CC, 3:48

²² Ibid., 3:48

²³ Ibid., 3:48.

²⁴ Tappert, 86.

²⁵ CC, 3:65-72.

²⁶ Tappert, 89.

problem on practical grounds. Yet the guidance is merely theoretical; the line of acceptability is never drawn clearly and, consequently, could be drawn at different places by different people.²⁷ Thus, adherents of Calvin's principle find not restrictions but *freedom* because the application of the principle itself relieves man from making such choices and from the burden of offenses to one's conscience.

Also for the Lutheran Church, the Formula of Concord (1576-77) stands as a document of articulated principles at the other end of the sixteenth century.²⁸ The Lutheran Church struggled to define itself doctrinally after decades of internal controversies, and the Formula of Concord sought "to give doctrinal unity and peace to the Lutheran Church."²⁹ However, the controversies did not effect a shift in the Lutheran Church's approach to scriptural silence, ceremonies, or traditions. Article 10, "Church Usages, Called Adiaphora or Indifferent Things," addresses "ceremonies or church usages which are neither commanded nor forbidden in the Word of God but have been introduced into the church in the interest of good order and the general welfare."³⁰ This article tries to succinctly clarify that there are things that scripture neither commands nor forbids and to affirm that that these things are acceptable. However, it also tries to distinguish between such ceremonies and worship: they are separate from worship and thus can be changed based on their usefulness and capacity to edify the church.³¹ At the same time, it admonishes that care should be taken so that such ceremonies not offend those who are weak in faith.³² While not using the term *adiaphora*, it concludes by determining that the necessary requirement for unity is agreement on doctrine and sacraments, and outside of such agreement, churches should not condemn each other on whether or not external ceremonies were observed.³³

It seems that the Formula of Concord recognizes that *if* the events of a worship service are all considered as or understood as worship, then a serious problem develops

²⁷ As presented in Chapter 3, Marlow's criticism of Keach iterated this same concern. Cf. *CSBE*, 43-44.

²⁸ Tappert, 463-64; Part 1 was written in 1576, and Part 2, written as an expansion on and comment in response to Part 1, was completed in 1577.

²⁹ *CC*, 1:258-59.

³⁰ Tappert, 492. Schaff's wording reads as follows: "ceremonies or rites which are neither enjoined nor forbidden in the word of God, but have been introduced into the Church merely for the sake of order and seemliness." *CC*, 3:160-61.

³¹ *CC*, 3:161-62.

³² *Ibid.*, 3:162.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3:163

for the express reason that the ceremonies or traditions in its concern are *not* directly instituted by scripture. Instead of implementing a rule of practice that is limited and tightly regulated by scripture, however, it seeks—even in the midst of balancing the instruction of scripture against Christian freedom—to instill the appropriateness of such freedom. To that end, it pointedly rejects 1) the labeling of human traditions or constitutions as divine worship or as a required part of such worship, 2) the coercion of such ceremonies or traditions on the church as necessary, at the expense of Christian liberty, and 3) the abrogation of such ceremonies on the rationale that the church is *not* free to use “external ceremonies . . . and indifferent things.”³⁴ Christian liberty must be preserved.

The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England also follow the Lutheran tendency toward freedom. Article 20, “Authority of the Church,” proclaims that the church has authority to decree rites or ceremonies as long as it does not ordain anything contrary to scripture or interpret one passage in contradiction with another.³⁵ Article 34, “Of the Traditions of the Church,” likewise states that traditions or ceremonies do not have to be alike in all places and can be altered by man’s needs as long as they do not contradict scripture.³⁶ Taken together, these articles indicate that the church should uphold liberty in matters indifferent, yet the latter portion of Article 34 implies that this liberty is collective or institutional rather than personal: it advocates that one who privately chooses to break a tradition or ceremony (which does not contradict scripture and is commonly approved) should be rebuked because he “offendeth against the common order of the Church, and hurteth the authority of the Magistrate, and woundeth the consciences of the weak brethren.”³⁷ It seems ironic that, after going to great lengths to preserve Christian liberty within the church’s institutional actions and decisions, the Church of England’s articles suggest that one who becomes accustomed to the use of things indifferent might be considered “weak” in his faith upon the alteration of such negotiable element—the personal exercise of Christian liberty—by an individual apart from the consensus of the whole. As observed with the Augsburg Confession, the Calvinistic principle of stricter regulation avoids such problems, at least in theory.

³⁴ Tappert, 494.

³⁵ CC, 3:501

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3:508

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3:509 This quotation is taken from the American revision of 1801 due to its updated spellings.

Creeds That Share John Calvin's Approach to Scripture

Just as the principle of freedom toward *adiaphora* was maintained by several creeds in the sixteenth century, so is the Calvinistic, or Reformed, principle of regulation written into confessional statements of Reformed Protestantism. The French Confession of Faith (1559), Article 33, rejects all human inventions and laws of men that bind the conscience under the guise of serving God.³⁸ The Belgic Confession (1561), in Article 7, on the sufficiency of scripture as the only rule of faith, asserts that scripture contains the "whole manner of worship which God requires of us."³⁹ The Heidelberg Catechism (1563) specifically addresses the second commandment, echoing many of Calvin's own statements. In response to Question 96, "What does God require in the second commandment," it answers that God permits no image of him or any worship in ways not commanded by him. Questions 97 and 98 elaborate on Question 96, and the catechism responds that no image or likeness of God is permissible and that pictures or lay books result in God's people being "taught by dumb idols" rather than by the "lively preaching of his Word."⁴⁰ In a similar vein, chapter two of the Second Helvetic Confession (1566), the Swiss Reformed confession of faith, rejects all human traditions,⁴¹ though it never provides examples of any specific ecclesiastical structure or behaviors that it considers as human traditions.

The Irish Articles of Religion (1615) evidence a prevailing Calvinism in the Irish Episcopal Church, which was, technically, under the authority of the Thirty-Nine Articles.⁴² In 1595, the Lambeth Articles, themselves the product of an unsanctioned synod in England, revealed strong Calvinistic tendencies among English Divines, so the Irish Articles of 1615 were not the first attempt at appending the Thirty-Nine Articles.⁴³ In the section addressing "Of the Service of God," Article 52 reads,

All worship devised by man's phantasy besides or contrary to the scriptures (as wandering on pilgrimages, setting up of candles, stations, and jubilees, Pharisaical sects and feigned religions, praying upon beads, and such like

³⁸ Ibid., 3:378

³⁹ Ibid., 3:388

⁴⁰ Ibid., 3:343.

⁴¹ Ibid., 3:834.

⁴² Ibid., 3:526.

⁴³ Ibid., 3:523.

superstition) hath not only no promise of reward in scripture, but contrariwise threatenings and maledictions.⁴⁴

The next article rejects outward forms of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit as unlawful, along with any other man-made image used in religion.⁴⁵

Yet the Irish Articles of 1615 also betray their affiliation with an institution that favors a permissive approach to the silence of scriptures. Article 77 states that each church (presumably meaning “congregation”) has the authority “to institute, to change, and clean to put away ceremonies and other ecclesiastical rites, as they be superfluous or be abused; and to constitute other, making more to seemliness, to order, or edification.”⁴⁶

The importance of articulating a position on the broad category of things indifferent—which, depending on which statement is read, could be called ceremonies, traditions, will-worship, idols, or man’s inventions—was also evident in seventeenth-century groups that were outside of the larger, more formalized, mainstream groups. Two examples here will suffice.

One of the leading figures in the early seventeenth century separatist movement was Henry Jacob. A graduate of Oxford, Jacob is described as a “semi-separatist minister” for maintaining a somewhat favorable attitude toward the Church of England. He considered the Church of England in need of reform from error, yet he did not consider it a false church despite escalating criticism throughout his life of episcopalian polity. As a testimony to the importance he placed on church government, Jacob participated in authoring the Millenary Petition, advised the Puritan participants to the Hampton Court Conference, and caught the attention of such Anglican luminaries as bishop Richard Bancroft and Archbishop John Whitgift.⁴⁷

In 1641, Jacob wrote a short pamphlet on the Lord’s Supper, *Kneeling in the Act of Eating and Drinking at the Lords Table is a Sinne*.⁴⁸ The title makes clear the issue at hand. Jacob’s response follows Calvin’s principle of regulating worship: the voluntary institution of worship practices by men is a sin. Voluntary additions to worship deny the sufficiency of the scripture in instituting worship and the absolute capacity of Christ

⁴⁴ Ibid., 3:536.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 3:540.

⁴⁷ *DNB*, s.v. “Jacob, Henry”; cf. Tolmie, Chapters 1, 2, and 5 for a detailed analysis of Jacob’s influence in English separatist churches.

⁴⁸ Henry Jacob, *Kneeling in the Act of Eating and Drinking at the Lords Table is a Sinne* (London: 1641).

as a teacher. They also contradict the second commandment, which forbids the ordinances or traditions of men. Jacob considered kneeling at the Lord's table a voluntary institution of man: it was neither a circumstance of worship, such as time or place, nor necessary as a result of God's instruction, nor resulting from nature or reason. It was a voluntary addition, just like several practices of the Roman church that he identified, such as holy water, candles, and images. The problem with such practices was that they "doth grow to be a positive false doctrine, a new constant Ordinance of men in Gods worship, a devised manner of worshipping God." To accept such practices was sinful, for he understood scripture to teach that any worship element that was without biblical example or warrant was wrong.⁴⁹

The second example comes from the Confession of the Society of Friends (1675), the group more commonly known as Quakers. This document is a series of fifteen theses put forth by Robert Barclay; Schaff described it as the "most authoritative summary of the principles and doctrines" of the Society of Friends.⁵⁰ The eleventh of these propositions concerns worship. It takes a very strict approach to worship, which, given the Friends' valuation of the Holy Spirit and its ongoing capacity to work in man, is understandable. It professes that any worship that man sets up, plans, and can start and stop or do or not do, is "superstitious, will-worship, and abominable idolatry in the sight of God."⁵¹ For the Society of Friends, this statement would have broadly applied to many practices that other seventeenth-century religious groups would freely admit, such as preaching. Despite this difference, the commonality with other, more restrictive statements cannot be missed: the themes of idolatry, will-worship, and superstitions are directly associated with worship elements that man devises.

The Westminster Confession of Faith

The consummate statement of English Reformed Protestantism, formulated in the seventeenth century and enduring until today, is the Westminster Confession of Faith (hereafter WCF) of 1647. Written by the Westminster Assembly of Divines, it succeeded such antecedents as the Millenary Petition and the resulting Hampton Court Conference called by King James I in 1604, King Charles I's tendencies toward Catholicism and Arminianism under the guidance of Archbishop William Laud, a growing Puritan leaning among members of Parliament, and the opening of a war between Parliament and the King in 1642.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 12-16, 28; quote 16.

⁵⁰ CC, 3:789.

⁵¹ Ibid., 3:796.

In the midst of such turmoil Parliament met to create a unifying statement of “doctrine, worship, and discipline in the three kingdoms.”⁵² Parliament sought a formula for a national church, a goal that had proved elusive in the previous one hundred years. It met under suspicious legal authority, being called by Parliament in 1643. Schaff described its charge as “to effect a more perfect reformation of the Church of England in its liturgy, discipline, and government on the basis of the Word of God, and thus to bring it into nearer agreement with the Church of Scotland and the Reformed Churches on the Continent.”⁵³ The problem with its legal standing was that the Thirty-Nine Articles granted ecclesiastical supremacy to the monarch, an authority Parliament usurped in convening the assembly.⁵⁴

The resulting assembly was a coalition-type gathering, including representatives of most parties within the English church, save the Laudians. It included Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, and Erastians. Doctrinally, the assembly was unified as Calvinistic; as evidenced by the included groups, church government proved the big issue of division.⁵⁵

Even though the assembly did not include continental leaders and sought a governing confession for English kingdoms, the confession it produced drew on the heritage of religious controversies that had openly plagued the continent and the English kingdoms for 130 years. Schaff commented,

The Westminster Confession sets forth the Calvinistic system in its scholastic maturity after it has passed through the sharp conflict with Arminianism in Holland, and as it had shaped itself in the minds of Scotch Presbyterians and English Puritans during their conflict with High-Church prelacy. The leading ideas, with the exception of the theory of the Christian Sabbath, were of Continental growth, but the form was entirely English.⁵⁶

At its heart, the WCF manifests a clear Calvinism. The central feature, from which all doctrine therein flows, is a high respect for biblical authority. Schaff wrote, “It rests the authority of the Bible on its own intrinsic excellence and the internal testimony

⁵² Ibid., 1:728

⁵³ Ibid., 1:730.

⁵⁴ Benjamin Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931), 3-35.

⁵⁵ CC, 1:731-38.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1:760.

of the Spirit rather than the external testimony of the Church, however valuable this is as a continuous witness."⁵⁷ It is an extensive, theologically comprehensive document.

This respect for biblical authority is paramount when the confession addresses the worship of God, which it does primarily in two places. Chapter 1.6, a subsection of the authority of scripture, reads,

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.⁵⁸

In this article, the confession describes the scriptures as sufficient. It sets forth two hermeneutical approaches, direct command ("expressly set down in Scripture") and necessary inference ("good and necessary consequence"), both guided by the Holy Spirit. Yet it also allows that worship includes "circumstances" of worship to be determined by reason: these circumstances, it seems, while not considered divine worship, are regularly tied to worship, being "always to be observed."

If WCF 1.6 speaks broadly, then WCF 21.1 focuses more specifically on worship. It reads, in part, "But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture."⁵⁹ This article *limits* acceptable worship of God and is often termed the regulative principle of worship, a name that reflects its controlling function.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1:767.

⁵⁸ S. W. Carruthers, ed., *The Confession of Faith of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster*, tercentenary ed. (London: Publishing Office of the Presbyterian Church of England, 1946), 5.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 17.

Conclusion

As demonstrated in Chapter 3, Keach and Marlow operated from different assumptions on how to treat scriptural silence as it pertained to singing. As this chapter has shown, the regulative principle, which is the principle that Marlow articulated as the essential point of disagreement with Keach, can be traced to John Calvin and through various creedal and confessional statements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It may not be accurate to call this rule *only* a “Calvinistic” principle, but Calvin’s treatment of scripture, formally enshrined by his *Institutes* and other writings, established precepts that became cornerstones to successive religious groups, including those that shaped Benjamin Keach and Isaac Marlow.

CHAPTER 5

EVOLVING RESPONSES TO SINGING IN WORSHIP THREATEN CHRISTIAN UNITY

Chapter 3 illustrated that the controversy over singing between Isaac Marlow and Benjamin Keach embodied the significant question of interpreting scripture in the face of scriptural silence. Chapter 4 placed this concern within the larger historical context of post-Reformation confessional statements, recognizing that, in terms of worship, many groups had taken a stance and formally described this silence as either permissive or prohibitive.

Marlow himself characterized this dispute in the language of scriptural silence, and he invoked the regulative principle of worship as the guiding rule to govern worship and to resolve the dispute. On the other hand, Keach believed that congregational singing in worship did not violate scripture's authority to regulate worship; in fact, congregational singing *deferred* to scriptural regulation of worship and aligned worship practices with scripture's guidance. However, Marlow believed the regulative principle of worship prohibited congregational singing and the introduction of hymns written by human minds. Consequently, to introduce either congregational singing or hymns of human composure carried its own significant consequences that potentially threatened Baptist unity. In his mind, congregational singing softened the regulative principle of worship.

Throughout the seventeenth century, the Baptists engaged the question of singing in worship in several ways and reached varying conclusions. By the end of the century, congregational singing forced a series of uncomfortable questions upon the Baptists, creating new dilemmas with far-reaching implications.

Baptist Positions on Congregational Singing and Hymnody in the Seventeenth Century

The Baptists, as a dissenting group whose origins can be traced to the early seventeenth century and then who grew as the century aged, were not immune to the question of scriptural silence. John Calvin had addressed this matter very clearly as it pertained to worship, and the other non-Anglican groups of the seventeenth century followed his thinking as they themselves specified whether scriptural silence was permissive or prohibitive, especially in the area of worship.

The burgeoning Baptist community likewise reflected the influence of Calvin and Reformed Protestantism. Throughout the seventeenth century, it was most easily seen as Baptist writers discussed the “doctrine of pollution”¹—to use Spann’s words—the concern that man’s own decisions regarding the worship service, and especially his introduction of man-made elements *into* the worship service, usurped authority in matters of worship and violated God’s instructions on acceptable worship. Those with a more strict view of worship and the authority for acceptable elements in worship viewed contributions of man, such as hymns, as man-made inventions. Such additions were on par with other “innovations” fought by Reformed Protestantism, such as images and idols. When it came to singing, such inventions of man had the capacity to frustrate the workings of the Holy Spirit.

C. E. Spann and R. H. Young have each adequately surveyed the positions of Baptists throughout the seventeenth century on the question of singing.² Thus, it is unnecessary to provide an exhaustive recitation of their work. However, the writings of several key people are instructive, for they illuminate Baptist tendencies in the seventeenth century.

General Baptist Positions on Congregational Singing and Hymnody

As noted in Chapter 1, John Smyth played an instrumental role in the formation of the General Baptists. Chapter 1 also quotes Smyth on two occasions as he spoke of singing in the church, particularly regarding how the practice differed in churches separated from the Church of England. Smyth asserted that using a book of songs was an “invention of the man of synne”³ and that the structures of man’s music, such as

¹ Spann, 9.

² *Ibid.*, 9-57; Young, 7-35.

³ Smyth, *Differences*, table of contents.

meter, rhythm, and tune, quenched the Holy Spirit.⁴ These devices of men were incompatible with what Smyth described as “spiritual worship,” the same language, incidentally, that Marlow used to describe appropriate worship. Young’s analysis of Smyth’s words lead him to conclude that Smyth objected to “more than one person at a time singing a Psalm” and “precomposed meter, rhyme, and tune.”⁵ On the surface, Young is correct, but his observations reflect on the practical implications of Smyth’s comments; more fundamentally, Smyth objected to the inventions of man. He did not speak of hymnals or hymns as being prohibited by scripture. Instead, Smyth raised the very concern asserted by groups who professed the regulative principle of worship, that man’s inventions contaminated worship and rendered it unacceptable to God.

The Congregationalist minister Henry Ainsworth, a defender of psalmody, rejected Smyth’s positions as contradictory. His entire book, *A Defence of the Holy Scriptures* (1609), directly challenged John Smyth’s understanding of worship and Christian ministry.⁶ Being a Congregationalist, however, Ainsworth did not oppose separation from the Church of England; in fact, the subtitle of this book calls the established church the “Antichrist.” Ainsworth was merely frustrated at Smyth’s explication of the separation and believed Smyth’s conclusions of what worship should look like were incorrect. On the matter of singing, Ainsworth was dissatisfied that Smyth recognized singing as a gift of the Holy Spirit yet led a congregation that remained songless. “But it seemeth strange unto me,” he wrote, “that M. Sm. should now both allow of the scriptures to be sung in tunes in the Church; and also make the singing by gift of the spirit, a part of Gods proper worship in the new testament; and yet he & his disciples to use neither of these in their assemblies.”⁷

Ainsworth’s criticism notwithstanding, Smyth’s writings do reflect his congregation’s practices. The following description, taken from a letter written by Hugh and Anne Bromehead, reveals the austere nature of Smyth’s early Baptist congregation:

We begin with a prayer, after read some one or two chapters of the Bible; give the sense thereof and confer upon the same; that done, we lay aside our books

⁴ Whitley, *Works*, 2:325.

⁵ Young, 10.

⁶ Henry Ainsworth, *A Defence of the Holy Scriptures, Worship, and Ministerie, used in the Christian Churches separated from Antichrist: Against the challenges, cavils and contradiction of M. Smyth: in his book intituled The Differences of the Churches of the Separation* (Amsterdam: 1609).

⁷ Ainsworth, 22.

and after a solemn prayer made by the first speaker he propoundeth some text out of the scripture and prophesieth out of the same by the space of one hour or three quarters of an hour. After him standeth up a second speaker and prophesieth out of the said text the like time and space, sometimes more, sometimes less. After him, the third, the fourth, the fifth, &c., as the time will give leave. Then the first speaker concludeth with prayer as he began with prayer, with an exhortation to contribution to the poor, which collection being made is also concluded with prayer.⁸

Assuming the Bromeheads accurately described worship in Smyth's congregation, the letter confirms that Smyth implemented in practice the positions he advanced in his writings.

Nearer to the end of the seventeenth century, the General Baptists still largely maintained the views that Smyth had espoused regarding singing. The best source for views representative of the General Baptists after they had existed for the better part of a century is *Christianisimus Primitivus*, written in 1678 by the influential leader Thomas Grantham.⁹ A long-time proponent of religious toleration, Grantham had signed *A Brief Confession or Declaration of Faith*, presented to King Charles II in 1660, and also the *Second Humble Adresse* and the *Third Adresse*, all of which petitioned the state that the Baptists were of peaceful intent and respected civil authority. He often found himself jailed during the era of persecution, however, and he frequented controversies that took the form of public debates. Although Grantham was a staunch General Baptist who propelled the group with the establishment of several congregations in Eastern England during his lifetime, he personally grieved the divisions that beset the Baptists and that hardened the distinctions between General Baptists, Particular Baptists, and Seventh-Day Baptists.¹⁰

Addressed to all Baptists, *Christianisimus Primitivus* sought to restore the ancient Christian religion from abuses that had altered it—mainly the abuses introduced by “humane innovation.”¹¹ The book could be described as a small systematic theology

⁸ As quoted in Walter H. Burgess, *John Smith the Se-Baptist* (London: James Clarke and Company, 1911), 170-71.

⁹ Thomas Grantham, *Christianisimus Primitivus* (London: 1678).

¹⁰ *DNB*, s.v. “Grantham, Thomas.”

¹¹ The full title of Grantham's book reads *Christianisimus Primitivus: or, the Ancient Christian Religion, in its Nature, Certainty, Excellency, and Beauty, (Internal and External) particularly Considered, Asserted, and Vindicated, from The many Abuses which have Invaded that Sacred Profession, by Humane Innovation, or pretended Revelation.*

combined with specific treatment of a series of matters Grantham considered as errors. His exposition runs the gamut from authority of scripture, knowledge of God, character of the church, and Christian discipline, to the practical matters of marriage, civil service, and taming the tongue, to rejections of the Quakers and responses to infant baptism.

Grantham's dedicatory epistle raised one primary concern: he feared that many presumed the church had a span of authority not authorized by scripture. He believed this to be a faulty assumption, one whose consequence was that man would administer ordinances and institute elements into worship in ways not faithful to scripture. For the church, he argued, this error raised a dilemma. The church must seek to recover the pattern of primitive Christianity, yet it must also continually evaluate when separation from other churches is required. He admonished the Baptist churches to honor their ancestors' separation from the Church of England but not to assume that the separation was necessarily complete.¹²

Grantham devoted the entirety of his eighth chapter to the "Duty of Thanksgiving; or the Ordinance of God touching the singing of Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs in the Christian Church, according to Scripture and Antiquity." Early in this chapter he set forth his foundational assumption, that there were only two ways to perform the ordinance of singing,

either by meer Art, as those do, who only speak what another puts into their mouths, or by the gift of Gods Grace and Spirit. The first in its greatest perfection cannot fit any man to perform this Service, as it is a Christian Ordinance, what ever it might do in the *Jewish Pedagogie*: because he that worshippeth Christ acceptably, must worship him in Spirit: For *they that are in the flesh*, i.e. *in a legal Form, or only present their Bodies in the Worship of God, cannot please God, in Gospel-services*. To sing therefore by meer Art in the Christian Church, is a meer counterfeit *Psalmody*: an empty sound of words, no Spiritual Song; . . . For when the Apostle exhorts Christians to *desire Spiritual gifts*, he as really intends the inward rectitude of the mind.¹³

Grantham addressed singing from seven aspects, including the primitive church's practice, abuses of innovations, and his understanding of the appropriate way to praise God. His views expanded on the very principles John Smyth had set forth earlier in the century, yet Grantham bolstered his arguments through scholarly appeals to Augustine and Athanasius, among others. Grantham found no biblical support for the regular, congregational singing of the Psalms, especially in meter, in the Christian

¹² Grantham, "The Epistle Dedicatory" in *Christianisimus Primitivus*.

¹³ Grantham, bk. 2, pt. 2, 99-100.

church,¹⁴ and he was most bothered that such mixed singing, both of the Psalms and of hymns of human composition—for which he found no scriptural authority—had become customary in many congregations.¹⁵ In particular, Grantham feared the consequences of introducing unwarranted singing into worship: first, it might lead to the introduction of forms of prayer, since there was no reasonable difference in the scriptural instructions regarding prayer and singing, and second, if formalities of forms (for prayer or song) emerged, then the spirit of the activity could be jeopardized.¹⁶

To illustrate his passionate dislike for such abuse of scripture, Grantham quoted Dr. Cornelius Agrippa on the excessive musical vanities of men. Agrippa, born Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, had lived nearly two centuries earlier and in the breadth of his learning was the paramount Renaissance scholar. He had studied in various cultural centers of Europe, had taught Hebrew, and had nurtured interests in medicine, alchemy, theology, and philosophy.¹⁷ In *The Vanity of Arts and Sciences*, Agrippa had written,

Musick . . . is grown to such, and so great licentiousness, that even in the Ministration of the Holy Sacrament, all kind of light, wanton, and trifling Songs, with piping of Organs, have their place. As for Common Prayer, it is so chanted, and minced, and mangled by our costly-hired Musicians—that it may justly seem not to be a Noise made by Men, but rather a Bleating of brut Beasts; whiles the Children neigh out Descant, as it were a sort of Colts: Others bark a counter Tenour, like a number of Dogs. Some bellow out a Tenour like a company of Oxen: And others grunt out a Base, like a Company of Hogs: So that a foul-ill-favoured Noise is made; but as for the Words and Sentences, nothing is understood, but the Authority and Power of Judgment from the Ears and Heart.¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid., 99-102.

¹⁵ Ibid., 105.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Charles G. Herbermann (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, Inc., 1907), s.v. “Agrippa of Nettesheim, Heinrich Cornelius.”

¹⁸ As quoted in Grantham, bk. 2, pt. 2, 107. I have viewed five different copies of Agrippa’s *The Vanity of Arts and Sciences*. They all were English translations and had imprints in London: 1569, 1575, 1676, 1684, and 1694. The 1569 and 1575 printings contained this passage, but the other three printings did not. Grantham’s wording, however, does not follow the wording found in the 1569 or 1575 printings. The quote is similar, however, to William Prynne’s rendering of the same passage from Agrippa in *Histrion-Mastix* (London: 1633), p. 284. Given the lack of congruence with any known

Like Smyth, Grantham affirmed that singing *was* a scriptural ordinance for worship. He averred that singing and praying were a natural religion for all of man (a position Keach accepted but Marlow rejected): man cannot but praise God as the common benefactor for the world and of all good things. The church, thus, had a duty to sing. However, the nature of singing cannot be based on duties required of the Jews. According to Grantham, proper praise of God should be based on the word of God, as understood by the soul, not as presented by a precomposed book. Not even the Psalms qualified: they provide a good guide, but given the failure of the New Testament to present an example of their use in the primitive church, Grantham found it inconclusive that they would please God in Christian worship. Additionally, he paralleled “proper” praise with presenting a doctrine or a prayer: it was an activity that required the leading of the Holy Spirit through a specific gift given to selected individuals.¹⁹ Limiting the manner of singing to one person practicing it alone as evidence of a spiritual gift rather than by “art” protected the integrity of scripture, assumed edification of the assembly as the purpose, and affirmed that the person who sings had the “heavenly qualifications” of appropriate ability and spiritual mindset.²⁰

On the other hand, despite believing singing an ordinance of worship, Grantham considered congregational singing, in rhyme or meter, fraught with danger. The Elizabethan Injunctions, issued more than a century earlier, exemplified his concern: Injunction 49 *permitted* songs to be *devised*.²¹ The injunction assumed the authority to grant permission to man for man-made inventions in Christian worship, and Grantham feared that devising precomposed forms of songs might exceed man’s authority in worship. Other danger signs Grantham cited include lack of apostolic example recorded in scripture, the uncertainty that God’s will was being done, the risk that metrical songs would introduce forms of prayer, and the possibility that artful singing would lead to the introduction of musical instruments.²² Grantham sought a path of fidelity to scripture; his definition of such faithfulness places him in the heritage of

publication of Agrippa’s *The Vanity of Arts and Sciences*, it is presumed that Grantham himself likely translated Agrippa from the original Latin.

¹⁹ Grantham, bk. 2, pt. 2, 108-11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 112-13; quote 113.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 114-15. In 1559, the year she acceded to the throne, Queen Elizabeth issued a series of injunctions to clergy and laity as part of the framework for her leadership of the church. Cf. *A Collection of Articles* (London: 1671) for a source of articles, ordinances, and other documents issued by the Church of England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that Grantham could have accessed.

²² *Ibid.*, 115.

Calvin's restrictive interpretive principle. For Grantham, this path was correct, and it was also safe.

Particular Baptist Positions on Congregational Singing and Hymnody

In general terms, it is accurate to claim that the Particular Baptists, with which Keach maintained affiliation, took a more favorable stance toward singing than did the General Baptists. Certainly, their stance was more flexible. Throughout the seventeenth century, the Particular Baptists' positions on singing vacillated from opposition to acceptance.

While sharing a common heritage with the General Baptists in that both groups were part of a large reactionary movement against Church of England reforms that, in their view, had not adequately purified the church, the General Baptists and Particular Baptists did not share a common, direct lineage. Murray Tolmie uses the metaphor of a flood of discontent to describe attitudes of separatists toward the establishment in the early seventeenth century. A river of nonconformity ran beneath the flood in narrow channels and left permanent scars when the water receded.²³ The Particular Baptists and General Baptists reflect formalized expressions of some of this frustration. The General Baptists had ties to the Anabaptists of Holland; the Particular Baptists split off from an early separate church in London.²⁴ Thus, the broader principles that led to the germination of each group were identical, but their specific progressions were not contiguous.

In 1646, Francis Cornwell, who suffered imprisonment under Archbishop William Laud for failing to conform to Laudian Ceremonies, published a book against stunted forms of Psalms. Once a Church of England vicar, Cornwell's efforts to justify infant baptism as scripturally authorized led him to abandon his support for the practice and to accept adult baptism as a correct understanding of scripture.²⁵ In his treatise against stunted forms of Psalms—which was actually a record of a conference between John Cotton and church leaders in Boston—Cornwell set forth twelve reasons of opposition. Much of Cornwell's aversion is familiar, as the rationale presented is identical to arguments Grantham and Marlow would pose several decades later. Some of his reasons include the following: stunted forms inhibit the bringing of spiritual

²³ Tolmie, 28.

²⁴ See *Ibid.*, 50-84, for a detailed analysis of the origins of both Baptist groups.

²⁵ J. M. Cramp, *Baptist History: From the Foundation of the Christian Church to the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1869), 397-99.

petitions to God, quench the gifts of the Holy Spirit, corrupt worship with man-made inventions and produce vain worship, and impose on the conscience a prescribed form of a worship element not specified in scripture.²⁶ Other Particular Baptists who similarly favored spirit-guided singing more in the tradition of John Smyth include Edward Draper and Thomas Collier.²⁷

The above evidence indicates that the matter of singing must have been a brewing controversy long before its public debate among Particular Baptists in the 1690s. In 1653, Cuthbert Sydenham wrote a treatise on what he considered then as the two greatest controversies of the day, infant baptism and the singing of psalms.²⁸ But Sydenham was not a Particular Baptist; in fact, he was not a Baptist at all. He was a Presbyterian, and though he belonged to the larger group of nonconformists, as did the Baptists, he was still an “outsider.” His treatise is significant for three reasons. First, even though he was not writing about Baptists in particular, he identified the practice of infant baptism as one of the greatest challenges of the day. The Baptists’ namesake was derived from their emphasis on baptism of adult believers and the related opposition to pedobaptism (which the Presbyterians allowed). Second, as discussed in Chapter 1, the Presbyterians’ use of metrical Psalmody was not embraced by all churches that established themselves apart from the Church of England. Consequently, Sydenham’s selection of these two issues points to his awareness of challenges faced by the larger community of nonconformists. Third, Benjamin Keach and E. H. each cited Sydenham’s treatise some four decades later in the Particular Baptist controversy on singing.²⁹

Being a Presbyterian, it is not unexpected that Sydenham supported the singing of Psalms in the Christian assembly. He attested that the New Testament supports congregational singing as a regular ordinance of the entire congregation, without distinction made by extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit. He also supported the practice of translating the Psalms into meter and rhyme.³⁰ He enumerated four abuses, yet they were all directed at the Roman and Episcopal churches’ misuse of the ordinance: the use of musical instruments, paid musicians (to the exclusion of the

²⁶ Francis Cornwell, *A Conference Mr. John Cotton Held at Boston* (London: 1646), 49-57.

²⁷ Edward Drapes, *Gospel-Glory Proclaimed Before the Sonnes of Men* (London: 1649); Thomas Collier, *The Right Constitution and True Subjects of the Visible Church of Christ* (London: 1654).

²⁸ Cuthbert Sydenham, *A Christian, Sober & Plain Exercitation on the Two Grand Practical Controversies of These Times; Infant-Baptism, and Singing of Psalms* (London: 1653).

²⁹ Cf. Keach, *BR*, 106-10, 118-20; E. H. *Scripture Proof*, 47-48.

³⁰ Sydenham, 165-72, 193-203.

congregation), Latin (rather than the vernacular), and a musical liturgy in lieu of regular preaching and praying.³¹

As Sydenham should have expected, his treatise drew an immediate response from a Particular Baptist pastor. William Kaye, a former parish priest in the Church of England, responded to Sydenham on both points of baptism and singing.³² It should be no surprise that Kaye sought to disprove Sydenham's acceptance of infant baptism. However, Kaye commented that "when mens Heaerts come in tune" in baptism, he hoped that their voices would as well. Not only did Kaye's views on singing indicate support for the practice, but he implied that some Baptist churches already accepted the practice. He wrote, "That as Independent Churches cast off Infant-sprinkling, so Churches of Christ under baptism will return (as some of them for the present are) unto singing. And yet I finde, that those that are not under the present practice, dare not deny their title to the Ordinance of Singing."³³ The next year, Kaye again affirmed his support of metrical psalmody in a dialogue with the Quaker John Whitehead.³⁴

The most defining statement of the Particular Baptists came in 1680 from Hercules Collins, a decade before Keach and Marlow sparred in the controversy over singing.³⁵ The 1680s were active years for Collins, a Particular Baptist minister. In 1682, he affirmed the need for nonconformity in *Some Reasons for Separation*, a document that likely contributed to his 1684 imprisonment. He also participated in the 1689 Particular Baptist assembly that met upon the legalization of religious toleration and approved the Second London Confession as the Particular Baptists' guiding document.³⁶

Collins penned his *Orthodox Catechism* as a theological summary. This document was essentially the Heidelberg Catechism of 1562 adjusted to the Particular Baptist tenets.³⁷ Its comprehensive nature was similar to *Christianisimus Primitivus*, which the General Baptist Thomas Grantham had written two years earlier.

³¹ Ibid., 204.

³² William Kaye, *Baptism Without Bason or Plain Scripture—Proof Against Infant Baptism*.

³³ Ibid., 29.

³⁴ William Kaye, *A Plain Answer to the Eighteen Quaeries of John Whitehead* (London: 1654).

³⁵ Hercules Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism* (London: 1680).

³⁶ *DNB*, s.v. "Collins, Hercules."

³⁷ Ibid.

At the end of the *Orthodox Catechism*, Collins attached an appendix focused solely on the ordinance of singing.³⁸ Though only twelve pages long, it provided a succinct yet effective statement of position in acceptance of congregational singing. He advanced two main points, both of which Keach echoed a decade later. First, vocal singing is an ordinance that scripture instituted, and second, man has a moral obligation to praise God, the creator of the universe. Like Grantham, Collins appealed to religious leaders of the past, including Justin Martyr, Augustine, and Beza. At the end of his short essay, Collins also addressed the primary objections typically advanced by those who opposed singing, concerns such as a mixed congregation, the mode of singing, and the role of spiritual worship of the heart. In these responses, Collins approved of singing metrical psalms, but he also embraced hymns of human composition:

But yet also I do think, that we are at our liberty to compose other parts or portions of God's Word to that end; provided our Hymns are founded directly on God's Word, these very Hymns may be called the Word of God, or spiritual Hymns. For, as a learned Man saith, 'tis the sence and meaning is the Word of God, whether in Prose, or in Meeter; and further saith, We may as well be said to sing God's Word, as to read it; it is only orderly composed and disposed for that action. Every Duty must be performed according to the Analogy of Faith, and founded on God's Word. All Prayer or Preaching, that doth not correspond with sacred Writ, notwithstanding any pretence or an extraordinary Inspiration, I am to explode out of God's Worship. And as Prayer and Preaching must correspond with the sacred Record, so must Singing; And as we count them the best Prayers and Sermons, that are fullest of Scripture, so those Hymns that are founded on the sacred Scriptures, can no more be denied to be of the Spirit, than a Man's Preaching or Prayer, which is full of the Word of God.³⁹

Collins' thoughts mark an extension of the use of metrical psalmody to the use of hymns written by men and women, so long as their sentiments are consistent with scripture.

Conclusion: Baptist Positions on Congregational Singing and Hymnody

Thus, at the end of the seventeenth century, both the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists had a history of addressing the propriety of congregational singing

³⁸ Collins, 75-86.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

in worship. Their views differed from each other and, for the Particular Baptists, within the movement itself. In the century's final three decades, a representative of each group produced a small, summative theological statement: Thomas Grantham for the General Baptists, and Hercules Collins for the Particular Baptists. On the matter of singing, Grantham's *Christianisimus Primitivus* echoed John Smyth's views and foreshadowed the position of Isaac Marlow; Hercules Collins's views reflected opposite conclusions and pointed in the direction that Benjamin Keach would take.

Implications of Accepting Congregational Singing and Hymnody

The seventeenth century progression of Baptist thought on singing as an ordinance for the Christian church reveals that the controversy engaged in by Keach and Marlow in the 1690s was not a new or fresh matter. Questions of matter, mode, and basic practicality as they related to the ordinance of singing had been asked throughout the century. The General Baptists, drawing primarily on John Smyth, had remained fairly consistent in their answers, whereas the Particular Baptist responses showed more flexibility. In the 1690s, Keach and Marlow merely forced the discussion to become more public and (though maybe not intentionally) encouraged their fellow brethren to take sides.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the introduction of congregational singing, and along with it hymns written by mankind rather than the strict use of the Psalms, broached a series of uncomfortable questions. Because Keach accepted singing, he did not share Marlow's discomfort. From Marlow's viewpoint, however, congregational singing and hymns written by men weakened the regulative principle of worship and destabilized its theoretical foundation for determining worship practices. It is not surprising, then, that Marlow was the one who struggled more with the potential implications of this action; as pointed out in Chapter 3, these struggles led him to leave a more extensive written record than did Keach.

Once congregational singing and hymns of human composure were accepted, the following new issues were raised:

1. Does the use of a printed collection of songs (either psalms or hymns), devised by men and made available to the congregation, encroach on biblical authority? That is, can such a book potentially take an authoritative role (inappropriately) like the Book of Common Prayer?

2. To what degree are forms of worship important?
3. How does God view imperfect worship?
4. Does inconsistency in scriptural interpretation/application threaten to invalidate a group's legitimacy?
5. What boundaries should be drawn to protect the Christian community?
6. What dangers exist in having porous boundaries that allow fellowship with those from whom a group has consciously separated?
7. Is mixed communion acceptable? When?
8. How does one describe or define the liberty of a group to decide to separate from others? In what cases should it be used?

There are two basic themes that permeate this list of concerns: forms of worship and community. Strict interpretation of the scriptures led to a fear of offering God a worship that was unacceptable if it included elements beyond those he had specified. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, this line of thinking had roots in Calvin's teaching and was acknowledged throughout the seventeenth century. By extension, this fear also applied to worship elements performed in the wrong way. In principle, all separatists rejected the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer, in existence for over a century, on the grounds that it was not scripturally authorized, and those who opposed the introduction of singing feared collections of songs—predetermined forms for worship—on the same grounds.

Separatists also had a high regard for the Christian community. Chapter 2 discussed the effect of the English Reformation on the Christian community, at least as defined by the pre-Reformation Catholic Church. Separatists viewed the Christian community very differently: rather than being defined by parish boundaries that were intertwined with spiritual responsibilities toward a parish church, it was viewed as an invisible association of those God had added to the church. One motive behind separation from the Church of England was to show a clear distinction from the national church. Thus, these groups sought to protect their distinguishing features, which emanated from their understandings of doctrinal purity, and they fiercely resisted intrusions that threatened to contaminate the more purified spiritual nature that had been attained.

Implications for the Assembly: Forms of Worship

The most pressing, and historically-relevant, concern with predetermined songs was that their introduction could lead to a softer stance toward the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer. This concern was the specific application; the principle behind this application was that such forms stifled the working of the Holy Spirit in creating spiritual worship, a tenet of Marlow's that has previously been examined. Marlow's primary argument against using the Psalms of David in Christian worship, for example, was that scripture had not wholly preserved the matter, or content, in a form whereby the New Testament church could replicate their use from the worship under the Law of Moses. Since the complete pattern for their use, including meter, was not preserved, he believed man had no authority to put the Psalms into meter.⁴⁰ Marlow did *not* say that the thoughts expressed by predetermined forms of song or prayer were inconsistent with scripture; actually, he acknowledged their fidelity to scripture:

so all of them being precomposed stinted Matter, without a Command of God for it, and repugnant to the nature of the gracious Gifts of the Holy Spirit for Gospel-Worship, are of the like nature for Singing, as most, if not all of those Forms of Prayer, in the Book of Common Prayer, are for praying; for generally the Matter of them are congruous to the Word of God.⁴¹

Marlow simply believed that meter or predetermined forms restricted the Holy Spirit.

In addition to the possibility that the Book of Common Prayer might implicitly be acceptable, Marlow feared that such forms of worship could lead, more generally, to other "formal and carnal Worship."⁴² As Chapter 4 demonstrated, Marlow reaffirmed a position held by numerous religious groups influenced by Calvin: carnal, man-made additions to worship violated an extension of the sacred principle established by the second commandment's prohibition against idols. This principle applied to predetermined songs (or prayers) as well. Marlow believed that artistic qualities were necessary for a person to create such a collection, and he concluded that the consequence of using such a collection was to impose "art" on the worship service; if "art" is used, then the Spirit is denied.⁴³

⁴⁰ *TSD*, 51-53.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴² Marlow, *Prelimited Forms*, 11.

⁴³ *CSBE*, 26-27, 77; *TSD*, 119.

This consequence aligns with his premise that worship required no “humane art.”⁴⁴ He asserted that knowing how to read could be helpful, but it was not necessary. Neither did preaching require humane learning beyond the ability to read the scriptures. He did find a prepared sermon acceptable, but not if it were “permitted to Words,” that is, fully scripted.⁴⁵ The learning of “art” could be valuable for the appointed minister or preacher, but only if it remained subordinated to God’s will.⁴⁶ The danger Marlow feared was that the wisdom of man might be exalted over the divine gift of the Holy Spirit. For example, if preachers prepared a sermon by “art,” they “give themselves up to a Form without the Power of Godliness.”⁴⁷ Thus, in terms of principle, Marlow believed that the tenets Keach advocated destroyed the spiritual nature of preaching, prayer, and singing by using the “natural and artificial” abilities acquired through learning the ways of men.⁴⁸ If, as John Owen taught in *A Discourse of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer*, utterances of sacred matters flowed from the Holy Spirit and served as dialogue between God and the church, then nothing human or artificial was acceptable, including the forms of singing that Keach advocated.⁴⁹

As he synthesized his thoughts on forms of worship, Marlow also expressed concern that Keach’s precepts violated a consistent approach to scripture and the particulars of elements required in worship. In his thinking, the dilemma over forms of worship presented an all-or-nothing proposition: “Set forms . . . of Prayers and Praises, must stand or fall together.”⁵⁰ It was contradictory to assert on the one hand that prayer writers and their prayers were fallible, and thus unacceptable, yet on the other hand to claim that song writers were infallible and were producing an acceptable prestinted collection for use in worship.⁵¹

Ultimately, Marlow’s most pertinent argument, in light of the context of spiritual worship that undergirded his perspective, was that *forms* of worship were not *spiritual* worship. As has previously been demonstrated, Marlow’s notion of spiritual worship was not limited to a spiritual mindset or to spiritual content, but it described worship

⁴⁴ *TSD*, 118.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 119-21.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 123. Cf. John Owen, *A Discourse of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer* (London: 1682), 145-48.

⁵⁰ *CSBE*, 6.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 29-31.

that was generated by the active functioning of the Holy Spirit. At its purest, spiritual worship was devoid of man-made instruments of assistance. Thus, Marlow claimed that a predetermined form, such as a prayer book or a song book, did not produce spiritual worship. In his thinking, the assistance such a book provided was unlawful: the use of an unlawful element only detracted from a pure spiritual worship. Additionally, the use of a form, even though it contained scriptural words, did not reveal the heart and life of the congregant.⁵² In other words, correct behavior in worship, especially that which results from man-made forms, does not necessarily produce spiritual worship; in fact, it may mask the unspiritual nature of a person. Marlow promoted a worship of the heart, which he described as offering a “heart melody”⁵³ in song to God: “And as we cannot deny, but that the least exercise of true Grace in our Hearts in Prayer, gives essence or being to inward spiritual Prayer; so the least exercise of gracious melodious Joy gives essence to inward Spiritual Singing.”⁵⁴ And again: “And for any to say, that they have the inward Melody in the use of outward melodious Forms: we may rather conclude, that it is carnal and sensual, instead of spiritual; and from the sense and workings of Nature, rather than from the gracious actings of the holy Spirit of Christ.”⁵⁵ Worship aided by forms counterfeited the nature of worship that God desires in man and prohibited the free workings of the Holy Spirit.

Implications for Fellowship: Community

If the fear of introducing predetermined forms of worship was the most pressing concern, signifying the pollution of man’s interaction with the Divine, the potential corruption of the Christian community pointed to the broader challenge facing of the life of the Christian body and its human dimension. The threat to the community originated in two related sources. Those who opposed singing or the use of hymns written by men were facing the possibility that they might have to 1) join with unbelievers present in the assembly in an act of worship they believed should be restricted to those who had been properly admitted to the Christian community or 2) join with Baptists with whom they disagreed. Even for those who did not consider the singing controversy a matter of salvation, neither option was palatable, for they both implied consent.

⁵² *AFD*, 43-44.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

The trouble with “mixed communion,” as it was called, grew from its threat to the church and to spiritual worship. As an issue of fellowship, the question of separating fellowship from others who professed Christianity had gained the recent attention of some of the same Baptist leaders who were writing on the singing controversy. In 1681, William Kiffin wrote *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church Communion* which focused exclusively on restricting the Lord’s Supper to baptized believers.⁵⁶ In 1682, Hercules Collins, author of the *Orthodox Catechism*, wrote on the separation from the Church of England.⁵⁷ This work, written in the form of a dialogue between two neighbors, a conformist and a nonconformist, explores the broad range of concerns that had led to the formation of separatist groups throughout the seventeenth century. Issues such as defining church, identifying the sacraments and their proper administration, and the authority of the Bible, along with practical questions about baptism, rituals, and worship, permeate this dialogue. In 1694, Isaac Marlow believed such a discussion relevant again and wrote *The Purity of Gospel Communion* during a lull in publications related to the singing controversy. Marlow’s treatise was broad in nature and pointed to three categories of people from which he believed the church should separate: those “guilty of corrupt Manners or evil Actions,” those who hold to doctrinal errors that concern matters of salvation, and “disorderly Persons in false Worship, or in corrupt Administrations of Gospel Ordinances.”⁵⁸

At the core of each of these three works is the desire to maintain the purity and integrity of the Christian community. When Marlow raised his opposition to the singing controversy on the basis of how it affected the Christian community, those were his same central objectives. In *Truth Soberly Defended*, Marlow labeled certain acts of worship as “internal” and attempted to distinguish between subgroups in the collective assembly, believers and unbelievers. He parsed worship activities between the groups, asserting that in a given activity one group *actively* joined with the other group, which *passively* received the action. He accepted that unbelievers might meet with the saints because of the teaching that occurs. However, in the “internal” acts of worship, which he never defined, the *church* (that is, baptized believers admitted to the community) should not join knowingly with unbelievers: “But for a Church to look upon any as Unbelievers, and yet encourage their vocal Exercise, and join with them in Divine Worship, is by Consent, and so becomes their Sin.”⁵⁹ The dichotomy Marlow saw was

⁵⁶ William Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church-Communion* (London: 1681).

⁵⁷ Hercules Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation* (London: 1682).

⁵⁸ Marlow, *The Purity of Gospel Communion* (London: 1694), 4, 10, 15; quotes 4, 15.

⁵⁹ *TSD*, 64.

that an unregenerate person would be excluded from the “duties of publick worship,”⁶⁰ so it seemed inconsistent that the church would accept the participation of those about whom it knew nothing. Because unbelievers could not unite in heart and spirit with believers, then they should not unite in voice by singing, either, lest the action imply consent and hypocrisy on the part of believers.⁶¹

In Marlow’s concerns for the purity of the Christian community, he raised his most serious objection to the principle of moral or natural worship that Keach had supported. If praising God through song be a moral or natural response of man, and thus be acceptable rationale for including non-Christians in Christian worship, then the whole justification for pure, carefully guarded worship of the separatist groups is challenged.

This concern was of such importance to Marlow that he addressed it in several of the works he contributed to the singing controversy. His most comprehensive analysis of the issue is found in *Truth Soberly Defended*. Marlow’s main opposition was that the moral or natural law is not a legitimate rule for worship. His reasoning started with the imperfection of Adam who, though he began with a perfect nature, did not maintain perfect obedience to God. With such an imperfect human nature, Marlow found it incredulous that Christians, already so fragmented, would depend on their human nature to devise a reliable and sufficient rule for worship.⁶² As evidenced in Chapter 3, Marlow placed a high value on correctly performing worship ordinances. The inability of human nature to perform worship ordinances in accordance with God’s guidelines and a “New Testament Spirit” was so troubling that he feared it would lead to worship found unacceptable by God,⁶³ a line of thinking very similar to Calvin’s views of man’s contributions to worship.

In addition to doubting the sufficiency of the moral nature to produce acceptable worship, Marlow posited that using the moral law as justification also led to worship by *moral* persons (a category not solely limited to Christians), which would be unacceptable to the community of the church.⁶⁴ If singing was an ordinance of the church merely because it was a part of a moral or natural religious response, then the church was forced to fellowship (that is, accept into the community) “Persons that are merely natural, and destitute of the saving Grace of Christ.”⁶⁵ Consequently, the

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 61-65.

⁶² Ibid., 12-15.

⁶³ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁵ *CSBE*, 26.

objection of singing with unbelievers was thus destroyed.⁶⁶ Those of a moral human spirit, though without salvation, would now be included in the Christian community and in worship, overthrowing the church communion of believers and pure worship. Most pointedly, the consequence was a “moral Church-state, for meer natural Persons, in a meer moral and natural Spirit, to exercise moral and natural Worship unto God.”⁶⁷

When Marlow wrote *The Controversie of Singing Brought to an End*, he also provided an explanation that related his concern over mixed communion to the broader context of the English Baptist churches. It held direct relevance at least as far back as the 1691 assembly. Marlow cited an incident involving Thomas Whinnel that occurred on the last day of the assembly. More detailed information is found in Kiffin’s *A Serious Answer*, one of the books examined by the general assembly the following year. According to Kiffin, Thomas Whinnel, a proponent of congregational singing (and author of *A Sober Reply*, another book examined by the 1692 assembly), posed a question of whether one who opposed congregational singing could commune with his own congregation if it embraced the practice of congregational singing. As Kiffin reported it, the assembly had unanimously agreed *not* to discuss the singing controversy because of its potential to distract the group from other necessary business. Yet on the assembly’s final day, when many people had already left, Whinnel raised the matter of communion in the context of the singing controversy, a move Kiffin claimed as “favouring more of a politick Contrivance than of Honesty and Candor.”⁶⁸

But Marlow was troubled by more than Whinnel’s statement at the assembly. In *A Sober Reply*, Whinnel implied that an assembly *had* dealt with the issue of such division caused by the singing controversy. Whinnel wrote:

There are some who also have too much conntenanced [*sic*] Divisions in Churches upon the account of singing the praises of God, we shall be glad if you can clear your self in that matter: And the more inexcusable they seem to be, since to their Knowledge the Assembly of the Elders, Ministers and Messengers of our Churches declared their utter dislike of any Breach or Division in the Churches upon the account of the practice or non-practice of Singing of Psalms, as ‘tis now, . . . and hath in every Age been performed; and also gave Advice to the contrary.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ *TSD*, 138.

⁶⁷ *AFD*, 31.

⁶⁸ Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse*, 12.

⁶⁹ Whinnel, 4.

Unfortunately, the narrative of the 1691 assembly does not record Whinnel's question on that last day or the reaction of those in attendance.

From Marlow's perspective, Whinnel's treatment of mixed communion—a question with serious ramifications for the Christian community—was certainly disingenuous, if not dangerous. Personally, Marlow believed mixed communion to be wrong. However, to resolve the question with some degree of academic and intellectual dialogue, Marlow presented a series of queries and comments to his readers. They are quite comprehensive and are summarized in full below:

1. Can the Lord's Supper lawfully be shared with Independents, who understand baptism differently?
2. If so, and if Baptists and Independents can sing together, then what is the reason for having a separate church? If it is out of personal interest, or because they do not have ministers to baptize, then
3. Is personal interest a valid reason for separate churches?
4. The problem of ministers can be overcome if Baptists and Independents join together.
5. Should Independents and Baptists have the liberty to separate or not?
6. Should not various Baptist congregations have the same liberty?
7. If so, then is it a schism when some do so separate to one side?
8. Is not it a contradiction for a Baptist church to accept Independents yet to advocate a separation from other churches, yet not allow their own churches to practice it?
9. Is it permissible by scripture to worship in a parish church and hold partial communion with the Church of England as far as any comments or forms of prayer agree with scripture, but not hold communion in all things?
10. If so, then if communion can be maintained with those who neglect correct baptism or add traditions of men, is this not a temptation to nonconformists if persecution returns? Maintaining such communion means choosing not to suffer but to become part of the corruption.

11. Is it lawful for a Christian to withdraw communion from a church that practices *one* ordinance wrongly and join one that is correct? Is it his duty?
12. Does scripture give a Christian liberty to enjoy full communion with a group that wrongly practices one ordinance over another? Where is the liberty found, and which ordinances meet this requirement?
13. Is thanking/praising God equal to prayer as an ordinance?
14. Is not *how* praises are sung as integral to the ordinance as is how one speaks in prayer?
15. Why is it less unlawful to commune with a church that sings wrongly than it is to communion with one that prays falsely?
16. For those who advocate stunted forms of singing, what if a brother prayed with a stunted form? Would communion be maintained without repentance?
17. Is not it unlawful to maintain communion if some members, alone, pray using a stunted form of prayer? If it can be proven, then will the church not require repentance?
18. Is the hymn essential to proper observation of the Supper? If so, why is the Supper sometimes administered without singing?
19. Is not it dangerous to the purity of belief for a Baptist church to have a minister that upholds singing and mixed communion contrary to the church's principles?
20. If such a minister agrees not to advocate his thinking, is that not also dangerous, for he is choosing not to teach God's will as he understands it. What else might he be unfaithful with?⁷⁰

This list of questions reveals some of the conflict Marlow felt with the contemporary relationship with other nonconformist churches and also reinforces the intellectual principles that he valued. The queries heavily target the loose confederation

⁷⁰ CSBE, 63-68. Queries 1-10 are original to CSBE. Queries 11-20 are taken, with some modifications, from Marlow's *The Purity of Gospel Communion*, 45-48.

of autonomous Independent churches, which shared many similarities with Baptists save a difference on their understanding of baptism.⁷¹ It also affirms the deep attachment Marlow felt to his position on the issue of singing and its implications. Finally, while the queries never ask for or propose a list of essential beliefs, they suggest that Marlow envisioned a list of essential points of unity in doctrine and practice that should be met for “full Communion with Christians.”⁷²

Marlow presumably believed that mixed communion was wrong, and he asserted that he would not even consider changing his mind until these queries and also the books he and Kiffin had each written on communion were answered.⁷³ His own definition of mixed communion was very broad: not only did it include communing with those who sprinkled infants, those who had sinful behaviors, or those who held false doctrines on essential matters, but it also included those who accepted modes of worship or ordinances not found in scripture.⁷⁴ When it came to worship, all modes of worship and ordinances must be lawful for communion to be embraced; otherwise, communion should be rejected. To hold full communion with a group that accepted false modes of worship or that incorrectly administered ordinances of the church was to breach a precept he understood Christ to have taught, that such communion was prohibited. Therefore, to commune with Baptists who sang incorrectly was equally as disobedient as to commune with those who had a false understanding of baptism or those who prayed with forms such as a prayer book.⁷⁵

Conclusion

Throughout the seventeenth century the Baptists struggled to balance the awareness that scripture spoke of singing and the concern that man not violate or exceed the authority God had given him in matters of Christian worship. The need to remain consistent with criticism of the Church of England heightened this concern: Baptists believed that 1) the Book of Common Prayer imposed an unauthorized form of

⁷¹ Tolmie, 85-119; cf. *idem*, 50-84.

⁷² *CSBE*, 65.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

worship and 2) the scriptural definition of the Christian community relied not on parish boundaries but on the voluntary assembly of adults properly admitted through adult baptism. The strong desire to protect these values of not exceeding God's written authorization for worship and not improperly admitting people to the Christian communion, even implicitly, raised a series of uncomfortable questions for opponents of congregational singing and hymnody. As has been demonstrated previously, Keach and Marlow viewed themselves as continuing the Reformation, which they judged to have been incomplete in England. The questions raised by an acceptance of congregational singing and hymnody threatened the nature of worship and the composition of the Christian community, two distinguishing features as the Baptists sought a more purely reformed church.

CHAPTER 6

LASTING IMPRESSIONS OF BENJAMIN KEACH AND ISAAC MARLOW

At the outset of this dissertation it was observed that interpretations of Benjamin Keach have recently begun to shift. Previous interpretations of Keach and the singing controversy of the 1690s typically identified him as a participant in a progression of events. In other words, they observed *that* he did something and focused on what he *did*: he introduced hymns into his Particular Baptist congregation, and this action caused a rift. Such a structure actually limits any comprehensive analysis of Keach. For example, histories of hymnody or church music minimize coverage of Keach in favor of others, such as Isaac Watts, who left high-quality texts that continue to be used today.

Recently, however, better and more complete analyses of Keach have been emerging. Evaluation is shifting from observing *that* he did something to asking *why* he did it. The result is that Keach is being interpreted as a pastor and theologian who struggled with the dynamics of practical ministry in the life of a congregation. This dissertation has sought to join that trend. The best way to describe the shift in how scholars are approaching Keach is to observe that the questions being asked of Keach are different: instead of asking *what* Keach did, scholars are now asking *why* he did it.

Asking a different guiding question about Keach's actions yields different answers, as demonstrated by this dissertation. Rather than observe that Keach believed congregational singing and hymnody acceptable, it introduces his personal transition in developing that belief. Rather than view Keach as isolated in the late seventeenth century or as a distant heir of the Reformation, it connects him to the energy of the Reformation as a continual guiding and inspiring force. Rather than comment that Keach and Marlow could not agree, it explores the factors why they could not reach a mutual understanding or resolution. Rather than debate the secondary issues that comprised the bulk of Keach's and Marlow's written products, it tries to identify the philosophical values that shaped those subsequent issues. Rather than tacitly acknowledge the regulative principle, it demonstrates that virtually *all* post-Reformation religious groups, if they devised a creedal statement or confession of faith, took positions on how to approach scripture in general, how to deal with scriptural silence, and how to interpret scripture's teachings for guiding Christian worship

practices. Rather than only establish that different approaches to scripture had some bearing on the controversy, it suggests that the *implications* of bending those guidelines drove much of the controversy.

The accomplishments of this dissertation are that it demonstrates the necessity for a new approach to how Benjamin Keach is appraised and that it proposes elements of a construct for such an assessment. The answers gained by asking new questions, as illustrated above, reveal features of the new model for evaluating Keach proposed in Chapter 1. Tied together, these components affirm Keach's connection to the Reformation and its principles, especially how nonconformist groups viewed the community of believers and potential threats to the community. They also highlight how worship practices had been determined and the struggle to reconcile the interpretive principles conveyed by a confessional statement with dilemmas posed by a practical pastoral ministry.

This construct is useful for several reasons. First, it proposes dimensions of evaluation that allow for scrutiny of Keach's motives rather than just his actions. Second, the elements of this construct apply to Keach and could also be used to examine Isaac Marlow. In fact, this dissertation has purposely not de-emphasized Marlow's role because understanding his contributions to the controversy and the discomforts that guided them helps us better understand why Keach responded as he did. Finally, this construct is useful because it allows us to see similarities in Keach and Marlow. They both desired faithfulness to scripture's teachings, and the controversy was both a cause of and the byproduct of their struggles to reconcile their confessional statement with the act of singing in Christian worship.

Previous research on the singing controversy has emphasized the differences between Keach and Marlow, and in many ways the preceding chapters carry on that trait. They stood on opposing sides of an issue that challenged the Particular Baptists in the late seventeenth century, and the dynamics of the controversy they debated also involved the General Baptists and other parties outside of the Baptist fellowships.

However, in many aspects Benjamin Keach and Isaac Marlow likely shared more similarities than dissimilarities. Even as they attacked each other and defended their own positions in contrast to the principles advocated by the other side, they shared core values, beliefs, and assumptions. The similarities between Keach and Marlow should not be overlooked in the midst of their pugnacious correspondence. Their similarities, though, were not just matters of internalized convictions. The singing controversy took Keach and Marlow jointly into a fiery cauldron of shared struggles as they wrestled with the practical implications of doctrines they both held dear.

Recognition of these similarities in the midst of controversy points toward a future analysis of the singing controversy that must be undertaken. This analysis should require expertise in Puritan theology, the practical challenges of its implementation as religious movements matured, and the politics of English dissent.

Shared Beliefs

It is only natural that Benjamin Keach and Isaac Marlow shared religious beliefs. They both identified themselves with nonconformist groups in England that received legal toleration in 1689, and as such they held common doctrinal positions that guided them throughout the singing controversy.

In their writings, Keach and Marlow both affirmed the supreme authority of scripture. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, they also both believed that the Reformation had not been completed. Even after 150 years, they both argued that the nonconformist churches in England were still struggling to become more perfectly reformed. They both believed that the necessary reformation and purification would be achieved by a faithful replication of scriptural teachings. For worship, this assumption translated to reproducing patterns of activities described in scripture and, from a theoretical perspective, it embraced a hermeneutical approach to scripture that recognized its instructions as prescribing Christian worship activity and therefore limiting the capacity of the Christian church to embrace activity not explicitly commanded.

Keach and Marlow also both assumed that public worship was a special event, directed by God's instructions. Despite their differences in the singing controversy, they agreed that singing was an element or act of worship that God had instituted. Because of their views of scriptural authority and the force of God's commands, each desired *not* to do that which was right in his own eyes and risk usurping God's prerogative. When applying these assumptions about scripture and worship to the issue of congregational singing, however, Keach and Marlow reached differing conclusions. Marlow charged Keach with acquiescing to contemporary practices of the Church of England, while Keach claimed that he merely desired faithfulness to biblical instruction.

Perhaps the greatest similarity between Keach and Marlow is that they both viewed the issue of congregational singing as presenting a threat to the purification and proper reformation of the church. For Isaac Marlow, the presence of congregational singing and hymns written by man soiled the attempt to offer God worship devoid of human devices. He considered congregational singing akin to the "rags of Rome" that continued their corrupting influence on Protestant Christianity. On the other hand, Benjamin Keach believed that the lack of congregational singing was tantamount to man's open, willing rebuffing of scriptural instructions to praise, teach, and admonish in song. The fundamental rationale for separating from the Church of England had been the quest for a more pure Christianity, and threats to this desire were taken seriously. Keach and Marlow both looked for biblical principles to guide the process of resolving the controversy, and while they never reached agreement or resolution,

neither Keach nor Marlow believed he advocated a practice *not* subordinated to scripture or vital in achieving a more purely reformed church.

Shades of Grey: Shared Uncertainties

A retrospective look at the singing controversy also demonstrates that Keach and Marlow shared uncertainties. Neither Keach nor Marlow would agree with this statement, for they both advanced their beliefs quite forcefully and with great certainty. The uncertainties develop *not* from what either man individually believed but from the practical implementation of their beliefs and some of the consequent implications. Marlow found comfort and safety in restrictions, and his approach to challenges was to iterate the boundaries or, if necessary, to tighten them so that there would be no doubt of remaining within the realm of acceptable worship practices. Keach challenged the contemporary doctrinal orthodoxy, and in so doing forced Marlow to confront ramifications outside of his safe boundaries. Chapter 5 listed several such implications and categorized them into those that affected the assembly and those that disrupted the community. Most of the implications, such as questions over mixed communion, boundaries of protection around the Christian community, and the liberty of groups to associate with or separate from others, challenged the understanding of community held by nonconformists. Keach forged ahead into this area of uncertainty because he believed the church lacked a divinely-instituted element of worship; Marlow resisted the uncertainty because he saw threats to the principles he used to define “church.”

The immediate heritage of the uncertainty revealed in Keach’s and Marlow’s disagreement can be traced to John Smyth. Chapters 1 and 5 discussed the principle of worship Smyth advanced and observed its restrictive nature and dependence on the spontaneity of the Holy Spirit during the worship service. Smyth’s principle, however, was more difficult to implement in practice. Spann comments, “Smyth’s principle could undermine or destroy the worship of Anglicans, Puritans and Separatists, but it could not be constructively applied to the erection of a stable pattern of worship.”¹ In other words, Smyth did not advance a theology of worship that translated well into practice.

If Marlow recognized impending uncertainties primarily from the *practical* dilemmas they would create, then it should be said that Keach embraced an area of

¹ Spann, 12.

intellectual uncertainty. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, Keach experienced a shift in how he approached matters of scriptural silence. His own writings testify that, with regards to singing, he once argued that scriptural silence on the specific manner or content of singing prohibited this congregational song, yet by the time of the controversy with Marlow he considered such silence permissive. In changing his thinking, Keach breached the traditionally understood principles (for the Particular Baptists) of textual reading and application of scripture, especially as it related to worship. The principles had roots in John Calvin and had been refined by Puritan movements throughout the seventeenth century. Keach's detractors viewed him as violating the regulative principle of worship, and in so doing, of shifting worship from theocentric to anthropocentric concerns. The transition in the purpose of church music in which Keach participated has not been lost on the contemporary observation of Louis Benson who, in his analysis of Isaac Watts' "Renovation of Psalmody," comments that Watts presided over the transition of church music as it became "not God's word to us, but our word to God."² While Keach did not leave for posterity hymnic material comparable to the contribution of Isaac Watts, he did take initial steps that foreshadowed decisions of Watts in redefining the purpose of song as understood by the English nonconformist churches.

Ultimately, the principles at the heart of the singing controversy, and the discomfort they caused for its parties, extend beyond Keach and Marlow. The debated issues reveal that the Baptists were participants in a larger theological matter. The controversy demonstrates that the Baptists were confronted with the reality that honest, sincere people—even of similar background—could have different readings of scripture, and their differing conclusions could affect Christian unity. Keach and Marlow simply brought the singing controversy out in the open and pushed the Baptists to begin recognizing the larger issue at hand. The movement toward such uncomfortable questions may be evidence of the impractical nature of John Smyth's worship principle and the difficulty of applying the regulative principle of worship in all circumstances. Benjamin Keach recognized these challenges and attempted to devise a practical resolution to them.

² Benson, 108-113; quote 111.

Shared Struggles

The uncertainties that Keach and Marlow experienced were really a symptom of a struggle created by the very guidelines they both sought to uphold. Like many other statements of faith articulated in the seventeenth century, the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 also took a position on scriptural silence that was very similar to the statements restricting worship quoted in Chapter 4. However, it also implied that something deducted from scripture with sound reason would be acceptable: “The whole Council of God concerning all things necessary for his own Glory, Man’s Salvation, Faith and Life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture; . . .”³ This phrase is very similar to the “good and necessary consequence” found in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Thus, while it is inaccurate to conclude that these faith statements are inconsistent, Keach and Marlow struggled with applying the theoretical principles to practice. To use the words of John Frame, “it is one thing to affirm the sufficiency of Scripture for worship, [and] another thing to work out a cogent theological account of it.”⁴ Frame writes these words in an article examining some difficulties with the regulative principle of worship, but they aptly apply to the Keach-Marlow struggle. In trying to work out the practical implications of “good and necessary consequence” as found in WCF 1.6, Frame suggests three qualifications.⁵ Using his structure, these same qualifications may help describe the problem of practically implementing the assumptions of scripture’s sufficiency for worship.

First, Keach and Marlow struggled to determine the nature of the “command” to sing. As Frame points out, the notion of a “command” can be deceiving when it is

³ *A Confession of Faith* (1688), 6.

⁴ John M. Frame, “Some Questions about the Regulative Principle,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 54 (1992): 357.

⁵ Frame, 358-59. Frame’s analysis of the regulative principle is challenged in T. David Gordon, “Some Answers about the Regulative Principle,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 55 (1993): 321-29. Also see Frame, “Reply to T. David Gordon,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994): 181-83; R. J. Gore, “Reviewing the Puritan Regulative Principle of Worship,” *Presbyterion* 20, no. 1 (1994): 41-50; idem, “Reviewing the Regulative Principle: Part II,” *Presbyterion* 21, no. 1 (1995): 29-47; and John Allen Delivuk, “Biblical Authority and the Proof of the Regulative Principle of Worship in *The Westminster Confession*,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 58 (1996): 237-56.

understood that “good and necessary consequence” allows scripture to teach implicitly. Second, Keach and Marlow struggled to determine whether singing congregationally was an element or a circumstance of worship. They both accepted “singing” as instituted and instructed by God, so in this sense they both recognized it as a required element. However, they differed on how it occurred in the life of a congregation, with Keach accusing Marlow of omitting an instituted element of worship, and Marlow accusing Keach of adding to an element of worship.

Finally, Frame introduces the term *mode*—which, it should be observed, is not explicitly stated in the Westminster Confession of Faith—to assist in implementing the elements of worship. He writes, “The modal qualification is simply this: that although Scripture prescribes the elements of worship, it does not always describe in detail *how* those elements are to be carried out.”⁶ If one accepts the term *mode*, it could be argued that Keach and Marlow ultimately debated how to define the mode of singing, that is, the *way* of praising, teaching, and admonishing that scriptures authorized.

Furthermore, part of the struggle that Marlow, in particular, had with the question of congregational singing may have come from his understanding of the purpose of the regulative principle. He was especially fixated on any song in worship replicating the correct biblical form, thus his opposition to the psalms of David, which scripture does not present in a form complete for performance or use. However, it is probable that Marlow misunderstood the full intent of a regulating principle. As T. David Gordon writes, “The regulative principle has never argued that the *forms* of worship are fixed by scriptural command; to the contrary, to fix and require them would have been considered an objectional imposition of a liturgy. In fact, the regulative principle was largely developed as a defense against such imposition by the Church of England.”⁷ Or, to use the metaphor of Ernest Reisinger and Matthew Allen, perhaps the regulative principle should be treated as a “hedge that acts as a boundary around broadly prescribed areas of worship” that should not be overstepped, rather than a “coatrack upon which every aspect, circumstance, and mode of worship must be hung in order to be approved.”⁸

The tension between the theoretical and the experiential, or practical, left Keach and Marlow looking for a way to reach resolution. This challenge was not limited to Keach and Marlow, but was an inherent facet of the theological guidelines they used. Marlow chose to avoid anything that might put him in violation of them; Keach, on the

⁶ Frame, “Some Questions,” 359.

⁷ Gordon, 326.

⁸ Ernest C. Reisinger and D. Matthew Allen, *Worship: The Regulative Principle and the Biblical Practice of Accommodation* (Cape Coral, Fla.: Founders Press, 2001), 11.

other hand, embraced a modification to the regulative principle. Reisinger and Allen, drawing on the work of William Cunningham, offer two cautions for implementing guiding theological rules in practice: first, care should be taken in the rigid application of a rule without recognizing that the rule may have necessary limitations or qualifications when put into practice, and second, care should be taken in rejecting a rule just because it cannot be implemented without some exceptions.⁹ As argued in Chapter 3, the root issue of the controversy centered around how to deal with matters of scriptural silence; for the singing controversy, the second caution has little bearing. However, the first caution appropriately describes a fundamental philosophical dilemma that shaped Marlow's response. Keach and Marlow were not just arguing about music; they were struggling to work out, in practice, the implications of a theological and philosophical guideline.

Future Directions

As presented in Chapter 1, interpretations of Benjamin Keach have been rather static until the last fifteen years or so. Recent scholarship on Keach has begun expanding the ways in which he is evaluated, and ongoing contributions will provide future scholars with a broader, multi-dimensional perspective of Keach.

Chapter 1 also presented a new theoretical construct for evaluating Benjamin Keach, and the chapters that followed demonstrated various elements of the proposed new typology. This study seeks to place Keach and Marlow outside of a simple disagreement on music and to orient the context of the controversy to the English Reformation and its doctrinal legacy among English separatists. Furthermore, it highlights elements of a new construct for considering Keach, and future scholarship should expand these elements in further detail. For example, future scholarship should consider how various separatist movements dealt with unbelievers participating with the congregation's corporate worship services while simultaneously protecting the activities of the community and its integrity. Additionally, future inquiry should probe the specific case studies of practical theology in groups that faced disagreement, especially when that disagreement stemmed from a formalized statement of faith.

⁹ Reisinger and Allen, 81-82. Cf. William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1862; reprint, Carlisle, Penn: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), 33 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

Finally, it should examine how Christian communities understood biblical mandates on replicating primitive forms of worship, especially in cases where the culture had alternative methods of meeting the spiritual function accomplished by these forms.

Given the evolving depictions of Keach, it is likely that Baptists and historians may not truly appreciate his contributions. In the singing controversy, he mediated tradition, theology, and post-Reformation separatism and embraced an intellectual shift within English nonconformity. He challenged fundamental worship practices of the Particular and General Baptists and, on the issue of congregational singing, promoted interpretive principles generally embraced by those of a Lutheran heritage in a fellowship that had strictly adhered to principles derived from John Calvin. Benjamin Keach uniquely blended the opposing hermeneutical methods of these historical forces. From the standpoint of Puritan patternism, he argued that he more faithfully replicated the biblical pattern by implementing congregational song. From the perspective of Christian liberty, he argued that singing was not prohibited by the Bible and was consistent with a type of praise known to have been offered at some point in the past. In presenting these arguments and in blending Calvinist and Lutheran interpretive principles, Keach challenged the Baptists to deal with the practical implementation of worship ordinances in the life of the church body in the face of differing conclusions on scriptural teachings and requirements.

From a broader perspective, the singing controversy illustrates that Baptists were grappling with a larger theological matter. Neither Marlow nor Keach questioned the theoretical foundation of the regulative principle of worship or its articulation. They both believed and supported scripture's authority to regulate Christian worship. Ultimately, however, they did struggle with a question of sound hermeneutics. This controversy forced them and their observers to consider that a "Christian" liturgical expression may not be a biblical liturgical expression. In many ways, this realization was not new; the Catholic and Anglican churches were replete with "Christian" expressions that English separatists considered outside the boundaries of biblical authority. The difference with the singing controversy is that Keach's and Marlow's own hermeneutic was challenged, and they were forced to contemplate the potential implications of one resolution or another. Keach and Marlow both worked from an assumption that the church had *one* way it could decide important issues, but now they were faced with determining the lines of what was acceptable in order to preserve the community.

The broader theological questions were not reserved only for Baptists. The singing controversy illustrated a fundamental aspect of the doctrine of the church as conceived specifically by English nonconformity and more generally by other Protestant groups. The church, as a voluntary community of believers (rather than one defined by the state and organized into parishes) had a responsibility to protect its membership from error. This principle, especially when combined with freedom to

associate, creates an inherent inclination toward division when a disagreement cannot be solved. One effect of the Reformation, spurred on by the increased accessibility of the Bible, was that individuals tended to interpret the scriptures themselves rather than to defer to appointed church leaders or to the community of believers. As the individual assumed the right to determine correctness of doctrine, such correctness also guided one's choice of Christian fellowship. When disagreement among members, prompted by the "incorrectness" of a party, developed, division could likely follow out of the need to protect the community. The singing controversy illustrated these dynamics and affirmed that the path of Reformation was neither straightforward nor neatly charted. Certainly Keach and Marlow would both agree with this assessment.

APPENDIX A

TO ALL THE BAPTIZED CHURCHES AND FAITHFUL BRETHREN IN ENGLAND AND WALES, CHRISTIAN SALUTATIONS.

BEhold how good and how pleasant it is (saith the Psalmist) for Brethren to dwell together in Unity, Psal. 133.1. But O how grievous a thing is the contrary, viz. to see Brethren live in Discord, in Strife and Contention. Our Saviour saith, By this shall all Men know ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another, John 13.35. Nay 'tis an Evidence we are passed from Death to Life, when we love the Brethren: and as this Grace is from hence to be coveted and laboured after, so the Nature thereof is by the Apostle plainly described, I Cor. 13. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; Charity envieth not. A Soul possessed of Love will suffer long, i.e. not be too quick and touchy with Brethren that offend or displease us. The charitable Man will with-hold and restrain his Wrath, not be rash in the Expressions of it, and hasty in Revenge," say our late Annotators. I fear that great Precept has been forgot, Love thy Neighbour as they self; Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, I Cor. 13.7. "The charitable Man beareth real Injuries with Patience, he believeth all things that are good of his Brother, will make the favourablest Constructions of his Words and Expressions; so far is he from being credulous to his Prejudice, rejoiceth not in Iniquity, will not rejoice in the real and sinful Falls of others; nor dare he spread or proclaim his Brother's Weakness to the Dishonour of God, and Prejudice to the Truth of the Gospel." Charity will cover a Multitude of Faults. My Soul mourneth to see how this Grace is and hath been wanting. What saith the Apostle James; But if ye have bitter Envying and Strife in your Hearts, glory not, and lie not against the Truth. You may pretend (as if he should say) you do it out of Zeal, and may glory in it, but if you have bitter Envy and Strife in your Hearts, glory not, and lie not against the Truth; glory not of your Zeal, for your glorying is a real and just cause of Shame. This Wisdom descendeth not from above, Jam. 3.15. This Wisdom which you pretend so much to, "[who (say our Annotators) criticize on other Mens Actions, and inveigh against them, accompanied with Strife and Envy]" is not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish: for where Envy and Strife is, there is Contention, and every evil Work, ver. 16.

The Spirit of Christ is compared to the harmless, meek and innocent Dove; 'tis easy to discern who are acted and influenced by that Spirit, and who are not. But *the Wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, &c. And the Fruit of Righteousness is sown in Peace of them that make Peace.* If we were acted by this Wisdom, by this Spirit, we should not bite and wound, and reproach one another, because we in some things see not alike, but may differ in our Sentiments. I have, dear Brethren, passed under the hardest Dispensation of late, that ever I met withal since I have been in the World; but I hope I can say my Sorrow or Grief is chiefly because the Name of God hereby suffers, and his People are exposed to Reproach. I desire to live no longer than to promote Peace and Union to my Power in all the Churches of the Saints; though I am represented as one that hath not indeavoured after it, because of my Writing in the Defence of Singing the Praises of God. But I would have you all know and bear me Witness, I am grieved in my very Soul that this Ordinance should be deemed to have such a Tendency, for I for my own part can as freely have Communion with my Brethren who do not own Singing, I mean proper Singing of God's Praises, as with such who are of my Judgment in that matter: every Truth is not an Essential of Communion, some Precepts are appointed for the Being of a visible Church, and others for the more comfortable Being thereof.

Satan be sure has got in his Feet among us, there has been a giving way or place I fear to him, our poor Brethren bewail it, and mourned over us in the late Assembly, and not without Cause: methinks I see how the Tears ran down their Cheeks. Does not the Apostle say, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Sedition, Heresies, are the Works of the Flesh? O that we would consider what Spirit we have been led by, or some of us, and repent in Dust and Ashes: Is not the Evil of making Discord among Brethren, one of the six things that God hates, yea that thing which is Abomination to him? *Prov.* 6.

Brethren, You will find in the Narrative of the Proceedings of the late Assembly, a Relation of those sad and grievous Reflections that are contained in some Books lately printed and dispersed amongst the Churches, wrote about the Controversy of Singing the Praises of God.

And that we by joint Agreement referred all Matters of Fact or Reflection to the Hearing and final Determination of seven worthy Brethren, chosen in the said Assembly: The Persons who agreed as aforesaid, were, Brother *Kiffin*, Brother *Steed*, Brother *Man*, Brother *Barret*, Brother *W. Collins*, Brother *Hollowell*, and my self.

Now that which the said seven Brethren took notice of in respect of me, as it is written in that Book, called, *A Sober Reply to Mr. Robert Steed's Epistle concerning Singing*; I shall give an impartial Relation of, and according to their Determination make my Acknowledgments as publickly as the Offences were given.

The seven Brethren were these following, *viz.* Brother *Andrew Gifford*, Brother *Samuel Buttal*, Brother *Hen. Austin*, Brother *Edmond White*, Brother *Willis*, Brother *Keat*, Brother *Scot*.

The Matter exhibited against me was chiefly my misrepresenting the first baptized Churches about the Ministers Maintenance. I have in *pag.* 9. of the said Book, wrote thus, *viz.* "We ask you whether or no generally the same baptized Churches did not as unanimously conclude and declare it too, that for a Gospel-Minister to have a yearly Allowance or a competent Maintenance, was not an humane Invention, and Antichristian. We speak in part upon our own Knowledg, and by good Information we have had from others, that both those Gospel-Duties (that is, Singing of Psalms, and the Ministers Maintenance) were equally decried, and we suppose you are not ignorant of it: Nay, and we hear some Churches, or Members of those Churches, are of the same Opinion still."

This the seven Brethren say is a great Wrong to the first baptized Churches, and their Request and Determination hereupon was, that I should acknowledg my Error in Print, or otherwise. Now because I have declared this Mistake and Wrong to the said Churches in Print, I cannot to the Satisfaction of all clear them, unless I print my Acknowledgment; and I am ready also to acknowledg it otherwise, as indeed I have done particularly to the offended Brethren.

Nor do I think it grievous to me to retract any Fault or Error this way; but contrariwise; since I have seen a Confession of Faith, put forth by several Brethren in Behalf of themselves and seven of the first baptized Churches in *London*, published in the Year 1644, I am glad I have this to say for the clearing of the said baptized Churches in this great Case; though I declare to you I knew nothing of that Confession till I was informed of it by the offended Brethren, which was about a Fortnight before the last Assembly met together, which was not till after their Books were printed and dispersed into the Country, and I told them then, I was willing forthwith to acknowledg my Error in Print; but afterwards, notwithstanding, they published their Books in and about this City.

And, Brethren, such is my Love to the Baptized Churches (if I know my own Heart) and for the Truth of Christ as 'tis professed by them, that I would suffer any thing in my Name or otherwise to promote their Honour and Reputation in the World.

Therefore with hearty Sorrow, according to the Determination of the seven Brethren, I do now acknowledg my Error in this matter (though it was through Ignorance done) yet I ought to have inquired further about that Business before I published any such thing about it. As to what I speak of my own Knowledg, all impartial Men must believe could not refer to those first baptized Churches in *London*, I being but about four Years old when that Confession of Faith was first printed, and but about eleven (as it appears) when it was the last time reprinted, but of some Churches in the Countrey of a later Date, and since it hath been received by the baptized

Churches from their first being planted, *viz.* that they who preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel. I hope all the Churches will accordingly to their utmost Abilities discharge their Duties to their Ministers herein, with all Faithfulness, and not expose them to the Cares and Incumbrances of the Affairs or the World, to get their own Bread.

Secondly, our Brethren also were offended with me for some hard Expressions which they alledged against me in the Assembly, as they are written in the said Answer to Mr. *Steed's* Epistle.

The first Offence is in *pag.* 3. *l.* 15, to 20. in these Words, *viz.* "And it seems as if the Sermon you formerly preached against this Truth of Christ was *that muddy Fountain* from whence his Lines (*viz.* Mr. *Marlow*) proceeded."

Thirdly, In *pag.* 11. *l.* 6, to 10. in these Words, "Brother, 'tis a hard Case Prejudice against an Ordinance should so blind your Eyes, that with all your Learning you should not know what Singing is, but conclude simple praising of God in Prayer is Singing." These words the seven Brethren call unbrotherly Censures: to which Determination I submit.

4th Offence is in *pag.* 4. *l.* 1, 2, 3. *viz.* "But 'tis like you foresaw some great Advantage by your Essay, in that you find some of your People so hardened and prejudiced against Singing the Praises of God."

5th Offence is in *pag.* 5. *l.* 13 to 16. *viz.* "To suggest that Satan may beguile them by their adhering to this Ordinance of singing Psalms in God's Worship, shews you are of a bitter and very censorious Spirit—."

The seven Brethren say both these are unsavory Expressions on both sides; that it is as well in Mr. *Steed* as in me: to this Determination I yield also.

6th Offence is in *pag.* 11. *l.* 14, 15. in these Words, *viz.* "As Mr. *Gosnold* once told Mr. *Kiffin*."

This the seven Brethren say is a needless Recital of Names.

I say so too, yet am also sorry I mentioned Mr. *Kiffin's* Name at all on that occasion.

7th Offence is in *pag.* 13. two last Lines: "But what do you mention Mr. *Harrison* for as one on your side, may not we cite Reverend Mr. *Tombs*, Mr. *Gosnold*, Mr. *Jesse*? &c."

The seven Brethren say this was a Recital without Injury.

8th Offence is in *pag.* 14. *l.* 31, 32, 33. *viz.* "We shall examine what you lay down in *pag.* 4. of your Epistle, which seems is the Heads of a Sermon you preached against Singing, after Reverend Mr. *Knowlles* had in the Morning preach'd it up as a Gospel-Duty."

This the seven Brethren say, is an unfair Representation; and, if intended to be the Afternoon of the same Day, as appears by Information, false: to which Determination I consent also. Though I said not in the said Book it was the Afternoon of the same Day; yet I was informed (to the best of my Remembrance) it was the

Afternoon of the same Day: but it appears it was on another Day, and not on that Day: Therefore I am very sorry I did so write.

The ninth and last Offence is in *pag.* 42. where are these Words, *viz.* “Why do you not answer what the Renowned Mr. Cotton, Dr. Roberts, Mr. Sidenham, Mr. Caryl, Mr. Wells, Mr. Jesse, Mr. Knowlles, Mr. Keach, Dr. Wright, Mr. Whinnel, and Mr. Ford have said.”

The seven Brethren call this a Weakness and Over-sight; and if we intend our selves, *viz.* to call our selves Renowned, savours of Vain-glory.

To this I yield and consent also, *viz.* That it was a great Weakness and Oversight to place *Renowned* upon the Head of Mr. Cotton, if the Reader must necessarily conclude all the other Persons mentioned next after are intended in that word Renowned also; but I declare and testify (who ought to be allowed to give the true Sense of our meaning) that we intended it only of Mr. Cotton of *New-England*. — And though some others there mentioned were eminent Persons, and might deserve that Epithet as well as he; yet some others there named we could not look upon to be Men that might be called Renowned; and if we should intend our selves, we were not guilty only of Vain-glory, but of the greatest Folly imaginable: But on this Occasion Reverend and Renowned Cotton was only meant, who hath wrote so excellently and learnedly on the Duty of Singing Psalms, &c. whose Works we never yet saw answered. These were all the hard Expressions brought against me, which those seven Brethren saw any Ground or Reason to take notice of; and I have answered their Result and Determination, and as publicly acknowledg my Errors as the Offence was given, and may be more fully than they intended. I am heartily sorry any thing like a Reflection should pass from me in Print; but if no worse had fallen from the Pen of my Brethren, I cannot see how the Name of God and the Truth should suffer by it, save only that Mistake concerning the first baptized Churches, about the Ministers Maintenance. — Yet if all knew and did consider what I have from my Youth suffered, as a Testimony for the Truth, (as ‘tis professed by us called Baptists) sure none of them could once suppose (if they have the least Charity) I wrote it out of Design to reproach any of the Churches, but looking upon it, had that been true, the Neglect also of Singing of the Praises of God, I mean proper Singing of Psalms, Hymns, &c. was of like Nature, arguing like Imperfection in them, as I conceived.

And since I have been fully cleared by the seven Brethren in the late Assembly of all those hard Words and Reproaches cast upon me by the Brethren in their Writings, (save what is here mentioned) and have been freed and fully acquitted (as ‘tis expressed in the printed Narrative) of *gross Forgery, and of things inconsistent with Christian Sobriety and common Honesty*; and they (that is to say, Mr. Kiffin, Mr. Steed, Mr. Barret, and Mr. Man) are desired, as the Result and Determination of those seven Brethren, to acknowledg their Faults and Abuse of me in Print, (they agreeing to do and stand by what those Brethren should determine) I hope and expect they will do it; nor have I any

just Cause to doubt it of one of them, since he has signified to me in the hearing of one or two Brethren, how much he has been troubled, and that he was willing to contribute towards the Charge of the printing those Books wherein those sad Reproaches are contained, and to call them all in, and to have them obliterated.

Lastly, I desire all who have that Answer to Mr. *Steed's* Epistle concerning Singing, that they would be pleased to send them to Mr. *Richard Adams*, as 'tis ordered by the late Assembly.

But I would not have any suppose I am changed in my Judgment about singing the Praises of God; nay, but by this late kind of Opposition I am the more confirmed in it, with many others; and in a short time you may see the said Answer with some Additions reprinted, though all those things that have offended shall be wholly left out. The Lord cause Love and Tenderness to be exercised, and deliver all from such Temptations as tend to make Divisions in the Churches upon that Account.

From my House by Horsly-down, June 27. 1692

Benjamin Keach.

Reader, Observe that all the three late Books, written on the Controversy of Singing, &c. are condemned by the Brethren in the Assembly, and ordered not to be sold, nor given away, but are all to be sent in to Brother *Richard Adams*, because of those base Reproaches and unchristian Reflections contained in them.

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APPENDIX B

TO THE BAPTIZED CHURCHES, THEIR ELDERS, MINISTERS, AND MEMBERS

The Truth of the Gospel is greatly to be prized, (whether it be concerning the Doctrine or the Institutions of our Lord and Saviour) it is more worth than all the Gold of *Ophir*: And therefore deserves our serious endeavour to obtain it, and our earnest striving to keep it. But while we would appear to be Zealous in pleading for the Truth, we should also follow after Peace with all that contradict the Principles of Religion that we profess, or that would introduce into the Churches a Humane Invention for an Ordinance of Christ. That is, we ought to be careful that we be not provoked by the False Accusations, or undue and causless Reflections of others, in their opposing the Truth that we own, to aggravate any thing more than is meet, lest it stir up Passion more than promote Conviction.

Now for as much as the Seven Brethren to whom in the last general Assembly we submitted to be determined (concerning what we have published in Answer to the Reflections, and the Representation we thereby made of the Actions of those Persons with whom we had to do, in that Controversie about Common set Form Singing) have agreed and declared that we (as well as our Brethren) should in Print, or otherwise, acknowledge that wherein they judge we have exceeded the Bounds of Moderation or Verity in that matter; which we are ready to comply withall as far as we can with a good Conscience. And therefore had made it evident before this time in Print to the view of others, had we not hoped, and in that expectation waited for a private Friendly Conference with Mr. *Benjamin Keach* (with whom we are principally concern'd in this matter) wherein we might mutually have examined in a Spirit of Love and Meekness, where any weakness or miscarriage had lain on both sides, and in a Christian way made our Acknowledgments to each other. And then to have considered what Course might have been used to prevent any offence that therein might be taken by others; which was several times propounded by one of us to Him, and several others of the Brethren. But instead of accepting thereof, we find a printed Paper published (by *Benjamin Keach* aforesaid,) wherein are more Reflections on us, (with a misrepresentation of our Judgment about Singing in the Church,) than

Acknowledgments of his many Mistakes (not at present to give them any other Title) in the said Book.

Moreover, we were many Weeks prevented by a Summons sent us from the Church whereof Mr. *Benjamin Keach* is Elder, delivered to us by two Messengers, with a Letter wherein we were expressly *required* to appear before them, to make good our Reflections against Mr. *Keach*, Printed in our Reply to his Book.

“In answer to which we by a Letter sent them, readily offered to give them a Meeting with any Four Persons that might be nominated by them, (provided they were none of those that subscribed the Epistle to Mr. *Keach* his Book:) And we would chuse Four more; which might meet with them at a convenient Season agreed on by each Party. And then mutually to examine all the Paragraphs in both Books that contain matter of Fact or Reflection, we then declaring that by the Grace of God we should be ready to acknowledge any weakness or failing that might be made manifest in what we had written; hoping their Elder (Mr. *Benjamin Keach*) would do the like in those things that might be justly Charg’d on Him.”

We did not question but they would readily have comply’d with so fair and reasonable a Proposition, whereby our Differences might have been composed, and the Controversie as to the heat of it might have been asswaged, if there should be any occasion to revive it again: But they were silent to us, and returned us no Answer. Therefore not knowing the Reason of that silence; after long waiting we sent again to them the Copy of the Letter aforesaid, with our Names Subscribed to it, and then we had an Answer sent which was Signed by Four Persons, who call themselves Helps in Government; who therein did not only declare therewith that Churches absolute rejecting of our Proposal aforesaid, but also did therein reflect upon us, (without any provocation given them in that Letter) with that Rancour and Bitterness that is more fit to be lamented over than to be repeated. The Lord forgive them, and grant they may have Wisdom and Grace to shew themselves more like Men and Christians in all such Cases for time to come.

We shall not now Repeat or Answer his renewed Reflections or Misrepresentation, but only give this brief account of our selves as follows.

That it was about Six Months after Mr. *Keach* and Mr. *Whinnel’s* Book was Printed, before some of us took any notice of those severe Reflections and false Accusations therein published. Wherein we were unduely and not rightly represented by Mr. *Whinnel* in his Epistle to the Baptized Churches, their Elders, Ministers and Members, though no provocation was given by that Epistle they undertook to answer, there being no reflecting on any of them, or any Answer thereby returned to any of their Books formerly Printed. But that which most of all grieved our Souls, was the exposing (in that Treatise or Book) those that were first in the Truth concerning Believers Baptism to great Reproach and Scandal, contrary to their Publick Declaration in their Confession of Faith so often Printed and Signed by them; and was accordingly practised by them

even beyond their Ability; and yet to have it published in Print to the contrary as a publick Testimony against them, and the Truth they professed, by such popular Persons as Mr. *Keach* and Mr. *Whinnel*, &c. which was greatly aggravated (as that whereby that bitter, false Calumny might have the greater Credit) by the Subscription of seventeen Names (in the Epistle recommending his Book) of Persons being well known in City and Countrey, who without any exception do upon their declared perusal of that Book recommend it as a Sober piece; we say again without any restriction or limitation. All which was the more grievous, for as much as the Publishers of that great Charge might have had full satisfaction from us to the contrary, would they but have made any Enquiry of us about it; had it not been for this and the Challenge therein made, we might have forbore to return any answer. But the sense of our Duty to God, and the respect we have to the Truth we profess, and to the Memory of those precious Churches wherein so much of the Gracious presence of Christ appeared, did engage us that we could not forbear: And it is our grief that there is not a Remedy yet made use of that is large enough to cover or cure that Malady. For as to what He (that is Mr. *Keach*) hath published to the contrary; we fear that retractation, such as it is, or rather excuse, is not sent abroad so far as the Books are wherein that Accusation is inserted. We are apt to think by the scarcity of them, that there are hardly enough to inform the Churches in this City. Besides, we find he is still publishing and dispersing those Books wherein that false Calumny or Charge is inserted: Some of them with a slight Cross on the Page wherein those Reflections are contained, and some of them with none; though it be directly contrary to the determination of the Seven Brethren; to which He did so solemnly consent and submit in the General Assembly. And how it comports with his Advertisement added in the Postscript of his Printed Paper, whereby He intimates, that his Book aforesaid, (which He hath been since selling or dispersing) by the determination of the Seven Brethren in the Assembly, is not to be sold or given away, but is to be sent in to Brother *Richard Adams*, as well as the rest, we shall leave to others to judge. Finally, it still grieves us to behold that He would fasten that Reproach on some of the Baptized Churches, of which we believe He cannot give one true instance; they having all (who are found¹ in the Faith and in Communion together) declared the contrary to be their Judgment, (even that the Ministers in the Churches ought to be maintained by the free Contribution of the Members) by their fully owning the Confession of Faith, wherein that Duty is professed and owned.

But as for what we have Charged on Mr. *Keach* in our Book, we are not as yet conscious to our selves that any thing of it is untrue, as to the substance of it; although in our Answer there might be too much severity in Reflecting on Him, which we desire to own.

¹ The passage might read "sound in the Faith." Cf. p. 5.

Therefore as to what the Brethren to whom the Examination and Determination of the Matter was refer'd, have judged concerning those passages they except against in our Book, which they have presented to us; we shall candidly and sincerely own them, as far as we can arrive to any sence of our Miscarriages or Mistake therein; which are as followeth.

First, In our Book, *page 5. line the last*, we say, "That it's probable that Mr. *Keach* expects to have the greatest Honour, &c."

We do now say it had been more suitable for us to have said the greatest share in Writing that Book, rather than to have used the word Honour.

Secondly, They except against our Charging Mr. *Keach* with Forgery, and things inconsistent with common Honesty; we shall therefore declare that which occasioeed [*sic*] that Expression concerning Him, and leave it to every one's Censure that shall hear of it, or read it.

That we blame him for, is, putting² in the Names of several Persons as Approvers of his Book, who never did subscribe the same. And for satisfaction to all, we shall declare their own words as near as we can.

First, There is the name of *Richard Adams*, who being asked about his Name to the said Book, made this Answer, "That indeed he saw his Name in it, but knew not how it came there."

Secondly, Another Person whose Name is subscribed to the Book is *J. Warner*, who saith, *1st*, "That when the said Book was read to Him, he made Objections against some part of it, as that which they could not prove."

2dly, "That in the Title it's declared to be by several Elders and Members of the Baptized Churches, but He (as he told then) was not under any of those Capacities, being neither Elder nor Member of any."

3dly, "That being urged notwithstanding to Subscribe, He granted that only two Letters of his Name might be Subscribed, but (told them) that by no means he would have any more of his Name written in words at length."

4thly, "He affirms that He never saw the Epistle to which his Name is subscribed: He desiring to see it, Answer was made to Him, *That it was not yet drawn up.*"

5thly, "That He was very much troubled when He saw his Name at large to the Epistle of the said Book, which Epistle (He saith) if He had seen it, He would by no means have had so much as one Letter of his Name to it."

² The original might read "pntting," although "putting" is certainly congruent with the context. Cf. p. 5.

A Third Person whose Name is subscribed to the Epistle is *Thomas Marriot*,³ who saith, That He told Mr. *Keach* when He importuned Him to have his Name set to it, "That He should not consent to have his Name subscribed to it, because of the Reflections that were in it."

These being Three of the Persons whose Names are set down in the Epistle, and these being their own Affirmations concerning it, as is before rehearsed: What to call such practices we shall not at present determine. We do acknowledge the calling it by the Name of Forgery, &c. might have been forbore; we should have left it to others to give it what Title they please.

As for the other Offence, in that we say in our Book, *page 6.* mentioning Mr. *Keach's* taking Gold out of another Man's Mine, made ready to his Hand, and present it as His to the great prejudice of the Author:

We say the Truth of it is well known to most of the Elders who had the hearing of it. But we do acknowledge it was not so well done of us to revive the fame, seeing the Author was willing to put it up, without any further contest about it.

And as for any other harsh Expressions in our Book, either against Mr. *Keach* or Mr. *Whinnel*, we are sorry for them; and we judge we ought to have been careful with milder words to have returned an Answer, whatever their Provocations or Reflections were; imitating therein that Holy pattern of Meekness and Patience which our Lord Jesus hath set before us.

Lastly, Whereas Mr. *Keach* in the Conclusion of his Printed Paper, doth intimate as if He would Reprint his Book which we have Answered, without Reflections, and with additions to the Argument: We shall only remember Him and others, That He in the last General Assembly of the Messengers, did of his own accord, without any one's perswading Him to it, (that we know of) openly declare and solemnly promise more than once, That he would write or meddle no more about the Argument concerning Singing; which Speech of his (hoping He would be as good as his word) was the very reason that some of us submitted to be determined by the Seven Brethren; reckoning thereby there might be a stop put to that troublesome Contest about that Question; whereby we might with the more Amity, Peace and Love maintain our mutual Converse together as in former Times, in those Holy Doctrines and Blessed Ordinances of our Lord and Saviour, wherein through Grace we do agree. But if notwithstanding He shall persist in his Writing and Printing about that Controversie, we shall seriously Examine it: And, if need require, return an Answer to it as the Lord shall enable us. But the Lord grant that he and we may study the things that make for Peace, and wherein we may Edifie one another.

³ In the original from which my copy was made, someone struck out the name *Thomas* and inserted the name *Richard*.

*William Kiffin,
George Barrette,
Robert Steed,
Edward Man.*

FINIS.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James C. ("Jimmy") Brooks received his Bachelor of Arts degree in music from Harding University in 1996 and the Master of Science in Education degree from Harding University with an emphasis in history in 1997. In 1998, he began work on a doctoral degree from The Florida State University's Program in the Humanities as a Teaching Assistant and then later as a University Fellow. While at Florida State, he also received the first Audrey Wilson Scholarship for Study Abroad, which enabled him to spend a summer studying the Italian language in a Florence, Italy language school.

His teaching experience at the college and university level as teacher of record includes courses in American History, World Civilization, Interdisciplinary Humanities of the Western World (Baroque-Enlightenment), and Interdisciplinary Humanities of the Western World (Enlightenment-Postmodern World). He is currently Adjunct Instructor of History at Pulaski Technical College in North Little Rock, Ark., and Arkansas State University-Beebe, in Beebe, Ark.