The Works of
WILLIAM PERKINS

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VOLUME 1

Digest or Harmony of the
Books of the Old and New Testaments

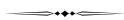*Combat Between Christ and the Devil*

Sermon on the Mount

EDITED BY J. STEPHEN YUILLE

General editors:
Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas

Contents

General Preface

William Perkins (1558–1602), often called "the father of Puritanism," was a master preacher and teacher of Reformed, experiential theology. He left an indelible mark upon the English Puritan movement, and his writings were translated into Dutch, German, French, Hungarian, and other European languages. Today he is best known for his writings on predestination, but he also wrote prolifically on many doctrinal and practical subjects, including extended expositions of Scripture. The 1631 edition of his English *Works* filled over two thousand large pages of small print in three folio volumes.

It is puzzling why his full *Works* have not been in print since the early seventeenth century, especially given the flood of Puritan works reprinted in the mid-nineteenth and late twentieth centuries. Ian Breward did much to promote the study of Perkins, but Breward's now rare, single-volume compilation of the *Work of William Perkins* (1970) could only present samplings of Perkins's writings. We are extremely pleased that this lacuna is being filled, as it has been a dream of many years to see the writings of this Reformed theologian made accessible again to the public, including laymen, pastors, and scholars.

Reformation Heritage Books is publishing Perkins's *Works* in a newly typeset format with spelling and capitalization conformed to modern American standards. The old forms ("thou dost") are changed to the modern equivalent ("you do"), except in Scripture quotations and references to deity. Punctuation has also been modernized in some cases, removing unnecessary commas and changing colons to periods when they indicate a full stop. However, the original words are left intact, not changed into modern synonyms, and the original word order retained even when it differs from modern syntax. Pronouns are capitalized when referring to God. Some archaic terms and obscure references are explained in the editor's footnotes.

As was common in his day, Perkins did not use quotation marks to distinguish a direct quotation from an indirect quotation, summary, or paraphrase, but simply put all citations in italics (as he also did with proper names). We have removed such italics and followed the general principle of placing citations in quotation marks even if they may not be direct and exact quotations.

Perkins generally quoted the Geneva Bible, but rather than conforming his quotations to any particular translation of Scripture, we have left them in his words. Scripture references in the margins are brought into the text and enclosed in square brackets. Parenthetical Scripture references in general are abbreviated and punctuated according to the modern custom (as in Rom. 8:1), sometimes corrected, and sometimes moved to the end of the clause instead of its beginning. Other notes from the margins are placed in footnotes and labeled, "In the margin." An introduction to each volume by its editor orients the reader to its contents.

The projected *Works of William Perkins* will include ten volumes, including four volumes of biblical exposition, three volumes of doctrinal and polemical treatises, and three volumes of ethical and practical writings. A breakdown of each volume's contents may be found inside the cover of this book.

If it be asked what the center of Perkins's theology was, then we hesitate to answer, for students of historical theology know that this is a perilous question to ask regarding any person. However, we may do well to end this preface by repeating what Perkins said at the conclusion of his influential manual on preaching, "The sum of the sum: preach one Christ by Christ to the praise of Christ."

—Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas

Biographical Preface

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William Perkins,
the "Father of Puritanism"

Elizabeth I, one of England's most famous monarchs, was born in 1533 as the fruit of that fateful union between Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. In 1558, after the death of her Protestant half-brother, Edward, and the death of her Roman Catholic half-sister, Mary, she ascended the throne. She was immediately besieged from all sides. Domestically, she struggled with the religious establishment, pursuing a *via media* through the entrenched factions. Internationally, she had to contend with numerous enemies, culminating in the Spanish Armada's thwarted invasion in 1588. But Elizabeth withstood it all and turned England into the foremost Protestant power by the time of her death in 1603.

Coinciding with the years of Elizabeth's illustrious reign was the life of one of England's most influential theologians, William Perkins.[1] Scholars have described him as "the principal architect of Elizabethan Puritanism," "the Puritan theologian of Tudor times," "the most important Puritan writer," "the prince of Puritan theologians," "the most famous of all Puritan divines," and

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1. For a brief account of Perkins's life, see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 43:781–84. Also see Joel R. Beeke and Randall Pederson, *Meet the Puritans* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), 469–80; Ian Breward, ed., introduction to *The Works of William Perkins*, Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics, no. 3 (Appleford, U.K.: Sutton Courtenay, 1970), 3:3–131; Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans* (1813; repr., Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1996), 2:129–36; Charles Cooper and Thompson Cooper, *Athenae Cantabrigiensis 1586–1609* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1861), 2:335–41; Thomas Fuller, *Abel Redevivus: or, The Dead Yet Speaking. The Lives and Deaths of the Modern Divines* (London, 1651), 431–40; Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State* (Cambridge, 1642), 88–93; and Samuel Clark, *The Marrow of Ecclesiastical History, Contained in the Lives of one hundred forty-eight Fathers, Schoolmen, First Reformers, and Modern Divines* (London, 1654), 850–53.

"the father of Puritanism."[2] Some have gone so far as to include him—along with John Calvin and Theodore Beza—in "the trinity of the orthodox."[3]

This brief essay provides a summary of Perkins's early life and education; his ministry, writings, and legacy; and his theology and piety. Each of the projected ten volumes of this edition of his works will contain an introductory essay in which Perkins's theology will be treated in greater depth correlative to the contents of the particular volume.

Perkins's Early Life and Education

Perkins's stature as an eminent theologian is all the more noteworthy given his less than auspicious start in life. He was born to Thomas and Hannah Perkins in the village of Marston Jabbet (near Coventry) in Bulkington Parish of Warwickshire. Very little is known of him until he enrolled at Christ's College, Cambridge, at nineteen years of age. The university had been highly influential

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2. There is a great deal of confusion surrounding the meaning of the term *Puritan*. Richard Greaves attributes this to the term's "multiplicity of meanings" in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. "The Puritan-Nonconformist Tradition in England, 1560–1700: Historiographical Reflections," *Albion* 17 (1985): 449. For definitions, see Ian Breward, "The Abolition of Puritanism," *Journal of Religious History* 7 (1972): 20–34; Paul Christianson, "Reformers and the Church of England under Elizabeth I and the Early Stuarts," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31 (1980): 463–82; Patrick Collinson, "A Comment: Concerning the Name Puritan," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31 (1980): 483–88; Michael Finlayson, "Puritanism and Puritans: Labels or Libels?" *Canadian Journal of History* 8 (1973): 203–23; Basil Hall, "Puritanism: The Problem of Definition," in *Humanists and Protestants: 1500–1900* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), 237–54; Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London: Panther Books, 1969), 15–30; Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2002), 237–59; John Morgan, *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes Towards Reason, Learning, and Education, 1560–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 9–22; J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1990), 21–48; Leonard Trinterud, "The Origins of Puritanism," *Church History* 20 (1951): 37–57; and J. Stephen Yuille, *Puritan Spirituality: The Fear of God in the Affective Theology of George Swinnock*, Studies in Christian History and Thought (Milton Keynes, U.K.: Paternoster, 2007), 5–17. In this essay, we use the term *Puritan* in reference to those who desired to reform the Church of England and promote a life of godliness consistent with the Reformed theology of grace. J. I. Packer writes, "Puritanism was an evangelical holiness movement seeking to implement its vision of spiritual renewal, national and personal, in the church, the state, and the home; in education, evangelism, and economics; in individual discipleship and devotion, and in pastoral care and competence…. It was Perkins, quite specifically, who established Puritanism in this mould." *An Anglican to Remember—William Perkins: Puritan Popularizer* (London: St. Antholin's Lectureship Charity, 1996), 1–2.

3. John Eusden, *Puritans, Lawyers, and Politics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1958), 11; Paul Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships: The Politics of Religious Dissent, 1560–1662* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1970), 114; Christopher Hill, *God's Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 38; and Packer, *Anglican to Remember,* 1.

in the English Reformation. From 1511 to 1514, Desiderius Erasmus lectured in Greek there while preparing his translation of the New Testament. Within ten years, William Tyndale prepared his English translation from Erasmus's text. By the 1520s, Martin Luther's works were circulating among scholars. In 1534, Cambridge accepted Parliament's Act of Supremacy, thus recognizing the king as the head of the Church of England. In 1549 the divinity chair was offered to Martin Bucer, thereby demonstrating the success of the Cambridge reformers.[4]

At this decidedly Protestant institution, Perkins began his lifelong studies in 1577, entering Christ's College as a pensioner, suggesting that socially his family stood on the borderline of the gentry.[5] Perkins soon made a name for himself, but not for the reasons we might expect. "Quickly the wild fire of his youth began to break out," notes one biographer.[6] Another declares that he "was profane and prodigal, and addicted to drunkenness."[7] But Perkins soon came under the godly influence of Laurence Chaderton (his personal tutor), Richard Rogers, Richard Greenham, and others.[8] More importantly, God began to work in Perkins's heart, producing deep conviction for sin. Benjamin Brook records a particularly noteworthy incident in which God brought Perkins face-to-face with his wretchedness: "As he was walking in the skirts of the town, he heard a woman say to a child that was forward and peevish, 'Hold your tongue, or I will give you to drunken Perkins yonder.'"[9] The exact details of this story might be apocryphal, but Perkins's personal transformation was certainly real. Burdened with the weight of his sin, he turned to the Savior of sinners. After he surrendered his wicked ways, he soon joined Chaderton, "the pope of Cambridge Puritanism," in a spiritual brotherhood along with Rogers, Greenham, and others.[10]

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4. Harry Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 51.

5. A *pensioner* paid the commons—that is, the common expenses of the college. A *sizar* was unable to pay the commons and, therefore, worked during his college career. A *scholar* was not required to pay the commons because the college waved his expenses due to his exceptional academic potential.

6. Fuller, *Abel Redevivus*, 432.

7. Cooper and Cooper, *Athenae Cantabrigiensis*, 2:335.

8. Joel R. Beeke, "Laurence Chaderton: An Early Puritan Vision for Church and School," in *Church and School in Early Modern Protestantism: Studies in Honor of Richard A. Muller on the Maturation of a Theological Tradition,* ed. Jordan J. Ballor, David S. Sytsma, and Jason Zuidema (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 321–37.

9. Brook, *Lives of the Puritans*, 2:129; and Cooper and Cooper, *Athenae Cantabrigiensis*, 2:335.

10. Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 125. Cf. Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

With renewed enthusiasm, Perkins devoted himself to his studies, receiving his bachelor's degree in 1581 and his master's degree in 1584. He was an industrious student. According to Thomas Fuller, "[Perkins] had a rare felicity in speedy reading of books, and as it were but turning them over would give an exact account of all considerables therein…. He took strict notice of all passages, as if he had dwelt on them particularly; perusing books so speedily, one would think he read nothing; so accurately, one would think he read all."[11]

Perkins's Ministry

At some point during his studies, Perkins began to preach on Sundays to the prisoners at Cambridge castle. Apparently, he pronounced "the word *damn* with such an emphasis as left a doleful echo in his auditors' ears a good while after."[12] Moreover, he applied "the terrors of the law so directly to the consciences of his hearers that their hearts would often sink under conviction."[13] His preaching was instrumental in delivering many from spiritual bondage. Samuel Clark tells of an occasion when Perkins confronted a condemned prisoner who was climbing the gallows looking "half-dead."[14] Perkins said to the man: "What is the matter with you? Are you afraid of death?" The prisoner confessed that he was less afraid of death than of what would follow. Perkins responded, "Come down again man, and you will see what God's grace will do to strengthen you." The prisoner complied. Kneeling together, Perkins offered "such an effectual prayer in confession of sins…as made the poor prisoner burst out into abundance of tears." Convinced the prisoner was brought "low enough, even to hell's gates," Perkins showed him the freeness of the gospel. Clark comments that the prisoner's eyes were opened "to see how the black lines of all his sins were crossed and cancelled with the red lines of his crucified Savior's precious blood; so graciously applying it to his wounded conscience, as made him break out into new showers of tears for joy of the inward consolation which he found." The prisoner climbed cheerfully up the ladder, testified of salvation in Christ's blood, and bore his death with patience, "as if he actually saw himself delivered from the hell which he feared before, and heaven opened for the receiving of his soul, to the great rejoicing of the beholders."

Perkins's preaching soon attracted people from the town and university. As Fuller observes, "His sermons were not so plain but that the piously learned did admire them, nor so learned but that the plain did understand them."[15]

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11. Fuller, *Holy State*, 91.
12. Clark, *Marrow of Ecclesiastical History,* 851.
13. Brook, *Lives of the Puritans*, 2:130.
14. Clark, *Marrow of Ecclesiastical History*, 852–53.
15. Fuller, *Holy State*, 89–90.

Given his growing popularity as a preacher, Perkins was appointed in 1584 as lecturer at Great St. Andrew's Church, located across from Christ's College. From this pulpit, he reached people from all social classes, being "systematic, scholarly, solid, and simple."[16] The effectiveness of his preaching was due in large part to his penchant for casuistry—the art of dealing with "cases of conscience" through self-examination and scriptural application.[17] Each of his sermons "seemed all law and all gospel, all cordials and all corrosives, as the different necessities of people apprehended it."[18] Equally important, Perkins's personal godliness was a powerful example to all: "He lived his sermons, and as his preaching was a comment on his text, so his practice was a comment on his preaching."[19]

Around the time of his appointment to Great St. Andrew's, Perkins was also elected to a fellowship at Christ's College. He held this position from 1584 to 1595, serving as dean from 1590 to 1591. Fellows were responsible for preaching, lecturing, and tutoring students, acting as "guides to learning as well as guardians of finances, morals, and manners."[20] Perkins served the university in several additional capacities. He catechized students at Corpus Christi College on Thursday afternoons, lecturing on the Ten Commandments in a manner that deeply affected them.[21] He also worked as an adviser on Sunday afternoons, counseling the spiritually distressed. In these roles Perkins influenced a generation of young students including Richard Sibbes, John Cotton, John Preston, and William Ames. In the preface to one of his own works, Ames remarks, "I gladly call to mind the time, when being young, I heard worthy Master Perkins, so preach in a great assembly of students, that he instructed them soundly in the truth, stirred them up effectually to seek after godliness, made them fit for the kingdom of God; and by his own example showed them, what things they should chiefly intend, that they might promote true religion, in the power of it, unto God's glory, and others' salvation."[22]

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16. Packer, *Anglican to Remember,* 3.

17. Ian Breward, "William Perkins and the Origins of Puritan Casuistry," *The Evangelist Quarterly* 40 (1968): 16–22; and George L. Mosse, *The Holy Pretence: A Study in Christianity and Reason of State from William Perkins to John Winthrop* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), 48–67.

18. Fuller, *Abel Redevivus,* 434.

19. Fuller, *Abel Redevivus,* 436.

20. Mark Curtis, *Oxford and Cambridge in Transition 1558–1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 80.

21. Gerald R. Bragg, *Freedom and Authority: A Study of English Thought in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 138.

22. William Ames, "To the Reader," in *Conscience with the Power and Cases thereof* (London, 1643), n.p.

While at Cambridge, Perkins engaged in several controversies. When Elizabeth ascended the throne in 1558, most of the English Protestants who had fled to the Continent during the reign of Mary returned to England. Some were discouraged with the state of the church and desired to remove all remnants of Roman Catholicism. Some of them also desired to reform the church's government on the basis of presbyterianism.[23] These men encompassed a broad spectrum of opinion, yet all shared one common denominator— dissatisfaction with the extent of the Reformation in England. As Neil Keeble notes, "The term 'Puritan' became current during the 1560s as a nickname for Protestants who, dissatisfied with the Elizabethan Settlement of the church by the Act of Uniformity of 1559, would have subscribed to the contention of the Admonition to Parliament of 1572 that 'we in England are so far off, from having a church rightly reformed, according to the prescript of God's Word, that as yet we are not come to the outward face of the same.'"[24]

Perkins never openly allied himself with the likes of Thomas Cartwright, an outspoken proponent of presbyterianism. He had even less sympathy for the separatist movement, commenting, "No man ought to sever himself from the Church of England, for some wants that be therein. We have the true doctrine of Christ preached among us by God's blessing, and though there be corruptions in manners among us, yea, and though they could justly find fault with our doctrine, yet so long as we hold Christ, no man ought to sever himself from our Church."[25] Like his mentor, Chaderton, Perkins worked to purify the established church rather than join those who advocated separation. Instead of focusing his attention on church polity, he was primarily concerned with addressing pastoral inadequacies, spiritual deficiencies, and widespread ignorance within the church. That being said, Perkins occasionally expressed his dissatisfaction over the condition of the Church of England. On January 19, 1587, he was called before the vice-chancellor at Cambridge to give an account for a sermon in which he allegedly railed against "superstitious" and "antichristian" practices.[26] Among other things, he objected to kneeling and facing east while receiving the Lord's Supper. Perkins denied some of the charges

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23. For an overview of the Admonition to Parliament in 1572, see Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988).

24. Neil Keeble, "Puritan Spirituality," in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. G. S. Wakefield (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 323.

25. William Perkins, *A Godly and Learned Exposition Upon Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, in *The Works of William Perkins* (London, 1631), 3:264.

26. Cooper and Cooper, *Athenae Cantabrigiensis*, 2:335; and Brook, *Lives of the Puritans*, 2:131.

while modifying several of his comments. After this brush with the authorities, it appears he intentionally steered clear of such controversies.

In the 1590s, ecclesiastical concerns were overshadowed by more important theological questions regarding the nature of grace.[27] Peter Baro (Lady Margaret's professor of divinity) argued that God's work of predestination is based upon His foreknowledge of an individual's faith and works. Perkins responded with *A Golden Chain* (*Armilla Aurea*), in which he openly challenged Baro's position. "God's decree," writes Perkins, "in as much as it concerns man, is called predestination, which is the decree of God, by which He has ordained all men to a certain and everlasting estate, that is, either to salvation or condemnation, for His own glory."[28] According to Perkins, God executes His decree through four "degrees": effectual calling, whereby "a sinner, being severed from the world, is entertained into God's family"; justification, whereby "such as believe, are accounted just before God through the obedience of Christ Jesus"; sanctification, whereby "such as believe, being delivered from the tyranny of sin, are by little and little renewed in holiness and righteousness"; and glorification, whereby the saints are perfectly transformed "into the image of the Son of God."[29] This golden chain constituted, for Perkins, the definitive word on God's grace.

During his time at Cambridge, Perkins's reputation as a teacher and writer was unrivalled. John Cotton considered Perkins's ministry the "one good reason why there came so many excellent preachers out of Cambridge in England, more than out of Oxford."[30] When Thomas Goodwin enrolled at Cambridge in 1613, a full ten years after Perkins's death, he wrote, "The town was then filled with the discourse of the power of Master Perkins's ministry, still fresh in most men's memories."[31]

In 1595, Perkins resigned his fellowship at Christ's College to marry a young widow, Timothye Cradock. During their seven years of marriage, they conceived seven children—three of whom died in infancy. He continued to preach at Great St. Andrew's Church until his death in 1602, caused by

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27. For more on this controversy, see Mark Shaw, "William Perkins and the New Pelagians: Another Look at the Cambridge Predestination Controversy of the 1590s," *Westminster Theological Journal* 58 (1996): 267–301.

28. William Perkins, *A Golden Chain: or, the Description of Theology: Containing the Order of the Causes of Salvation and Damnation, According to God's Word*, in *The Works of William Perkins* (London, 1608), 1:16.

29. Perkins, *Golden Chain*, 1:78–93.

30. Louis B. Wright, "William Perkins: Elizabethan Apostle of 'Practical Divinity,'" *Huntington Library Quarterly* 3 (1940): 194.

31. Quoted in Breward, ed., *Works of William Perkins*, 3:9.

complications arising from kidney stones, at age forty-four.[32] Expressing the sentiment of many throughout England, Perkins's closest friend, James Montagu, later bishop of Winchester, preached the funeral sermon from Joshua 1:2: "Moses my servant is dead."

Perkins's Writings and Legacy

Perkins's influence as a theologian continued unabated after his death. This was due in large part to the widespread popularity of his writings.[33] Eleven posthumous editions, containing nearly fifty books, were printed by 1635.[34] At least fifty editions of his works were printed in Germany and Switzerland.

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32. Perkins was buried in the churchyard of Great St. Andrews. Everett Emerson, *English Puritanism from John Hooper to John Milton* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1968), 159.

33. Dissertations and theses that contribute to an understanding of Perkins's theology include Ian Breward, "The Life and Theology of William Perkins" (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 1963); William H. Chalker, "Calvin and Some Seventeenth Century English Calvinists" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1961); Lionel Greve, "Freedom and Discipline in the Theology of John Calvin, William Perkins, and John Wesley: An Examination of the Origin and Nature of Pietism" (PhD diss., Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1976); Robert W. A. Letham, "Saving Faith and Assurance in Reformed Theology: Zwingli to the Synod of Dort," 2 vols. (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1979); R. David Lightfoot, "William Perkins' View of Sanctification" (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984); C. C. Markham, "William Perkins' Understanding of the Function of Conscience" (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 1967); Richard Alfred Muller, "Predestination and Christology in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Theology" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1976); Charles Robert Munson, "William Perkins: Theologian of Transition" (PhD diss., Case Western Reserve, 1971); Willem Jan op't Hof, *Engelse piëtistische geschriften in het Nederlands, 1598–1622* (Rotterdam: Lindenberg, 1987); Joseph A. Pipa Jr., "William Perkins and the Development of Puritan Preaching" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1985); Victor L. Priebe, "The Covenant Theology of William Perkins" (PhD diss., Drew University, 1967); Mark R. Shaw, "The Marrow of Practical Divinity: A Study in the Theology of William Perkins" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1981); Paul R. Schaefer Jr., *The Spiritual Brotherhood: Cambridge Puritans and the Nature of Christian Piety* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011); Rosemary Sisson, "William Perkins" (MA thesis, University of Cambridge, 1952); C. J. Sommerville, "Conversion, Sacrament and Assurance in the Puritan Covenant of Grace to 1650" (MA thesis, University of Kansas, 1963); Lynn Baird Tipson Jr., "The Development of a Puritan Understanding of Conversion" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1972); J. R. Tufft, "William Perkins, 1558–1602" (PhD diss., Edinburgh, 1952); Jan Jacobus van Baarsel, *William Perkins: eene bijdrage tot de Kennis der religieuse ontwikkeling in Engeland ten tijde, van Koningin Elisabeth* ('s-Gravenhage: H. P. De Swart & Zoon, 1912); William G. Wilcox, "New England Covenant Theology: Its Precursors and Early American Exponents" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1959); James Eugene Williams Jr., "An Evaluation of William Perkins' Doctrine of Predestination in the Light of John Calvin's Writings" (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1986); Andrew Alexander Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in the Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012).

34. Harry Porter claims that Perkins wrote more than fifty of the 210 books printed in Cambridge between 1585 and 1618. *Reformation and Reaction*, 260–64.

There were 185 seventeenth-century printings of his individual or collected works in Dutch,[35] twice as many as any other Puritan.[36] Perkins and his most influential student, William Ames, impacted numerous *Nadere Reformatie* (Dutch Further Reformation) theologians.[37] His writings were also translated into Spanish, Welsh, Irish, French, Italian, Hungarian, and Czech.[38]

In New England, close to one hundred Cambridge men, including William Brewster of Plymouth, Thomas Hooker of Connecticut, John Winthrop of Massachusetts Bay, and Roger Williams of Rhode Island, lived in Perkins's shadow. Richard Mather was converted while reading from Perkins, and—more than a century later—Jonathan Edwards was gleaning insights from Perkins's writings.[39] According to Samuel Morison, "A typical Plymouth Colony library comprised a large and a small Bible, [Henry] Ainsworth's translation of the Psalms, and the works of William Perkins, a favorite theologian."[40] Perry Miller observes, "Anyone who reads the writings of early New England learns that Perkins was indeed a towering figure in their eyes."[41]

Perkins's writings include discourses on various cases of conscience; treatises on worship, preaching, assurance, predestination, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the errors of Roman Catholicism; and expositions of Galatians 1–5, Matthew 5–7, Hebrews 11, Jude, and Revelation 1–3. His method in writing was multifaceted. At medieval Cambridge, the regular arts course consisted of the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, logic), the quadrivium (music, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy), and the philosophies (natural, moral, metaphysical).[42] Once students completed the bachelor's and master's degrees, they proceeded to the higher faculties such as law, theology, and medicine. Since

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35. J. van der Haar, *From Abbadie to Young: A Bibliography of English, Mostly Puritan Works, Translated i/t Dutch Language* (Veenendaal: Kool, 1980), 1:96–108.

36. Cornelis W. Schoneveld, *Intertraffic of the Mind: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Anglo-Dutch Translation with a Checklist of Books Translated from English into Dutch, 1600–1700* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 220–26.

37. The *Nadere Reformatie* was primarily a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century movement that paralleled English Puritanism in both time and substance. Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) was to the *Nadere Reformatie* what John Owen, often called the Prince of the Puritans, was to English Puritanism. Voetius called Perkins "the Homer [that is, the magisterial classic] of practical Englishmen." Packer, *Anglican to Remember,* 3. Cf. Joel R. Beeke, *Gisbertus Voetius: Toward a Reformed Marriage of Knowledge and Piety* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1999), 9, 11.

38. Munson, "Theologian of Transition," 56–59; and Wright, "Elizabethan Apostle," 171.

39. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction,* 258–60.

40. Samuel Morison, *The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England,* 2nd ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 134.

41. Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1956), 57–59.

42. Charles Mallett, *A History of the University of Oxford* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968), 1:182–83.

the time of Augustine, it was believed that these arts and philosophies provided the necessary foundation for theological study. Generally speaking, the Puritans agreed. Horton Davies notes, "It is erroneous to suppose that the Puritans despised the achievements of human reason because they subordinated them to the divine revelation."[43] While insisting that original sin had ruined humanity's capacity to understand spiritual truth, the Puritans also insisted that humanity retained the ability to penetrate into the mysteries of nature. Consequently, they had no inhibitions about studying the arts and philosophies. They simply studied these authors with great care, believing that regenerate reason could make profitable use of them. Perkins's familiarity with the moralists, historians, and philosophers is prevalent throughout his writings.

In addition to demonstrating the breadth of his learning, Perkins's works show his formal training set within a definite scholastic framework.[44] Laurence Chaderton first introduced Peter Ramus's *Ars Logica* to Cambridge students in the 1560s.[45] Ramus (1515–1572), a convert from Roman Catholicism, proposed a method to simplify all academic subjects—a single logic for both dialectic and rhetoric. The task of the logician was to classify concepts in order to make them understandable and memorable. This was accomplished through method—the orderly presentation of a subject. The *Ars Logica* quickly won the support of many Puritans, including Gabriel Harvey—a lecturer who used Ramus's method to reform the arts curriculum of grammar, rhetoric, and logic. Harvey's presentation deeply impressed Perkins.[46] In his writings, Perkins regularly employed Ramus's method by presenting his subject's partition, often by dichotomies, into progressively more heads or topics, applying each truth set forth.[47]

The margins of Perkins's writings reveal not only his proficiency in the arts and philosophies but also the depth of his reading within a wide theological spectrum. Unsurprisingly, Augustine stands out among the Patristics. Many of the Scholastics and Romanists figure prominently, especially in his polemical works. Most noteworthy, however, is Perkins's familiarity with the Reformers. He did not view himself as an innovator, but a defender of a deposit

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43. Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1997), 6.

44. William T. Costello, *The Scholastic Curriculum at Early Seventeenth-Century Cambridge* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 146.

45. James Bass Mullinger, *The University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1884), 2:404.

46. Munson, "Theologian of Transition," 12–25.

47. Donald Keith McKim, *Ramism in William Perkins's Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), iv–vi. Joseph Pipa demonstrates that Perkins did not slavishly follow Ramus in that he was not locked into the use of dichotomy. "Development of Puritan Preaching," 161–68.

received from those who had gone a generation before him. His writings, therefore, accord with the principles of literal and contextual interpretation established by the Reformers.

Perkins rejected any appeal to these past authors as authoritative, commenting, "The ancient writers will have their sayings and testimonies well examined, and so far forth only to be received as they do agree with the rule of our faith, and the writings of the prophets and apostles."[48] Perkins embraced what he described as Scripture's "infallible certainty," meaning "the testimony of Scripture is the testimony of God Himself."[49] Because Scripture is the very word of God, Perkins viewed it as the means by which God reveals Himself and imparts grace to His people, and this necessarily implied that Scripture must stand alone at the center of the life of the Christian and the church.

Perkins's Theology

Owing to his concept of Scripture's "infallible certainty," Perkins adopted the Bible as the axiom of all his thinking and the focus of all his teaching. To that end, he devised a very simple structure in preaching and writing: exposition, doctrines, reasons, and uses.[50] He was committed to this structure because he believed it was the best way to convince the judgment and embrace the affections, thereby bringing the mind into vital contact with the meaning of Scripture. According to Perkins, the mind is the supreme faculty of the soul. In making this assertion, he was not suggesting that the will necessarily follows the dictates of the mind. Rather, in referring to the mind as the supreme faculty of the soul, Perkins intended to convey the reality that the knowledge of God always begins in the mind because the will cannot choose what the mind does not know. His perspective echoes that of John Calvin, who states, "Let the office...of understanding be to distinguish between objects, as each seems worthy of approval or disapproval; while that of the will, to choose and follow what the understanding pronounces good, but to reject and flee what it disapproves."[51] Here, Calvin describes the proper functioning of the soul as the mind directing the will. There is no suggestion, however, that the will necessarily follows the mind. On the contrary, he writes, "It will not be enough for the mind to be illuminated by the Spirit of God unless the heart is also

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48. William Perkins, *The Forged Catholicism, or Universality of the Romish Religion*, in *The Works of William Perkins* (London, 1631), 2:487.

49. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:219–26.

50. William Perkins, *Art of Prophesying; or, A treatise concerning the sacred and only true manner and method of preaching*, in *The Works of William Perkins* (London, 1631), 2:341.

51. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1.15.7.

strengthened and supported by his power. In this matter the Schoolmen go completely astray, who in considering faith identify it with a bare and simple assent arising out of knowledge, and leave out confidence and assurance of heart."[52] Simply put, the mind is the leading faculty, but this does not mean that the will follows by necessity. Perkins adopted this view of the temporal priority of the mind, remarking, "The mind must approve and give assent, before the will can choose or will: and when the mind has not power to conceive or give assent, there the will has no power to will."[53]

In his actual exposition of Scripture, Perkins practiced Christ-centered exegesis, which stemmed from his great desire and design to proclaim Christ above all else. As recorded in Luke 6:48, Christ describes the wise man as one who "built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock." Perkins viewed this statement as the archetype of true wisdom.[54] To begin with, true wisdom consists of *digging deep*. For Perkins, this is the cultivation of conviction for sin. Without a "ransacking of the heart," we cannot lay a good foundation. Second, true wisdom consists of *choosing a rock*. Our works of righteousness cannot provide any protection against God's judgment. We need to stand upon a secure rock, meaning we must look away from ourselves to Christ for salvation. Third, true wisdom consists of *laying a foundation*. According to Perkins, "This is done by our faith in Christ: for as mutual love joins one man unto another, so true faith makes us one with Christ."[55]

By means of this union, "Christ, with all His benefits, is made ours."[56] In particular, we become the beneficiaries of justification. Perkins writes, "The form of justification, is, as it were, a kind of translation of the believer's sins unto Christ, and again Christ's righteousness unto the believer, by a reciprocal or mutual imputation."[57] This concept of "mutual imputation" flowed directly from Perkins's covenant theology.[58] In the garden God established the covenant of works with Adam and his posterity. That is to say, Adam stood in the place of his descendants, and God gave him a specific commandment.

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52. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.2.33.

53. William Perkins, *A Reformed Catholic*, in *The Works of William Perkins* (London, 1608), 1:553.

54. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:256.

55. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:256. R. Tudur Jones demonstrates that from Perkins to John Bunyan the Puritans stress "union with Christ." He finds it present in earlier Protestantism, for example, in the writings of Calvin, who insisted that there is no benefit unless the Holy Spirit engrafts us into Christ. "Union with Christ: The Existential Nerve of Puritan Piety," *Tyndale Bulletin* 41 (1990): 186–208.

56. Perkins, *Golden Chain*, 1:83.

57. Perkins, *Golden Chain*, 1:82.

58. Perkins, *Golden Chain*, 1:170.

When Adam sinned, God counted his sin as his posterity's sin, his guilt as his posterity's guilt, and his punishment as his posterity's punishment. This gave rise to the need for another covenant—the covenant of grace. Adam has a counterpart—the last Adam, Christ. Just as Adam's "offence" resulted in death and condemnation for his posterity, so too Christ's "gift by grace" resulted in life and justification for His posterity (Rom. 5:15–19). For Perkins, when we believe, we are no longer in Adam under the covenant of works because we have been united with Christ under the covenant of grace, and He has fulfilled the covenant of works on our behalf. This is the framework for his understanding of "mutual imputation"—Christ fulfills the covenant of works, meeting its requirement by His active obedience (life) and paying its penalty by His passive obedience (death).[59]

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59. For a summary of the rise of the two covenants in English theology, see Michael McGiffert, "Grace and Works: The Rise and Division of Covenant Identity in Elizabethan Puritanism," *Harvard Theological Review* 75 (1982): 463–505. For Robert Letham's thesis that covenant theology emerged from factors present within Reformed theology from the very start, see "The *Foedus Operum*: Some Factors Accounting for Its Development," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 14 (1983): 457–67. Some scholars argue that covenant theology is absent from Calvin. In *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), Perry Miller popularized the notion that it was the Puritans who actually developed covenant theology in response to perceived deficiencies in Calvin's theology. By "deficiencies," Miller has in mind Calvin's concept of God's absolute sovereignty, which fails to provide individuals with any motive for moral behavior or any ground for personal assurance (366–74). The Puritans remedied these deficiencies by creating a covenant theology that stressed human duty. According to Miller, Calvin knew nothing of any such system. For a similar view, see Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, 474; and Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1989). For the opposite view, see Anthony Hoekema, "The Covenant of Grace in Calvin's Teaching," *Calvin Theological Journal* 2 (1967): 133–61; Peter Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 126–58; and George Marsden, "Perry Miller's Rehabilitation of the Puritans: A Critique," in *Reckoning with the Past: Historical Essays on American Evangelicalism from the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals*, ed. D. G. Hart (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995). As for the precise relationship between Calvin and the federal theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), there are three main schools of thought. (1) Some scholars argue that the WCF departs from Calvin. While not denying the presence of covenant theology in Calvin, they affirm that Calvin's teaching represents one of two conflicting movements: the Genevan Reformer expounds an unconditional (or unilateral) covenant with the emphasis on God's sovereignty while the Zurich–Rhineland Reformers expound a conditional, or bilateral, covenant with the emphasis on human responsibility. In "Origins of Puritanism," Trinterud's thesis is that Puritan federal theology followed the Zurich–Rhineland tradition as opposed to the Genevan tradition (37–57). For more on the two traditions theory, see Everett Emerson, "Calvin and Covenant Theology," *Church History* 25 (1956): 136–44; Michael McGiffert, "The Perkinsian Moment of Federal Theology," *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 117–48; and Jens Moller, "The Beginnings of Puritan Covenant Theology," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 14 (1963): 46–67. (2) Many scholars challenge this interpretation, insisting there is

Perkins, therefore, insisted that we are saved by virtue of union with Christ through faith. He insisted with equal vigor that saving faith includes far more than intellectual assent. According to Mark Shaw, Perkins's "covenant theology enabled him to follow a consistent line of co-action which gave strong emphasis to God's sovereign grace in Christ as the ultimate cause of salvation while at the same time emphasizing the necessity of human response. The human psyche as created by God needed the sovereignty of grace to deliver it from the condemnation it was helpless to alter while at the same time it needed to apply and respond to his grace."[60] In other words, Perkins did not believe we are simply forced into a state of salvation without any awareness of our own experience. Instead, he affirmed that God proceeds with us by steps, so that we are involved in the process.

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fundamental agreement between Calvin and the Zurich–Rhineland Reformers and, by consequence, a basic unity between Calvin and the Puritans. See Lyle Bierma, "Federal Theology in the Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983): 304–21; and Lyle Bierma, "The Role of Covenant Theology in Early Reformed Orthodoxy," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 21 (1990): 453–62. With slight variations, Hoekema and Lillback share this view. Bierma believes that the notion of a bilateral versus unilateral understanding of the covenant is misleading. It is true that both Zwingli and Bullinger teach that God expects obedience as a covenantal response to His grace. However, this does not mean that God's favor is based upon that response. It is also true that Calvin emphasizes God's sovereignty regarding the covenant. However, he also stresses the individual's response in faith and obedience. These are not the fruit of one's effort, but of the Holy Spirit working within. (3) Still other scholars recognize both the similarities and differences between Calvin and the Zurich–Rhineland Reformers in their approaches to the covenant. In *Theology and Piety in the Reformed Federal Thought of William Perkins and John Preston* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellin, 1998), Young Song refers to this as the "Diversity within Unity Theory" (11). He acknowledges the diversity within the Reformed covenant tradition, yet denies that this stems from a theological division between God's grace and human duty. Rather, he sees the diversity as resulting from a methodological distinction between logical (Calvin) and historical (Zurich–Rhineland Reformers) approaches to the covenant (19). The latter emphasizes a dispensational view of God's covenant revelation, whereas the former applies the covenant concept to the *ordo salutis*, thereby developing a systematic view of God's covenant dealings with His people (27). These are not contradictory, but complementary approaches. Similarly, John Von Rohr recognizes the federalist tradition in distinction from the Calvinist tradition in *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 31–32. However, he is careful to affirm that they merely represent two different emphases; namely, human responsibility and divine sovereignty. Again, these are not in contradiction. The Puritans never opted for one at the expense of the other; instead, they conjoined the two in the covenant of grace (33). Also see John Von Rohr, "Covenant and Assurance in Early English Puritanism," *Church History* 34 (1965): 195–203.

60. Mark Shaw, "Drama in the Meeting House: The Concept of Conversion in the Theology of William Perkins," *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983): 71.

Perkins adhered wholeheartedly to God's sovereign grace in salvation.[61] He believed that "man must be considered in a four-fold estate," namely, as he is "created," "corrupted," "renewed," and "glorified."[62] Before the fall, man's will possessed "liberty of nature, in which he could will either good or evil." After the fall, man's "liberty of nature" remained, meaning he still possessed the freedom to choose.[63] However, man's "liberty of nature" is now "joined with a necessity of sinning, because it stands in bondage under sin." Perkins believed that, in this estate, man's will is appropriately termed by Augustine "the bound free-will."[64] That is to say, man's will is free in the actions it performs, but captive in the way it performs them. In this condition, his heart is so captivated by sin that he has no power to escape from its bondage. For this reason, he stands in need of God's sovereign grace.[65] Although Perkins preached about God's sovereign grace from eternity and God's covenant acts of salvation, he was particularly concerned about how this redemptive process breaks through into our experience. He wanted to explain how we respond to God's sovereign acts—that is, how the covenant of grace impacts us so as to move us from initial faith to full assurance.

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61. Cf. Joel R. Beeke, "William Perkins on Predestination, Preaching, and Conversion," in Peter A. Lillback, ed., *The Practical Calvinist: An Introduction to the Presbyterian and Reformed Heritage* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2002), 183–214. Perkins's supralapsarian convictions will be addressed in additional detail in the introduction to volume 5.

62. Perkins, *Reformed Catholic*, 1:551.

63. William Perkins, *A Treatise of God's Free Grace, and Man's Free-Will*, in *The Works of William Perkins* (London, 1608), 1:709.

64. Perkins, *Treatise of God's Free Grace*, 1:703. Calvin explains, "A bound will, finally, is one which because of its corruptness is held captive under the authority of evil desires, so that it can choose nothing but evil, even if it does so of its own accord and gladly, without being driven by external impulse." *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, ed. A. N. S. Lane (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 69.

65. When it comes to the effect of Adam's fall, Perkins adhered to what is known as the Augustinian principle, which Calvin states as follows: "The natural gifts in men were corrupted, but the supernatural taken away." *Institutes*, 2:2:4, 12, 14, 18. "Natural gifts" refers to the faculties of the soul (understanding, affections, and will) whereas "supernatural gifts" refers to knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). Perkins maintained that both natural and supernatural gifts constitute the image of God in humanity in *An Exposition of the Symbol or Creed of the Apostles, according to the Tenor of the Scriptures, and the Consent of the Orthodox Fathers of the Church*, in *The Works of William Perkins* (London, 1608), 1:153. When Adam sinned, he lost the image of God. This does not mean that Adam lost his faculties; on the contrary, his soul still consisted of understanding, affections, and will. Rather, for Perkins, it means Adam's faculties were no longer characterized by knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, as he writes in *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience, Distinguished into Three Books* (London, 1632), 6. This deprivation of the supernatural gifts had a negative impact upon the natural gifts: man's understanding was darkened, his affections were hardened, and his will was enslaved. Perkins maintained that, void of the supernatural gifts, man is now incapable of doing anything pleasing in God's sight. *Reformed Catholic*, 1:553.

Perkins's Piety

At this point, Perkins's experimental piety steps to the fore.[66] The term *experimental* comes from the Latin verb *experior*—"to know by experience." For Perkins, our experience of the covenant of grace begins with humiliation.[67] God "softens" our hearts by giving us a "sight of sin" arising from our knowledge of the law and a "sorrow for sin" arising from our knowledge of His displeasure.[68] Perkins equated this "pricking in the heart" with the "spirit of bondage," which the apostle Paul mentions in Romans 8:14. "This sorrow," says Perkins, "is called the *spirit of bondage to fear*; because when the Spirit has made a man see his sins, he sees further the curse of the law, and so he finds himself to be in bondage under Satan, hell, death, and damnation: at which most terrible sight his heart is smitten with fear and trembling."[69] Once this "spirit of bondage" takes hold, the result is "holy desperation."[70] Simply put, we recognize that we will never attain salvation by any "strength or goodness" of our own. Perceiving this, we acknowledge that we are without moral virtues adequate to commend ourselves to God and that anything short of damnation is a mercy.

Having thereby softened our hearts, God now causes faith "to breed." For a better understanding of how God cultivates faith in the heart, Perkins appealed to the fact "that a sinner is often compared to a sick man in the Scriptures."[71] His point is that what disease is to the body, sin is to the soul; moreover, the method of curing disease points to the method of curing sin.[72] When we are convinced we suffer from a disease, we immediately call for the doctor. When the doctor arrives, we yield ourselves to his counsel and willingly accept whatever remedy he prescribes. The same is true when it comes to faith in Christ. When we are absolutely convinced of our need, we submit

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66. For more on this, see Joel R. Beeke, "The Lasting Power of Reformed Experiential Preaching," in *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching,* ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 2002), 94–128.

67. For more on this, see J. Stephen Yuille, "Ready to Receive: Humbling and Softening in William Perkins's Preparation of the Heart," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 5 (2013): 91–106.

68. William Perkins, *A Treatise Tending Unto a Declaration, whether a man be in the estate of damnation, or in the estate of grace*, in *The Works of William Perkins* (London, 1608), 1:363.

69. Perkins, *Tending Unto a Declaration*, 1:364. Perkins was careful to acknowledge that this experience of humiliation varies in degree and expression from person to person; that is to say, the issue is not the magnitude of our sorrow, but whether we are convinced that our righteousness is unacceptable in God's sight. "It is often seen in a festered sore," writes Perkins, "that the corruption is let out as well with the pricking of a small pin as with the wide lance of a razor." *Tending Unto a Declaration*, 1:364–65.

70. Perkins, *Tending Unto a Declaration*, 1:365.

71. Perkins, *Tending Unto a Declaration*, 1:365.

72. Perkins, *Tending Unto a Declaration*, 1:365–66.

to His cure. God leads us to "ponder most diligently" His great mercy offered in Christ, and He brings us to acknowledge our "need of Christ," whereby we pray, "O God be merciful to me a sinner.'"[73]

Accompanying this faith is repentance, which Perkins defines as "a work of grace, arising of a godly sorrow; whereby a man turns from all his sins unto God, and brings forth fruits worthy [of] amendment of life." According to Perkins, God produces repentance by "steps and degrees." Genuine repentance consists of seven things: (1) the knowledge of the law of God, the nature of sin, the guilt of sin, and the judgment of God; (2) the application of this knowledge to the heart by the Spirit of bondage; (3) the consequent fear and sorrow; (4) the knowledge of the gospel; (5) the application of this knowledge to the heart by the Spirit of adoption; (6) the consequent joy and sorrow; and (7) the "turning of the mind, whereby a man determines and resolves with himself to sin no more as he hath done, but to live in newness of life."[74]

From humiliation, faith, and repentance, our experience of the covenant of grace moves to obedience. Perkins viewed the law as the point of contact between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace since obedience is fundamental to both covenants. He also asserted that the focus shifts between the two covenants from our obedience to Christ's obedience—the covenant of works having been fulfilled in the covenant of grace.[75] For Perkins, therefore, we are free to obey the law in accordance with the new covenant. In his

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73. Perkins, *Tending Unto a Declaration*, 1:365.

74. William Perkins, *Two Treatises. I. Of the nature and practice of repentance. II. Of the combat of the flesh and spirit*, in *The Works of William Perkins* (London, 1608), 1:453.

75. Holmes Rolston argues that the Puritans distort Calvin's concept of God's grace by defining humanity's relationship with God in legal terms. *John Calvin versus the Westminster Confession* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1972), 36. Also see Rolston, "Responsible Man in Reformed Theology: Calvin versus the Westminster Confession," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970): 129–55. For a similar position, see McGiffert, "Perkinsian Moment of Federal Theology," 118–48. According to these authors, the prelapsarian covenant of works resulted from the Puritans' concept of people as legal creatures whose relationship with God is defined in terms of moral obedience. Accordingly, Puritan federal theology focuses on the conditional covenant in Adam rather than the unconditional covenant in Christ. For Rolston and McGiffert, this entire schema is foreign to Calvin. For the opposite view, see Lillback, *Binding of God*. David McWilliams critiques Rolston's thesis in "The Covenant Theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Recent Criticism," *Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991): 109–24. For him, Rolston's view is explained by his denial of the historicity of Adam (113). In addition, he argues that Rolston's basic problem with federalism arises from his commitment to universalism: "The existential discontent with federalism is the fruition of a basic antagonism to a fundamental element of Reformed theology, namely, *particularism*" (115). For further discussion on the relationship between Calvin and the WCF, see David Weir, *The Origins of the Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

exposition of Matthew 7:21–23, he affirms that those who profess Christ's name seek to do the Father's will.[76] He defines the Father's will in terms of two texts of Scripture. The first is John 6:40, where Christ declares, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." The second text is 1 Thessalonians 4:3–4, where the apostle Paul writes, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour." Based on these verses, Perkins maintains that "the doing of the Father's will" stands in three things: faith, repentance, and new obedience.[77]

Simply put, "new obedience" is the fruit of faith and repentance, whereby a man "endeavors himself to yield obedience to all God's commandments, from all the powers and parts both of his soul and his body." It is called *new* because "it is a renewing of that in man whereto he was perfectly enabled by creation."[78] Perkins believed the affections are the inclination of the soul to a particular object. The soul loves whatever it perceives as good, and this love is manifested in desire when the object is absent and delight when the object is present. Conversely, the soul hates whatever it perceives as evil, and this hatred is manifested in fear when the object is absent and sorrow when the object is present. Prior to Adam's fall in the garden, man's love was set on God, and, consequently, his affections were well directed. When Adam fell, however, the object of man's love changed. In his fallen condition, his love is no longer set on God, but on self. In a state of regeneration, the Holy Spirit renews our love for God, and the result is new obedience. Perkins elaborates, "Sanctified affections are known by this, that they are moved and inclined to that which is good, to embrace it: and are not commonly affected and stirred with that which is evil, unless it be to eschew it."[79]

For Perkins, this experience of the covenant of grace in humiliation, faith, repentance, and obedience was absolutely essential. We must seek "the graces of God's children who are regenerate, even true faith, true repentance, and new obedience, and not rest in other gifts though they be most excellent."[80] He was convinced that many people err at this point because they satisfy themselves

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76. For an analysis of Perkins's exposition of Christ's Sermon in the Mount, see J. Stephen Yuille, *Living Blessedly Forever: The Sermon on the Mount and the Puritan Piety of William Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012).

77. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:245. Perkins sees faith in John 6:40 and repentance (i.e., sanctification) and new obedience in 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

78. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:246.

79. Perkins, *Tending Unto a Declaration*, 1:371.

80. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:249.

with "a general persuasion of God's mercy."[81] But this "general persuasion" is not the same thing as genuine faith and repentance. It may produce "reformation of life," but it never produces "new obedience."

Expectedly, this discussion of "a general persuasion of God's mercy" leads to Perkins's handling of the doctrine of assurance. By the late sixteenth century, the issue of assurance loomed large within the Church of England because of the growing tendency on the part of many to take God's saving grace for granted. As Richard Lovelace explains, "The problem that confronts the Puritans as they look out on their decaying society and their lukewarm church is not simply to dislodge the faithful from the slough of mortal or venial sin, but radically to awaken those who are professing but not actual Christians, who are caught in a trap of carnal security."[82] The early Puritans in particular reacted to dead orthodoxy, which minimized the seriousness of sin and regarded mere assent to the truths of Scripture as sufficient for salvation. It thus became essential for them to distinguish between assurance and presumption. Perkins was particularly concerned with the prevalence of civility within the professing church. "If we look into the general state of our people," says he, "we shall see that religion is professed, but not obeyed; nay, obedience is counted as preciseness, and so reproached."[83] He was deeply concerned, therefore, about awakening a sleepy generation of churchgoers from their false sense of security. As a result, he labored to lead his flock into a well-grounded assurance of salvation.[84]

To that end, Perkins produced several writings in which he explains how we are to search our consciences for the least evidence of salvation based on Christ's saving work.[85] He viewed his efforts in this regard as part of a pastor's fundamental task in keeping "balance in the sanctuary" between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.[86] Pastors had to demonstrate how God's immovable will moved man's will and how to look for evidence of inclusion in

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81. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:247.

82. Richard C. Lovelace, "The Anatomy of Puritan Piety: English Puritan Devotional Literature, 1600–1640," in *Christian Spirituality 3*, ed. L. Dupré and D. E. Saliers (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 303.

83. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:261.

84. Joel R. Beeke, *The Quest for Full Assurance: The Legacy of Calvin and His Successors* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1999), 18.

85. For Perkins's treatment of the doctrine of assurance, see *Tending Unto a Declaration*; *Case of Conscience*; *A Discourse of Conscience, where is set down the nature, properties, and differences thereof, as also the way to get and keep a good conscience*; and *A Grain of Mustard-seed, or, the least measure of grace that is or can be effectual to salvation*. In The Works of William Perkins (London, 1608), 1:353–420, 421–38, 515–54, 635-68.

86. Irvonwy Morgan, *Puritan Spirituality* (London: Epworth Press, 1973), chapter 2.

God's covenant. They also had to instruct their people as to how to make their election sure.[87]

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87. There is considerable controversy surrounding the relationship between Calvin and the Westminster divines' articulation of the doctrine of assurance. R. T. Kendall ignited much of this debate by asserting that the WCF departs from Calvin's belief that "faith is *knowledge*… merely witnessing what God has already done in Christ" and that assurance is "the *direct* act of faith." *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1979), 19–20, 25. For a similar position, see Basil Hall, "Calvin against the Calvinists," in *John Calvin: A Collection of Distinguishing Essays*, ed. G. E. Duffield (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 19–37. Kendall locates the primary cause of this departure in Theodore Beza's doctrine of limited atonement, for it "makes Christ's death that to which the decree of election has particular reference and that which makes the elect's salvation efficacious" (*Calvin and English Calvinism*, 29). Similarly, Brian Armstrong argues that there are "two very different intellectual traditions" operative in the seventeenth century: Scholasticism and humanism. The latter is consistent with the teaching of Calvin whereas the former—although known as Calvinism—actually departs from Calvin. *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), xix. Armstrong points to Amyraut as standing against the tide of Scholasticism by faithfully articulating Calvin's humanistic emphasis, whereas he points to Beza as the one most responsible for the propagation of Scholasticism within Protestantism (38). Richard Muller challenges this view in *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 11. In *Calvin and English Calvinism*, Kendall argues that Perkins adopted Beza's distortions of Calvin's teaching, and his legacy ensured their inclusion at the Westminster Assembly where they received "creedal sanction" (76). On this basis, Kendall concludes that the WCF "hardly deserves to be called Calvinistic" (212). Gordon Keddie makes the same argument in "Unfallible Certenty of the Pardon of Sinne and Life Everlasting: The Doctrine of Assurance in the Theology of William Perkins (1558–1602)," *Evangelical Quarterly* 48 (1976): 242–43. For the opposite opinion, see Richard Muller, "Perkins' *A Golden Chain*: Predestination System or Schematized Ordo Salutis," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 9 (1978): 69–81. For critical reviews of Kendall's thesis, see Paul Helm, "Calvin, English Calvinism and the Logic of Doctrinal Development," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34 (1981): 179–85; Anthony Lane, "Review of R. T. Kendall's *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*," *Themelios* 6 (1980): 29–31; and W. Stanford Reid, "Review of R. T. Kendall's *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*," *Westminster Theological Journal* 43 (1980): 155–64. Also see Robert Letham, "Faith and Assurance in Early Calvinism: A Model of Continuity and Diversity," in *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives*, ed. W. F. Graham (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1992), 355–88. Opponents levy two major criticisms. First, Kendall's assertion that Calvin believed in universal atonement is not conclusive. For the various views, see Roger Nicole, "John Calvin's View of the Extent of the Atonement," *Westminster Theological Journal* 47 (1985): 197–225; M. Charles Bell, "Calvin and the Extent of the Atonement," *Evangelical Quarterly* 55 (1983): 115–23; Hans Boersma, "Calvin and the Extent of the Atonement," *Evangelical Quarterly* 64 (1992): 333–55; W. Robert Godfrey, "Reformed Thought on the Extent of the Atonement to 1618," *Westminster Theological Journal* 37 (1975): 133–71; and Stephen Strehle, "The Extent of the Atonement and the Synod of Dort," *Westminster Theological Journal* 51 (1989): 1–23. For an extensive treatment of this subject, see G. Michael Thomas, *The Extent of the Atonement: A Dilemma for Reformed Theology from Calvin to the Consensus (1536–1675)* (Bletchley, U.K.: Paternoster, 1997). Second, Kendall's assertion that Calvin defines faith exclusively as an act of the mind is inadequate. Both Lane and Reid argue

According to Perkins, one of the principal means by which God imparts assurance is the covenant of grace. The golden chain of salvation (predestination, calling, justification, sanctification, and glorification) is linked to us through the preaching of God's gracious covenant. Perkins pointed to this covenant as a basis for assurance, maintaining that God becomes our God by means of the gracious covenant propounded in the gospel, promising pardon of sin in Christ. "What must we do to say truly and in assurance that God is our God?" Here are the basics of Perkins's answer:

> We must for our parts make a covenant with Him, unto which is required consent on either party; first on God's part, that He will be our God.… On our part is required consent.… When we receive the sacraments… there is required in our consent a further degree which stands in an outward consent of the heart, whereby a man takes God for his God; which is then begun, when first a man acknowledges and bewails his sins…when he endeavors to be reconciled to God…when he purposes never to sin again. When this covenant is thus concluded by consent of both parties, a man may safely and truly say that God is his God. Now seeing we know these things, our duty is to labor to be settled and assured.… First in this assurance is the foundation of all true comfort: all the promises of God are hereupon grounded…and not only is it the foundation of all comfort in this life, but of all happiness after death itself…for by virtue of this covenant shall we rise again after death to life, glory, and immortality.[88]

Clearly, as far as Perkins was concerned, we are active in terms of our covenant relation with God. Yet he acknowledged that we never glean assurance from a conditional covenant alone, for human conditionality can never answer all the questions conjoined with human depravity and divine sovereignty. For Perkins, the covenant also contains an absolute relationship. Assurance does not flow from the covenant's conditional nature, which is connected to our

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that Calvin never restricts faith to the mind; rather, he believes that faith begins in the mind and proceeds to the heart, where it provokes a response. Joel Beeke adopts an entirely different view from Kendall regarding the relationship between Calvin and the WCF, commenting, "The difference between Calvin and the Calvinists is substantial and developmental, but *not* antithetical as Hall and Kendall advocate." *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 20. Also see Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982), 25–26. Although the Puritans gave practical and mystical syllogisms a more intrinsic role than Calvin, they continued to regard the promises of God as the primary ground for assurance. Also, they distinguished between an initial act of faith and a fully developed assurance while insisting that the latter proceeds from the former.

88. William Perkins, *A Godly and Learned Exposition Upon the Whole Epistle of Jude*, in *The Works of William Perkins* (London, 1631), 3:520.

performance, but from the covenant's absolute nature, which is grounded in God's gracious being and promises. Perkins comments, "God has spoken to us; He has made promise of blessing to us; He has made covenant with us; and He has sworn unto us. What can we more require of Him? What better ground of true comfort [is there]?" He adds, "The promise is not made to the work, but to the worker, and to the worker, not for the merit of his work, but for the merit of Christ."[89] Although Perkins encouraged people to strive after assurance, he ultimately pointed them to the one-sided grace of God, declaring that the covenant itself is a divine gift rooted in the merits of Christ. Assurance, in the final analysis, rests on God's faithfulness to His covenant promises, making even the fulfillment of the condition of faith on our part possible only by God's gracious gift.

Perkins understood that faith is a supernatural gift by which we take hold of Christ with all the promises of salvation. The object of faith is Christ alone. Faith first sees Christ as the sacrifice on the cross for the remission of sins, then learns to experience Him as the strength to battle temptation, the comfort to endure affliction, and ultimately as everything needed in this life and the life to come. In sum, faith shows itself when "every several person does particularly apply unto himself, Christ with His merits, by an inward persuasion of the heart which comes none other way, but by the effectual certificate of the Holy Ghost concerning the mercy of God in Christ Jesus."[90]

Faith, therefore, has no meaning apart from Christ. "Faith is…a principal grace of God, whereby man is engrafted into Christ and thereby becomes one with Christ, and Christ one with him."[91] Perkins's numerous references to faith as an "instrument" or "hand" must be understood in this context. Faith is a gift of God's sovereign pleasure that moves us to respond to Christ through the preaching of the word. Perkins's use of the term "instrument" or "hand" conveys the simultaneously passive and active role of faith in this redemptive activity. As Hideo Oki writes, "The connotation of 'instrument' suggests activity. This activity, however, is never simply 'positive'; on the contrary, it means that when it is most active, then it is moved and used by something other and higher than itself. Thus, in the midst of activity there is passivity, and in the midst of passivity it [is] most efficient in activity."[92] This is precisely what Perkins intended. Initially, faith is the passive "instrument," or "hand," granted by

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89. William Perkins, *A Commentary or Exposition Upon the Five First Chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians*, in *The Works of William Perkins* (London, 1631), 2:243, 393.
90. Perkins, *Golden Chain,* 1:79–80.
91. Perkins, *Cases of Conscience*, 45.
92. Hideo Oko, *Ethics in Seventeenth Century English Puritanism* (ThD diss., Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1960), 141.

God to the sinner to receive Christ. Yet precisely at the moment when Christ is received, faith responds to the gift of grace. Thus, the response is most active when it has completely yielded to the person it has received. This concept of faith, within the context of covenant, is the genius of Perkins's theology. His intense concern for the godly life arises alongside his equally intense concern to maintain the Reformation principle of salvation by grace alone, for we are never granted salvation on account of our faith but by means of faith.

Conclusion

Whatever else he might have been, Perkins was committed to proclaiming this experience of God's sovereign grace from humiliation to assurance and seeing it cultivated in others. Behind the industrious scholar, combative polemicist, exhaustive expositor, and prolific author stood a pastor deeply concerned about the spiritual condition of the individual in the pew. For Perkins, there was a clear difference between speculative (notional) knowledge and sensible (inclinational) knowledge. The first involves the head alone whereas the second involves the head and heart. With this distinction in view, he exhorts:

> We must labor for the power of this knowledge in ourselves, that we may know Christ to be our Savior, and may feel the power of His death to mortify sin in us, and the virtue of His resurrection to raise and build us up to newness of life for knowledge in the brain will not save the soul. Saving knowledge in religion is experimental, and he that is truly founded upon Christ feels the power and efficacy of His death and resurrection, effectually causing the death of sin, and the life of grace which both appear by new obedience.[93]

In Perkins's estimation, the Reformed theology of grace, the golden chain, was not a subject for mere academic debate and discussion, but was crucial to the development of true Christian piety. He was convinced that people must experience an affective appropriation of God's sovereign grace, moving beyond intellectual assent to heartfelt dedication to Christ. This experimental piety earned Perkins the label *Puritan*. Strictly speaking, he was not a Puritan in terms of his ecclesiology, for he refused to align himself with the more militant figures of his era. Nor was he a Puritan in terms of his theology, for it is anachronistic to speak of Puritanism as a theological movement prior to the Arminian renewal in theology, which occurred within the Church of England during the reign of the Stuart kings.[94] But Perkins was a Puritan in

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93. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:259–60.
94. For more on this, see Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Puritanism, c. 1590–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

terms of his piety. "For the pure heart is so little regarded," says he, "that the seeking after it is turned to a by-word, and a matter of reproach. Who are so much branded with vile terms of *Puritans* and *Precisians*, as those that most endeavor to get and keep the purity of heart in a good conscience?"[95] Again, "The due obedience to the moral law is nick-named and termed preciseness, and the professors thereof called *Puritans* and *Precisians*, for this cause only, that they make conscience of walking in obedience to God's law."[96]

Perkins would never have described himself as a Puritan, given its negative connotation, yet it is the very term that others used, favorably or not, to describe that experimental theology so prevalent in his life and ministry. His piety set the tone for the literature that would pour forth from the presses in the seventeenth century,[97] thereby ensuring him a place in history as the Father of Puritanism.[98]

<div align="right">—Joel R. Beeke and J. Stephen Yuille</div>

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95. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:15; italics added.

96. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:195; italics added.

97. As Packer observes, "Puritanism, with its complex of biblical, devotional, ecclesiastical, reformational, polemical and cultural concerns, came of age, we might say, with Perkins, and began to display characteristically a wholeness of spiritual vision and a maturity of Christian patience that had not been seen in it before." *Anglican to Remember,* 4.

98. Richard Muller, "William Perkins and the Protestant Exegetical Tradition: Interpretation, Style, and Method," in William Perkins, *Commentary on Hebrews 11,* ed. John H. Augustine (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1991), 72.

Preface to Volume 1 of
William Perkins's *Works*

William Perkins (1558–1602) was a prolific author, composing almost fifty treatises on a wide range of biblical, theological, polemical, and practical subjects—all before his death at age forty-four. "As for his books," writes Thomas Fuller, "it is a miracle to conceive how thick they lie, and yet how far they spread all over Christendom."[1] The historian William Haller sums up the popularity of Perkins's treatises as follows: "No books, it is fair to say, were more often to be found upon the shelves of succeeding generations of preachers, and the name of no preacher recurs more often in later Puritan literature."[2]

By the early seventeenth century, Perkins's writings had outstripped those of John Calvin (1509–1564), Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575), and Theodore Beza (1519–1605) in terms of popularity. In seeking to account for this remarkable trend, Ian Breward identifies two unique features in Perkins: first, "an ability to clarify and expound complex theological issues which aroused the respect of fellow scholars"; and, second, "a gift for relating seemingly abstruse theological teaching to the spiritual aspirations of ordinary Christians."[3] To state it simply, Perkins was able to merge intricate theology with practical piety—a rare gift indeed.

The present volume contains three of Perkins's treatises. The first is *A Digest or Harmony of the Books of the Old and New Testament*. In the 1650s, James Ussher (1581–1656), Archbishop of Armagh, published *The Annals of the Old and New Testament*, in which he proposed that God created the universe in 4004 BC. Ussher also provided a detailed chronology of biblical events that was included in many annotated editions of the King James Bible from the eighteenth century into the twentieth, thus making his name synonymous

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1. Thomas Fuller, *Abel Redevivus: or, The Dead yet Speaking. The Lives and Deaths of the Modern Divines* (London: by Tho. Brudenell for John Stafford, 1651), 436.

2. William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), 65.

3. Ian Breward, "The Significance of William Perkins," *Journal of Religious History* 4, no. 2 (1966): 113.

with biblical chronology. It is worth noting, however, that Ussher's *Annals* was merely one (albeit an important one) in a long line of literary works seeking to establish the age of the earth and provide an overview of biblical history. More than a half century before Ussher published his famous book, Perkins produced his *Harmony*, stating, "I set before you a tablet or little brief of the holy and heavenly history."[4] Perkins dated God's creation of the universe in 3967 BC. With this date firmly in place, he developed his overview of redemptive history, culminating in the final judgment.

Several important factors contributed to the formulation of Perkins's chronology. To begin with, his unwavering commitment to biblical inerrancy shaped his calculations. He believed that the Holy Spirit used the human authors of Scripture (that is, the prophets and apostles) in such a way that what they wrote was His, not theirs. This conviction led him to embrace what he described as Scripture's "infallible certainty," meaning "the testimony of Scripture is the testimony of God Himself."[5] As a result, he believed that Scripture must stand alone at the center of the life of the Christian and the church. Owing to this, Perkins adopted the Bible as the axiom of all his thinking and the focus of all his teaching. Unsurprisingly, therefore, he viewed Scripture as the absolute authority for his chronology.

Another important factor was Perkins's recognition that Scripture does not always provide a linear timeline but does provide numerous details that can be linked to dateable events from secular history. This led him to employ two main approaches in formulating his chronology. First, he used the biblical genealogies to establish an unbroken male line from Adam to Solomon. Second, he compared biblical data concerning certain political and astronomical events with Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman sources. This was particularly important for establishing the timeline after the reign of Solomon.

In its day, Perkins's *Harmony* made a significant contribution to the long-standing academic debate surrounding biblical chronology. Today, it remains a valuable demonstration of the unity of redemptive history.

The second treatise in this volume is *The Combat between Christ and the Devil Displayed*. Here, Perkins expounds the content of Matthew 4:1–11. Shaping his exposition is his belief that Christ's temptation in the wilderness served

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4. William Perkins, *A Digest or Harmony of the Books of the Old and New Testament*, in *The Works of that Famovs and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Vniversitie of Cambridge, M. William Perkins* (London: Iohn Legatt, 1631), 2:677. Hereafter cited as *Works* (1631).

5. William Perkins, *A Godly and Learned Exposition upon Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, in *Works* (1631), 3:219–26.

three purposes.[6] The first was that Christ might defeat the devil. Just as the devil overcame the first Adam in temptation, even so the last Adam, Christ, must overcome the devil in temptation. The second purpose was that Christ might show us how the devil assaults the church so that we might be better prepared to resist his temptations. The third purpose was that Christ might be "a merciful and faithful high priest" to those who are tempted (Heb. 2:17–18). He is acquainted with the trouble and anguish of temptation; therefore, He is able to help and comfort us.

The first purpose was foundational to Perkins's interpretation of Christ's temptation. He was convinced that Christ's chief purpose in the incarnation was to fulfill His role as Mediator on behalf of His people. At the outset of His ministry, therefore, Christ identified with His people in their sin by entering the waters of baptism. As Perkins explains, "It pleased Christ for special end and purpose to be baptized, not as we are, to put off sin, for He had none; but to be ordained a Mediator for us, that putting on our sin He might bear the burden thereof in our stead."[7] This representative role continued in His temptation. "And therefore," says Perkins, "was Christ led by the Spirit to encounter with the devil, that He might perform this one work of a Mediator, namely, in temptation overcome him, who by temptation overcame all mankind."[8]

Perkins believed that Christ, like Adam, was a *public* individual, in that He acted as the federal head, or representative, of His people. In the garden of Eden, God established the covenant of works with Adam and his posterity.[9] That is to say, Adam stood as the federal head of his descendants. When Adam sinned, God counted his sin as his posterity's sin, his guilt as his posterity's guilt, and his punishment as his posterity's punishment. But the first Adam has a counterpart—the last Adam (Christ). Just as Adam's "offence" resulted in death and condemnation for his posterity, so too Christ's "gift by grace" resulted in life and justification for His posterity (Rom. 5:15–19). When we believe, we are no longer in the first Adam under the covenant of works because we have been united with the last Adam under the covenant of grace, who has fulfilled the covenant of works on our behalf, meeting its requirement by His active obedience (life) and paying its penalty by His passive obedience (death).

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6. William Perkins, *The Combat betweene Christ and the Diuell Displayed: Or, A Commentarie upon the Temptations of Christ* (London: by Melchisedech Bradwood for E. E., 1606), 8–9.

7. Perkins, *Combat betweene Christ and the Diuell*, 1.

8. Perkins, *Combat betweene Christ and the Diuell*, 4.

9. William Perkins, *A Golden Chain: or, the Description of Theology: Containing the Order of the Causes of Salvation and Damnation, According to God's Word*, in *The Workes of that Famovs and VVorthie Minister of Christ, in the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, M. W. Perkins* (London: Iohn Legate, 1608), 1:170. Hereafter cited as *Works* (1608).

This is the theological framework in which Perkins expounds Matthew 4:1–11. Adam was in the garden; Christ was in the wilderness. Adam was satisfied; Christ was hungry. Adam was surrounded by tame animals; Christ was surrounded by wild animals. Adam had every advantage; Christ had every disadvantage. Adam chose not to delight in God; Christ chose to delight in God. Adam chose to ignore God's Word; Christ chose to cling to God's Word. Adam disobeyed; Christ obeyed. Adam succumbed to the devil; Christ triumphed over the devil.

Throughout this treatise, Perkins employed his standard structure of exposition, doctrines, reasons, and uses.[10] He was committed to this structure because he believed it was the best way to convince the judgment and embrace the affections, thereby bringing the mind into vital contact with the meaning of Scripture. His *exposition* is solid; his *doctrines* and *reasons* are judicious; and his *uses* are practical and insightful. This makes his *Combat* a great resource for understanding the devil's stratagems and appreciating the believer's calling to look to his "merciful and faithful high priest" in the midst of temptation.

The third and most significant treatise in this volume is *A Godly and Learned Exposition upon Christ's Sermon in the Mount.* "Hereof I have chosen to entreat," says Perkins, "because it is a most divine and learned sermon, and may not unfitly be called the 'Key to the whole Bible'; for here Christ opens the sum of the Old and New Testaments."[11] Perkins viewed the Sermon on the Mount as the key that unlocks the meaning of Scripture in its entirety. This observation is extremely significant, as it implies that his understanding of what Christ declares in Matthew 5–7 was pivotal to the development of his theology and, by consequence, his piety. Given the centrality of this sermon to Perkins's thinking, it is important to understand how he approached it. In other words, it is important to identify those factors that influenced him in his interpretation and application.

The first factor was Perkins's *historical* context. In many respects, Perkins was a Reformer. He preached and lectured in the midst of a pitched battle with the Roman Church. He insisted that "union of the two religions" (Protestantism and Catholicism) "can never be made, more than the union of light and darkness…. For though in words they [the Catholics] honor Christ, yet indeed they turn Him to a pseudo-Christ and an idol of their own brain."[12] In Perkins's estimation, Roman Catholicism had deviated so far from the teaching

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10. William Perkins, *Arte of Prophesying; or, A Treatise Concerning the Sacred and Onely Trve Manner and Methode of Preaching*, in *Works* (1631), 2:673.

11. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:1.

12. William Perkins, *A Reformed Catholic; or, A Declaration Showing How Near We*

of Scripture that it had lost the true knowledge of Christ. He was so scornful in his attacks because he believed its synergistic understanding of the gospel minimized the full extent of man's sin and God's grace. That is to say, he believed it ultimately led people away from Christ. This conviction permeates his writings. Unsurprisingly, it even appears in his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, in which he repeatedly argues that the Roman Church stands in direct correlation to the scribes and Pharisees of Christ's day. Like the scribes and Pharisees, the Roman Church distorts God's Word, proclaims a false way of salvation, practices terrible hypocrisy, and oppresses Christ and His disciples. For Perkins, the parallels are manifold and the points of application are numerous. Running throughout his exposition, therefore, is a constant diatribe against Rome.

The second factor that shapes Perkins's approach to the Sermon on the Mount is his understanding of its *immediate* context. Believing that Matthew and Luke record the same sermon, he turns to Luke 6:7 in order to identify its context: "And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him."[13] According to the verses that follow, Christ did indeed heal the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath day. The response of the scribes and Pharisees was spiteful: "And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do." In reaction to their antagonism, Christ departed into the mountain and prayed before choosing His twelve disciples (Luke 6:11–16). These details provide the setting for the Sermon on the Mount. They demonstrate that Christ's teaching must be interpreted in the context of His ongoing conflict with the scribes and Pharisees. In Perkins's own words, "Christ's intent is to clear the true meaning of Moses and the Prophets, which was corrupted by the false gloss of the Jewish teachers."[14]

Perkins, therefore, viewed the sermon as an exact account of what Christ preached to His disciples at the outset of their ministry in the face of growing opposition. This is a key interpretive tool because it implies that Christ had but one goal: "to teach His disciples, with all that believe in Him, to lead a godly, holy, and blessed life."[15] This conviction shaped Perkins's approach to the sermon. He did not view it as a legalistic system of morality, a paradigm for the establishment of a new society, or a standard of ethics for a future millennial

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May Come to the Present Church of Rome in Sundry Points of Religion, and Wherein We Must Forever Depart from Them, in *Works* (1608), 1:549.

13. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:1.
14. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:1.
15. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:1.

kingdom. On the contrary, he viewed it as the definitive word on the nature of true godliness.

On a concluding note, it is important to observe that the theme of godliness figures prominently throughout Perkins's treatises. He was adamant that we are saved by virtue of union with Christ through faith. He was equally adamant that saving faith includes far more than intellectual assent: "knowledge in the brain will not save the soul; saving knowledge in religion is experimental; and he that is truly founded upon Christ, feels the power and efficacy of His death and resurrection, effectually causing the death of sin and the life of grace which both appear by new obedience."[16] Perkins was convinced that the gospel (union with Christ through faith) is always transformative, producing godliness, cultivating new obedience, making a divorce between sin and the soul, moderating inordinate affections, stirring a desire for holiness, setting the soul upon the means of grace, and producing zeal in religion.

To get the most out of Perkins's writings, we must not lose sight of this experiential side to his theology. Moreover, we must remain sensitive to his fundamental perspectives concerning the authority of Scripture, the majesty of God, the centrality of Christ, the beauty of grace, the reality of eternity, the unity of life, and the efficacy of the gospel. When we do, Perkins proves to be a helpful guide into the nature of true theology—what he called "the science of living blessedly forever."[17]

—J. Stephen Yuille

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16. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:259–60.
17. Perkins, *Golden Chain*, 1:11.

PART 2: The Matter of Christ's Sermon

The First Branch: Matthew 5:3–12

Thus much of the preface. Now we come to the matter of this sermon, beginning at the third verse of this chapter, and so continuing to the twenty-eighth verse of the seventh chapter. And it may be divided into twelve heads or places of doctrine: the first whereof concerns true *happiness* or *blessedness* from the second verse of this chapter to the thirteenth,[8] wherein are propounded sundry rules directing men to attain thereunto. The scope of them all must be considered, which in general is this: our Savior Christ had now preached two years among the people, and thereby had won many to become His disciples, and among the rest, His twelve apostles, to all whom He promised happiness and life everlasting, if they would continue in the faith and obedience of His Word. Now though they believed in Him, yet they still remained in the same state for outward things, and became more subject to outward miseries than before, so as if they judged of happiness by their present outward estate, they might easily suspect the truth of Christ's doctrine, and think He had deceived them, because He promised them happiness, and yet for outward things their case was far worse than before they knew Him. This our Savior Christ considering does here go about to remove this false conceit out of their minds. And for this purpose He delivers this doctrine unto them, in the first general head of His sermon: *that true happiness before God is ever joined, yea covered many times, with the cross in this world.* Whereby He strikes at the root of their carnal conceit, who placed true happiness in outward things, and looked for outward peace and prosperity upon the receiving of the gospel.

The Use. As this is the scope of the doctrine following, so it stands us in hand to learn the same, and to find experience hereof in our own hearts, that true comfort and felicity is accompanied with manifold miseries in this life. Indeed, carnal wisdom deems them happy that enjoy outward peace, wealth, and pleasure. But this conceit must be removed, and Christ's doctrine embraced, who joins true happiness with the cross. Secondly, this serves to teach us patience in affliction, for it is God's will to temper happiness and the cross together. Now this puts life into an afflicted soul, to think that Christ will have His felicity enjoyed and felt in outward misery. Thus much of this head of doctrine in general, now we come to the branches thereof.

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8. To the beginning of verse 13, but not including it.

First Rule of Happiness

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (v. 3). Here is Christ's *first rule* concerning happiness, wherein observe two points: first, the parties blessed, "the poor in spirit"; secondly, wherein this blessedness consists, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Before we come to these parts severally, note in a word the form of speech here used. They that are led by human reason will rather say, "blessed are the rich for theirs are the kingdoms of the world," but Christ here speaks the flat contrary, saying, "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," which is infinitely better than all the kingdoms of the world. Whereby we may see that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, and the ordinary conceit of man is flat opposite to the saving doctrine taught by Christ.

Point 1

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." The word translated "poor"[9] does properly signify a *beggar*, one that has no outward necessaries, but by gift from others. But here it is more largely taken, not only betokening those that want outward riches (for Saint Luke opposes *these poor to the rich in this world* [6:20, 24]), but also those that are any way miserable, wanting inward or outward comfort. And such a one was Lazarus, "that lay begging at Dives' gates" [16:20–21]. What is meant by "poor in spirit" is plainly expounded in Isaiah 66:2 where the Lord says, "I will look to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words." Christ's meaning then is this: *that those poor are blessed, who by means of their distress, through want of outward comforts, are brought to see their sins and their miseries thereby, so as finding no goodness in their hearts, they despair in themselves, and fly wholly to the mercy of God in Christ for grace and comfort, as Lazarus did to Dives' gates for outward release.*

The Use. Seeing Christ does thus set out the person that is truly blessed, let us see whether we be in the number of these poor ones.[10] Indeed we have many poor among us: some that by excess and riot have spent their substance, and others that through idleness increase their want, as the wandering beggars, a sinful and disordered people, who join themselves to no church. But none of these can by their poverty make just claim to true felicity. The blessed poor are poor in spirit, and this poverty we must find in our hearts, if we would know ourselves to be truly happy. But after trial, this will be found much wanting. For first, if men live outwardly civil, and keep themselves from gross sins, this thought of pride takes place in their hearts, that they are righteous, and they

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9. In the margin: πτωχοί.
10. In the margin: Trial of our poverty.

persuade themselves with the "young man" in the Gospel [Matt. 19:20] that they can keep God's commandments. Secondly, let worldly wants befall men in body, goods, or name, and they are grieved; yea, their souls are full of sorrow. But for spiritual wants, as blindness of mind, hardness of heart, unbelief, and disobedience, their hearts are never touched. Now whence comes this but from that pride of heart, whereby they bless themselves in their estate, and think all is well with them in respect of their souls? So that true it is, poverty of spirit is hard to be found. We therefore must search ourselves, and labor to feel our spiritual wants. And look how Lazarus lay for his body at Dives' gates, so must we lie at God's mercy-gate in Christ for our souls, abandoning this pride of heart, and acknowledging that there is no goodness in us of ourselves, for the strait gate of heaven cannot receive a swelling heart that is puffed up with pride. And to induce us unto this good duty, let us consider the gracious promises made to them that be poor in spirit. They are called "God's poor" [Ps. 72:2]. "He thinketh on them" [Ps. 40:17]. Though "heaven be God's throne, and the earth his footstool, yet will he look to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit" [Isa. 66:2]. "The Lord will dwell with him that is of a contrite and broken heart" [Isa. 57:15]. Christ came "to preach the glad tidings of the gospel to the poor" [Luke 4:18]. "The Lord filleth the hungry (that is, the poor and hungry soul) with good things, but the rich he sends empty away" [Luke 1:53]. Let these and many such favors with God, which they enjoy, provoke us to become poor in spirit.

Secondly, are they blessed that be *poor in spirit*? Then here all poor and wretched persons in the world may learn to make good use of their wants and distresses.[11] They must consider them as the hand of God upon them, and thereby be led to the view of their sins; and by the consideration of their sins, be brought to see their misery in themselves, the true ground of this spiritual poverty. Now, when they are once poor in spirit, they are in a blessed state in the judgment of Christ. If a man bleeds dangerously at the nose, the best way to save his life is to let him bleed elsewhere, and so turn the course of the blood another way. Even so, when a man is oppressed with worldly calamities, he cannot find any comfort in them, for in themselves they are God's curses, yet if thereby he can be brought to see his spiritual poverty, then of curses they become blessings unto him. And therefore when we are in any distress, we must not only fix our eyes upon the outward cross but, by means of that, labor to see the poverty of our souls. And so will the cross lead us to happiness.

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11. In the margin: Poor men's duty.

Thirdly, they that abound with worldly wealth, must hereby learn to become *poor*, if they would be saved.[12] *Poor* I say, not in goods, but in soul and spirit. This indeed is hard to flesh and blood, for naturally every rich man blesses himself in his outward estate, and persuades himself that God loves him, because He gives him wealth. But such conceits must he strive against, and learn of God "to rejoice in this, that he is made low" (James 1:10).

Fourthly, on this saying of Christ, that *the poor are blessed*, the popish teachers (observing the word translated "poor" to betoken outward poverty) go about to build their vow of voluntary poverty,[13] whereby men renouncing their wealth and possessions of this world, do betake themselves to some monastery, there to live a poor and solitary life.[14] But their voluntary poverty will not agree with this text, for Christ's poor here pronounced blessed are such as by reason of their poverty are miserable and wretched, wanting outward comforts, as we showed out of Luke [6:20, 24], where Christ opposes them to the rich, who abound with all worldly delights. But to undergo the popish vow of voluntary poverty is no estate of misery or distress, for who do live in greater ease or enjoy more freedom from the crosses and vexations of this life than their begging friars? Again, if their vowed poverty had any ground in this text, then Christ should pronounce such poor blessed as made themselves poor. But that He does not, for then in the next verse He should pronounce such mourners blessed, as voluntarily cause themselves to mourn. For that verse depends on this, as a more full explanation of this first rule. But no man will say that they that mourn without a cause are there called blessed; and therefore popish vowed poverty has no ground on this place. And thus much of the persons.

Point 2

Wherein the blessedness of these poor consists; namely, in having a right to the kingdom of heaven, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." By "kingdom of heaven" (for the better conceiving of this blessedness) we must understand a state or condition of man, whereby he is in God's favor, and has fellowship with God. The truth of this description is evident by the tenor of the New Testament. Now this estate of man is called a "kingdom," because herein God rules as King, and man obeys as God's subject. For no man can be in God's favor, nor enjoy His fellowship, unless God be his King, ruling in his heart by His Word and Spirit, and he be God's subject resigning himself to be ruled by Him; for this happy estate consists in God's gracious ruling of man, and man's holy subjection unto God. Indeed, few do see any great happiness in

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12. In the margin: Rich men's duty.
13. In the margin: Bellar. cont. Gen. 5 lib. 2. cap. 20.
14. In the margin: Against the vow of poverty.

this estate, but the truth is man's whole felicity stands herein: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17). Here the apostle teaches us three things; namely, that when God's Spirit rules in a man's heart, then first, he is justified, there *is righteousness*; secondly, he has *peace with God*, even that peace of conscience which passes all understanding; thirdly, the joy of the Holy Ghost, which is an unspeakable comfort, passing all worldly joy whatsoever. And these three do notably set out the state of a happy man, which will yet more plainly appear by their contraries in Judas, who being a wretched sinner, unrighteously betrayed his Master, and thereupon fell into the misery of a guilty accusing conscience, which was the cause of his desperate death, and also that his body burst asunder, and his bowels gushed out. Now if an evil conscience be so fearful, then how blessed an estate is the peace and joy of a good conscience which a man then has when God by His Word and Spirit rules in his heart? Again, this estate is called "the kingdom of heaven," because that man in whom Christ rules by His Word and Spirit is already himself in heaven, though in body he be yet on earth. For heaven is like a city with two gates, through both of which a man must pass, before he obtains the full joys thereof. Now so soon as God by His Word and Spirit, rules in any man's heart, he is already entered the state of grace, which is the first gate; the other remains to be passed through at the time of death, which is the gate of glory, and then he is in full possession.

The Use. Does true happiness consist in this estate, where Christ rules and man obeys?[15] Then here behold the error of all philosophers and wise men of this world touching happiness, for some have placed it in pleasure, some in wealth, and others in civil virtue, and some in all these. But the truth is, it stands in none of these. A natural man may have all these, and yet be condemned, for the civil virtues of the heathen, were in them but glorious sins. Our Savior Christ has here revealed more unto us than all the wise men of the world did ever know, and hereby we have just occasion to magnify the books of Scripture, far above all human writings, because they do fully set out unto us the nature and estate of true felicity, which no human works could ever do. We must therefore account of them, not as the word of man, but of the ever-living God; yea, this must persuade us to maintain the books of Scripture against all devilish atheists, that deny the same to be the Word of God.

Secondly, hereby we are taught, from the bottom of our hearts, to make that petition for ourselves, which Christ teaches in His holy prayer;[16] namely, *that He would let His kingdom come*; that is, not suffer sin, Satan, or the world to

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15. In the margin: The error of the world touching happiness.
16. In the margin: Pray for God's kingdom.

reign in us, but by His Word and Spirit to rule in our hearts, giving us grace to be guided thereby in all our ways. We affect nothing more than happiness, and therefore we must oftentimes most seriously make this request to God, preferring this estate with God, before all pleasures and happiness in this world, and use all good means to feel in our hearts the power of Christ's kingdom.

Thirdly, this should move us to hear God's Word with all fear and reverence, for by this means, the kingdom of Christ is erected in us. When the Word of Christ takes place in our hearts by faith, and brings forth in our lives the fruits of righteousness, and true repentance, then may we truly say, the kingdom of heaven is in us.

Lastly, Christ ascribing this happy title of His heavenly kingdom to them that be poor, and of a contrite heart, does herein minister a sovereign remedy against all temptations, from outward poverty and distress.[17] Doubtless poverty is a grievous cross, not only in regard of the want of bodily comforts, but especially because of that contempt and reproach, which in this world does hang upon it. Whereupon many do esteem their poverty, as a sign of God's wrath against them, and thereby take occasion to despair, thinking the kingdom of darkness belongs unto them. But here consider you poor, this sentence of Christ, where He plainly teaches, that if a man in outward distress, can be brought to feel his spiritual poverty, and the wretchedness of his soul, by reason of his sins, then he is so far from having just cause to despair of God's favor, by reason of his poverty, that on the contrary, he may gather to his soul a most comfortable assurance, from the mouth of Him that cannot lie, that the kingdom of heaven belongs unto him.

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17. In the margin: Consolation to the poor.