

# WILLIAM PERKINS AND REFORMATION THROUGH THE INSTRUCTION OF PREACHERS IN ELIZABETHAN PURITANISM

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**ABSTRACT.** This paper envisages a clearer presentation of Perkins' authority as a Reformation preacher mainly by pointing to his humane face, his mundane attitude towards both the royalty and the High Church of his time, precisely because, as it is well known nowadays, preaching back then had no rival in terms of entertainment, and people travelled great lengths in order to listen to sermons given in person. We will thus ascertain Perkins as a Puritan preacher that, exactly as expected of him, set forth to acknowledge the shortcomings in what adequate preaching should be, to expose the decline of preaching in his time, and to encourage the formation of a new generation of servants. All these efforts, combined with his task of presenting theological topics weekly for a general audience—which indelibly marked the lives of his listeners, constitute the traits without which Perkins' personality would not be whole today.

**KEY WORDS:** Perkins, Puritanism, Reformation, simplicity, humanity

## **Introduction**

William Perkins lived during the reign of Elizabeth I, a time of change from many points of view, but especially a time of change for the Church. We will discover a Church of England that is in the process of reformation and because of that, a new emphasis on the value and importance of serious and competent preaching of the Word, but with an inappropriate and untrained clergy for this task, an aging clergyman, confused by historical circumstances, and whose role was to administrate the Sacraments, not the exposure of the Word. Perkins's response to the needs of his time was deliberate avoidance of ecclesial policy and training a competent generation of preachers. In his vision Reformation comes by training. In this sense, Perkins will use all the possible tools: activity as a teacher at Cambridge, his own preaching work, his publishing activity, the pastoral mentoring and the prophesying conferences.

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### **Historical Background and the Sate of Preaching in Perkins' time**

For a clearer understanding of William Perkins' activity, a brief description of the historical, theological, social, and ecclesiastical background is necessary. The evaluation of preachers and preaching by competent minds of his time ought to be taken into account.

In 1513, approximately fifty years before Perkins' birth, within the Church of England, which was as Catholic as France and Spain (Davies 1970: 3), King Henry the VIII initiated a reform due to political and personal reasons, one that would eventually change the theology and practice of the Church of England. Although Henry himself was not theologically driven to reform the Church, his esteemed advisers such as Thomas Cranmer, Thomas Cromwell, and Hugh Latimer were influenced by the ideas of the Reformation (Bremer 2009: 5), and became "as Skidmore called them, 'pivotal architects'" of the Reformation within the Church of England (Skidmore 2008: 3).

Young King Edward the VI's ascension to the throne had been seen as a true heavenly gift by those who sought the continuation of the Reformation—especially since Edward had been raised, educated, and influenced by men who had contributed to the promotion of the Reformation and since Duke of Somerset acted as regent, who was a staunch supporter of the Reformation (Gonzales 2010: 93), in the first three years of his reign. James Murray states about this time that "during Edward's reign, reformers had the opportunity to experience a remarkable progress because the king desired such changes" (Murray 1771: 10). Things took a different turn when Mary I became queen.

With a tragic and traumatizing history (Weir 1997: 3), and especially with a strong devotion to the Catholic faith inherited from her mother, newly-appointed queen Mary turned the restoration of her maternal faith into "the crusade of her life" (Weir 1997: 6). Doran and Freeman state that "Mary's success of restoring Catholicism was considerable", thus re-establishing traditional worship, increasing the number of those recruited for ministry, the Church's finances had been returned, and monasteries had been reborn (Doran and Freeman 2011: 11).

Taking into consideration the violence and cruelty of her actions along with the disaster in the social life and economic state, it is no wonder that when her death was publicly announced in 1558, Londoners did not blush to sing *Te Deum Laudamus* all day long, with the ascension to the throne of her sister, Elisabeth I, who was Henry's last surviving child (Nichols 1848: 178).

The queen's enthronement rekindled the hope of a new lifestyle for England's population; her reign remained a reference point in the history of England. When Elizabeth passed away, England had totally changed.

According to David Loades, “Elizabeth changed England, which will never be the same again” (Loades 2003: xi). From a religious point of view, the Reformation had been definitively put on the moderate Protestant pathway. The Act of Supremacy and Uniformity, the Thirty-nine Articles, and other measures had definitively set apart the Church of England from Rome, wherefore the Church of England became independent and Protestant for the most part (Whiting 2014: xvi).

Ever since the beginning of the Reformation in England, preaching played a key role in the Church. For instance, the importance of preaching was affirmed in Article XIX of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, which affirms that the visible Church of Christ is an assembly of believers, wherein the pure Word of God is being preached, and the sacraments are administered according to Christ’s order [...] (Leith 1973: 273). Even the leaders of the time considered preaching important. In 1641, The House of Commons passed a bill which institutionalized the lector’s preaching activity (Seaver 1970: 20). Preaching was also very much appreciated by the laymen. Written sermons were a great favourite with them, although live sermons were all the more invaluable. Seaver mentions that preaching had no rival in terms of entertainment; people would often travel great lengths in order to listen to a sermon in person (Seaver 1970: 5).

The great interest for preaching in Perkins’ time was also corroborated by the art of note-taking. Note-taking was taught in schools, wherein students were taught to follow a message and note the Biblical text of the sermon, the doctrines presented by the preacher, evidence, and suggested applications (Mitchell 1932: 33). In contrast to the high esteem for preaching was its practice during Elizabeth’s rule, which coincided with William Perkins’ working life.

Puritan preachers (not just them) acknowledged the shortcomings in the domain of adequate preaching, exposed the decline in preaching, and encouraged the formation of a new generation of servants.

In 1552 (a little before Perkins’ birth), Bernard Gilpin, also known as “Apostle of the North”, spoke the following words in his sermon at the Court of Edward VI: “A thousand pulpits in England are covered with dust. Some have not had four sermons these fifteen or sixteen years and few of those were worthy the name of ‘sermon’” (Carlson 2001: 249).

During the reign of Elizabeth I, during Perkins’ working life, many churches had no pastors (Emerson 1968: 7). Moreover, the quality of their qualification was lacking (Herr 1940: 18). The clergy was “ignorant and unskilled, many were incapable of preaching, let alone read for the edification of their listeners” (Neal 1977: 225).

During William Perkins' time, Edward Dering was invited by Elizabeth I to the Court to preach. In his sermon, he stated he obvious need for laws that resolved the worrying issue of the clergy, laws which would

... keepe backe the ignorant from the Ministerie, whom God hath not called to suche a function, take away your authoritie from the Bishops, let them not thus at their pleasure make Ministers in their Closset, whom so euer it pleaseth them. (Dering and Field 2010: iv)

Moreover, a worthy mention is the objective and competent analysis by Lawrence Chaderton, a preacher preoccupied with the instruction of other preachers. Chaderton, who was a tutor, collaborator, and close friend of William Perkins, describes the preachers of the time as lazy, ignorant, and ungodly, who “neither can, nor will, go before the dear flock of Christ in soundness of doctrine, and integrity of life” (Chaderton 1580).

William Perkins himself was aware of the lack of a competent clergy. In a sermon on Job 33:23–24 entitled *The Calling of the Ministry*, Perkins discusses the rarity of competent servants. He considers that the expression *one in a thousand* is a painfully accurate description that does not necessitate proof for the churches in England of his time. The expression can be interpreted be it among servants, indicating that in the midst of servants the truly dedicated ones are rare, or as referring to the rarity of finding a man amongst many that would become a quality servant (Perkins 1996: 93).

In this historical, theological, and ecclesiastical background, William Perkins comes into action. Before we observe the manner in which he addressed the pastoral crisis, let us acquaint ourselves with William Perkins, the man.

### **Perkins and his “human” face**

William Perkins was not at all a generous man when it came to biographical insights. The source of his biographical information is eventually Thomas Fuller, owing to his two books, *Abel Redivivus or The Dead yet Speaking* (see Fuller 1651) published in 1867 and *The Holy and Profane State* (see Fuller 1841) published in 1841. Historian Ian Breward contributed decisively to the popularization and dissemination of Perkins' life through his unpublished PhD thesis, *Life and Theology of William Perkins* (see Breward 1963).

One could say that he lived a relatively short life, yet remarkable, which almost coincided with the regnal years of Elizabeth I (Perkins 1996: 93). The birthplace is Marston Jabet, the county of Warwickshire, which at the time was a powerful Puritan centre. As for his childhood, William Perkins was born in the family of Thomas and Hannah Perkins in 1558, year which coincides with the first regnal year of Queen Elizabeth I, and died in 1602,

a year earlier than Queen Elizabeth I. There is little information left; Fuller states that everything that can be said about Perkins' first years is that they were marked by simplicity. Fuller also gives a physical description of him:

His stature was indifferent, complexion ruddy, hair bright, body inclined to corpulence, which proceeded not from any laziness, but pulse and pains shall make one fat where God gives the blessing. He was lame of his right hand, like another Ehud yet made the instrument to dispatch many Eglon errors in judgement and vice in conversation. (Fuller 1651: 153)

Beeke and Yuille comment on his right hand handicap and possible difficulties he had encountered in a society of manual labour. His parents, Thomas and Hannah Perkins were part of the middle class or the small gentry of the time, which indicates the fact that William Perkins was raised in a family that had a good economic standing. However, because of the fact that there are no church registry books of the time, there is no information on Perkins' genealogy, see Beeke and Yuille 2015: 13).

In June 1577, when he was 19 years old, abiding by the societal norm of which he partook, which meant enrolling children in tertiary education (Gray 1926: 106), his parents enrolled him as student at Cambridge University, Christ's College. The choice was motivated by the fact that the school was renowned for its puritan beliefs, and subsequently, the place where many Puritan leaders had been formed, such as Richard Rogers, Laurence Chaderton, Paul Baynes, and John Milton (Knappen 1933: 20). It is well known that his tutor was Laurence Chaderton (Breward 1963: 116), described as Pope of Cambridge Puritanism (Leslie and Lee 1887: 430) and that he obtained a B.A. in 1581 and an M.A. in 1584, the year when he also became a tutor in the school he had just graduated from, position which he kept for the next decade of his life. (Bremer 2006: 196).

At Cambridge, Perkins experienced a period of the profane and prodigality (Brook 1813: 129), namely interest towards occultism coupled with excessive alcohol abuse (Cooper and Henry 1913: 535). The measure in which Perkins delved into such behaviours cannot be precisely accounted for; Perkins is not at all generous with autobiographical details. Such an autobiographical moment is mentioned by Perkins when he admitted his interest for astrology: "I have long studied this Art... until... it pleased God to lay before me the prophanenesse of it" (Perkins 1631b). It is not known with accuracy the time and circumstances his inner transformation occurred. There is one account according to which the moment of the awakening of Perkins' consciousness and return to Christ the Lord was generated due to overhearing a discussion between a mother and a disobedient son. The mother, not knowing that Perkins heard the discussion, said "Hold your tongue, or I will give you to drunken Perkins

yonder” (Brook 1813: 129), but the veracity of this story is not acknowledged by all authors. For instance, in Perkins’ biography which prefaces the republication of his works, the author states that some details of the story may be apocryphal (see Perkins and Yuille 2014: ix). On the other hand, Dutch author Jan Jacobus van Baarsel, cited in Victor Lewis Priebe, deems the account authentic and attributes Perkins’ pietistic accents to his dramatic experience of conversion and renouncement of depredation stemming from alcohol abuse (Priebe 1967: 10).

From a theological perspective, Perkins was educated in the Calvinist theology, Cambridge being renowned for this aspect. The professors from Cambridge discussed the double predestination in stricter terms than Calvin had ever intended, probably due to Beza’s influence at Cambridge (Costello 1958: 116-17).

Among the most important personalities who influenced his formative years are Peter Ramus and Lawrence Chaderton. About Ramus’ influence on Perkin’s formation and though, McKim states:

Thus Ramism functioned powerfully and comprehensively in the theology of William Perkins. It served as an organizing methodology for nearly all his published works, most of which had their origins as oral communications in lectures or sermons... It helped him and others to give grounding to the interplay of doctrine and life... Ramism offered the vehicle through which God’s truth could be communicated for the education and edification of the people. It provided the framework in which preaching was done to challenge the mind and stir the heart... It also furnished the tools by which the word of God could be rightly interpreted. (McKim 1985, 516)

Lawrence Chaderton was a “central figure in Cambridge Puritanism” (Lake 1982: 4), being a tutor and then friend for his lifetime, “the most Puritan in direction” (from Cambridge University) and “a well-known preacher of the Gospel”, just as Packer describes him (Carter 1753: 231). From Chaderton, Perkins assumed the moderate, non-conflictual, conciliatory version of Puritanism and his interest towards a solid understanding of the Biblical text. Chaderton created at Cambridge a system of reading the Scriptures in its original languages, Chaderton’s expertise in this field having been attested by his involvement in the translation of the King James Version (Carter 1753: 231).

Moreover, Perkins interacted with Richard Greenham, who was known for his pastoral work at Dry Dayton. About Greenham’s Cambridge Period, John A Primus states that this period refers to his formative years and to him maintaining “important friendship relationships, like that of William Perkins, the first systematic theologian of English Puritanism, a central figure at Cambridge in 1580” (Primus 1998: 23). The most obvious

influence on Perkins has been in the area of spiritual counselling; Greenham had discussed this topic many times even in his home in Dry Drayton. Packer stated that Perkins had become “just like his older contemporary, Richard Greenham” (Packer 2012), a renowned expert in spiritual pathology who had successfully fulfilled his role as spiritual counsellor for those who feared they were lost or spiritually ruined from one reason or another. It is well known that the end of the sixteenth century had experienced an escalation of spiritual disorders, many people experiencing serious doubts regarding their spiritual state. This escalation of inner disturbances had stemmed from a few factors. The first factor was the uncertainty and fear of future from Elizabethan England, which experienced hostility from the Catholic world on the one hand, and on the other hand, it was fighting against anarchic individualism, which proved to be fatal both economically and politically. The second actor was the constant calling of Puritan preachers to introspection, lest the believer should live in self-deceit regarding the condition of the heart; this calling had naturally brought about anxieties. The third factor was the work of the Holy Spirit in that period through the Puritan preaching of the Gospel, which naturally convicted people of sin, fear of hell, or divine rejection (see Packer 2012).

By presenting the formative factors from Perkins’ life, we cannot ignore the exhaustive and extensive reading Perkins displayed. Brooks writes that Perkins had a peculiar knack for reading. He read at an impressive speed, as if he was not reading at all, but he could recite the content so well, that it was evident that he had read the content in its entirety (Brook 1813: 131). Perkins, in his works, demonstrates interaction with various authors. For instance, David Barbee proves in his PhD thesis that Perkins had seriously interacted with the Church Fathers, reading their works and borrowing their parlance (Barbee 2013: vii). Perkins had also interacted with the works of Calvin and with writers influenced by Calvin, such as Martyr, Beza, Francis Junius, Augustine Marloratus, Caspar Olevenius, and Daniel Tossanus. Perkins directly quotes Luther and other Lutheran writers, Martin Chemnitius, Niels Hemmingsen, Andreas Gerardus Hyperius, Mattias Flacius Illyricus, and Victorin Strigel (Marshall 2011).

His studies at Cambridge were brought to a successful conclusion in 1584 with a Master of Arts, after which Perkins was ordained. For a brief period he preaches before convicted felons in the Cambridge Castle, after which he is entitled “lecturer” at St. Andrew’s Church, which is in close proximity to Christ’s College.

Perkins was involved in the public catechising of Corpus Christi College, where he would present theological topics every Thursday night. Those nights left indelible marks in the lives of many listeners, such as John Robinson (Burgess 1920: 48).

Between 1584 and 1591, Perkins belonged to the teaching staff of Cambridge University, having become the most famous fellow of the school (Collinson 1967: 123). Moreover, for a year, between 1590 and 1591, he filled in the role of dean of Christ's College (Beeke and Pederson 2013). In 1595, Perkins resigns from Cambridge in order to marry Timothee Cradock, a young widow—and Samuel Ward prayed with this occasion: “Good God, allow no disaster in this school” (Knappen 1933: 109). The marriage lasted for seven years, wherein the Perkins family had seven children, three of which dying during infancy. Sadly, there is no historical document to elucidate on Perkins as husband, patriarch, or father. Moreover, there is neither biographic nor autobiographic account of the manner in which the Perkins family overcome the pain caused by the death of their three children.

Despite a hectic life, Perkins was a prolific writer. Until his death, his writings underwent eleven editions, comprising fifty small treatises, exegetical works of Galatians, Epistle of Jude, the Sermon on the Mount, and the first three chapters of Revelation. Moreover, Perkins had written about a plethora of subjects: predestination, the Lord's Prayer, Christian living, Roman-Catholicism, Christian security, the order of salvation, and of course, about preaching. His works had been very well received in England, which was reflected in the sales. His works had surpassed famous authors by number of editions and sales, such as Calvin and Beza; in Switzerland fifty editions, almost sixty in Germany, and over a hundred in the Netherlands. His works had been translated and published in France, Hungary, including the territory of contemporary Romania, Bohemia, Spain, Ireland, and Wales (Blacketer 2010: 48).

Perkins died in 1602, a little earlier than the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign, aged 44 years old, due to complications caused by kidney stone. He left behind a tried family—three children who had to be nurtured by Mrs. Perkins, who was with child at the moment of her husband's death, but also grieving the loss of her three infants due to various diseases.

The sermon at the funeral had been delivered by James Montagu, Perkins' closest friend. The sermon was based on Joshua 1:2 and entitled, “Moses my servant is dead”. Montagu eulogistically highlighted Perkins' education, character, efforts, and influence.

### **Perkins' Intentions: Reformation through Instruction**

Perkins lived through complicated and delicate times wherein the Reformation was applied to the Church of England. It is noteworthy to stress his lack of interest regarding politics and struggle for ecclesiastical power, his conviction affirmed that renewal comes through different means. Perkins' main weapon was the instruction of believers in general, but

especially the instruction and equipping of Church servants. During Perkins' times, the Presbyterian wing of the Puritan movement suffered the fiercest opposition and defeat from the Elizabethan Church and the State. The failure of imposing the Presbyterian ecclesiastical leadership and other ideals led to a recalibration of Puritan powers towards a Reformation of moral and spiritual nature, "William Perkins being the central figure of this change of direction" (Leif 2016:62-63). Regarding the role Perkins identified and appropriated, Blacketer states:

William Perkins was as committed to the Church of England as he was convinced of Reformed theology. He was optimistic about the potential of sound and energetic preaching to gradually transform the Church of England into the Reformed church that it was in name. Perkins identified the locus of true reform as the human heart and conscience; thus he took very seriously his calling to help prepare sound and effective preachers. Institutional and liturgical reform in the English Church would have to be regal, dependent upon the established authorities, but spiritual reform of the people would have to be rhetorical, dependent upon the preaching of the word. (Blacketer 2010: 216)

Therefore, reformation by instruction had become the cause to which he had dedicated all his might and impetus. As for the wider audience, Perkins achieved his purpose through his theological and practical writings, simple preaching that was adapted to the audience, and through pastoral assistance.

Reformation through instruction meant the production of a significant number of theological writings. Perkins was aware that the basis of renewal of spiritual and moral life of a congregation lies on a thorough and Scriptural understanding of the Reformed doctrine on the justification by faith exclusively. Therefore, it is no wonder that, "in his role as a theologian, Perkins was motivated by the obvious carefulness towards the articulation and defence of the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith" (Priebe 1967: 23). The moral reform cannot proceed as long as men consider human effort expressed by works as the foundation of their salvation. For this reason, Perkins planned on "exalting the grace of God" and "destroying vigilante pride of every man or religion" (Perkins 2014: 645). Perkins was aware that instruction can be hindered by the student's lack of technical and academic vocabulary, therefore he employed accessible parlance and he simplified theological discussion that were renowned for their complexity. Therefore, William Perkins' theological writings are extremely practical, so that the believer can be assisted in the process of renewal of his or her life. His writings touch on sensitive issues: the believer's struggle with doubts, spiritual warfare, rebuilding one's spiritual life after falling into sin, anger management, bearing the cross patiently, comfort in the face of death. In

his presentation of the Sermon on the Mount on the need for thorough understanding of the Scriptures, Perkins states that its purpose is equipping the disciples and all the followers so that they might “live a godly, righteous, and blessed life” (Perkins 1631: xxxviii), which is exactly what Perkins pursued as a theologian.

For the Reformation by instruction, Perkins used not only his writings, but also preaching. In this respect, it is noteworthy the burning desire to apply the Lord’s promises particularly and personally to his listeners (Priebe 1967: 24). With the same purpose in mind, Perkins preached and promoted a plain style, thus facilitating understanding, interaction, and assimilation of the message by the laymen (Mosse considers that this very element of Perkins’ preaching philosophy accounted for his fame and influence, see Mosse 1957: 48). Fuller, commenting on this ability, stated that both the expert and the lay can learn from his sermon due to the fact that “Perkins brought school to the pulpit, and by discarding complicated terms, he offered nurturing food to the people through an accessible parlance” (Fuller 1841: 831). Yet Perkins’ preaching was not only clear but also profoundly relevant. Perkins supplied to the needs of the congregations of the time. Long stated that Perkins was “profoundly relevant”, seeking to apply the Scriptures “to the day and age of his life”, the diversity of the tackled topics was proof of the genuine desire to be relevant (Perkins preached about witchcraft, salvation, eschatology, family life, or preaching, and avoided the trend of his age, overly preoccupied with interminable ecclesiastical debates, especially on how the Church is governed, see Long 1989: 3). For Perkins, preaching meant building a bridge between the Word and the world. Perkins refused adamantly to separate theology from the daily life (Long 1989: 4).

In order to fulfil his purpose, Perkins used pastoral work besides his writings and sermon. As a pastor, Perkins was preoccupied with encouraging and comforting those with a troubled conscience. His pastoral care and competence in the domain can be observed in his works *Consolations for the Troubled and Distressed Consciences of Repentant Sinners* and his more complex and famous work, *Cases of Consciences*. Packer stated that Perkins became “just like his older contemporary, Richard Greenham” (Packer 2012), a renowned expert in spiritual pathology who had successfully fulfilled his role as spiritual counsellor for those who feared they were lost or spiritually ruined from one reason or another. (It is well known that the end of the sixteenth century had experienced an escalation of spiritual disorders, many people experiencing serious doubts regarding their spiritual state. This escalation of inner disturbances had stemmed from a few factors. The first factor was the uncertainty and fear of future from Elizabethan England, which

experienced hostility from the Catholic world on the one hand, and on the other hand, it was fighting against anarchic individualism, which proved to be fatal both economically and politically. The second actor was the constant calling of Puritan preachers to introspection, lest the believer should live in self-deceit regarding the condition of the heart; this calling had naturally brought about anxieties. The third factor was the work of the Holy Spirit in that period through the Puritan preaching of the Gospel, which naturally convicted people of sin, fear of hell, or divine rejection, see Packer 2012). Skilful in dealing with such predicaments owing to Greenham's influence, Perkins had become useful by spiritually counselling many troubled souls, helping them find peace, hope, trust, faith, and a new dimension of discipleship and personal devotion. His wisdom in advising and comforting people's troubled conscience had become so well-known, that the heavy-hearted came from near and far to find comfort in his wise council (Brook 1813: 130). Fuller described him as "an excellent surgeon of heavy hearts and consciences marked by distrust" for a reason (Fuller 1841: 90).

William Perkins was convinced that the Reformation which was so necessary to the Church of England could not have been instilled with unequipped or poorly instructed preachers. Therefore, one of his major preoccupations had been instructing a new generation of pastors. In his times, the students preparing for pastoral ministry were not instructed in preaching, thus sermons relied heavily on oratorical skill and the content was extremely sophisticated, which Perkins planned on changing. Long states that

Perkins rightly insisted that ministerial renewal must begin in the pulpit. Perkins realized that the Church's greatest need was for preachers, not abstract theologians! The Church needs to capture afresh the biblical conviction that God quickens, feeds and guides his people by his Word. A decline in preaching has always run hand in hand with a decline of spiritual life and activity in the Church. If the Church is to flourish there must be a recovery of true biblical preaching from theological college to pulpit. (Long 1989: 5)

Perkins worked earnestly to achieve this purpose using all possible means. Firstly, to the best of his abilities, he used his tenure as fellow at Christ's College in Cambridge and his position as a lecturer at St. Andrew's Church that was in close proximity to the school. Perkins wholeheartedly believed in the role of University in initiating and maintaining the pastoral reformation that the Church needed. Breward states that, as fellow and lecturer, Perkins "exerted a great influence on preaching and pastoral ministry and on the many students who had come for training at Cambridge" (Breward 1965: 77). After many years in New England, John Cotton stated that the reason so many competent servants were trained at Cambridge and not Oxford is

owing to the presence and influence of William Perkins, who taught them what and how to preach (Mather 1820:41). Steve Pointer, in his writings on the second generation of Puritans, which included Perkins, states that they have channelled the energy towards developing a group of highly educate clerics, capable of expounding on the Scriptures thoroughly and clearly, proclaiming a Protestant theology of grace, “Perkins undoubtedly exemplifying these ideals as fellow at Christ’s College during 1584–1595 and in lecturing at St. Andrew’s Church from 1584 until his death in 1602” (Pointer 2001: 68).

Perkins had contributed to the instruction of servants with the help of his preaching. In other words, Perkins used preaching as a didactic tool towards the instruction of a competent clergy. At Cambridge students flocked to hear the sermons of William Perkins and he trained the most talented Puritan preachers of the next generation (Gleason and Kapic 2004: 19).

Besides his academic and lecturing activity, Perkins had seriously contributed to the instruction of preachers through his writings addressed to servants in particular. Lischer states that Perkins’ major contribution lies exactly on the fact that “having worried about the lack of instruction of ecclesiasts, he planned on remedying this deficiency by writing textbooks” (Lischer 2002: 298).

As for pastoral assistance that a competent servant must give to believers, Perkins published two seminal papers in a time when there were no such materials written in English. The first one, *Consolations for the Troubled and Distressed Consciences of Repentant Sinners*, written as a dialogue between a pastor and a parishioner who had fallen into sin, presents pastoral assistance given to such cases, thus helping believers rise above doubts and fears and rejoice in peace and assurance found in their Saviour. The second one is ampler and more famous, *Cases of Consciences*, which aids pastors by offering them practical guidance through many situations. Pastors who are preoccupied with offering pastoral care find advice on how to offer an accurate diagnosis of spiritual and moral problems, and on how to apply general principles to specific situations.

As for his instruction in preaching, Perkins authored and published *The Art of Prophesying* and *The Calling of Ministry*. *The Art of Prophesying*, the textbook which influenced Puritan preaching for well over a century (Hall 2006: 270), includes the information necessary for the formation of abilities which Perkins deems indispensable in the formation of a preacher. Not only is it about exegetical and practical abilities but also theological concepts that are essential to the preacher and preaching. In full accord with Perkins’ preoccupation towards character development, the textbook includes a serious call to the edification and development of a healthy character. In his

treaty *The Calling*, Perkins contributes to the philosophy of ministry. In other words, in this treaty, Perkins presents how the job of a pastor ought to be thought of, what the identity is, and the roles that the servant must fulfil. In a time when pastoral work was not deemed respectable or financially lucrative, Perkins contributes to the formation of a new generation of preachers, teaching them how to think about themselves, helping them understand the unique role they have, and presenting them with the reward attached to the job.

The conferences of prophecy meetings were used by Perkins and Puritan preachers towards the instruction of a new generation of preachers. In these meetings wherein people interested in the Word of God and experienced preachers attended. The pastors in the making presented their sermons, after which they were helped to refine their exegetical abilities and competences in homiletics.

Prophesying or the exercise of prophesying, after Elizabethan Church practices, involved in elaborating two, three, or even four sermons based on the same text in the presence of a voluntary congregation gathered from the surroundings (larger than the usual one) and in the presence of local servants. The procedures were presided over by a moderator; the meeting was concluded by private discussions between the junior preachers and senior servants, which included the correction of the doctrines presented publicly (Collinson, Craig, and Usher 2003: xxvii).

The obvious purpose of these meetings was the eradication of mediocrity among church servants and the formation of a new generation of competent preachers, through whom the Church could flourish.

Another instrument used successfully by Perkins in achieving his aim to which he had dedicated his life was apprenticeship or the instruction under the strict surveillance of an experienced preacher. Cragg describes how in scholastic training, the stress falls on the intellectual formation of a preacher whereas practical competences had been left out of the academic context. It was assumed that these practical abilities were learnt in the parish, method which caused many problems and lacking. The method practiced by puritans, which Perkins subscribed as what is today called “apprenticeship under the tutelage of an experienced and competent pastor”. Practically, a graduate fresh out of university, passionate about serving the Church would literally move and live with an experienced pastor, whose pastoral abilities would be corroborated by the test of time. Perkins’ friend and collaborator, Richard Greenham, developed this model and disseminated it not only in England but also in the colonies later established by the Puritans in the New England (Cragg 1968: 228).

Perkins not only saw the need for Church reform but also understood that achieving and successfully implementing reform depends on the

general instruction of believers, but more importantly on the instruction of pulpit servants. Since the image conjured up by these servants was sombre and thus engendering hopelessness, Perkins planned on contributing to a change of paradigm. In this sense, not only did he write textbooks, but also faithfully fulfilled his role as fellow and tutor at Cambridge and as lecturer at St. Andrews. Moreover, he made use of the practice of prophesying conferences and discipleship under the tutelage of an experienced preacher. Just as history attests, Reformation through instruction had a significant impact, one that could be felt to this day.

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