

**BABES-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA**  
**FACULTY OF REFORMED THEOLOGY**

**„ONE OF A THOUSAND”**  
**WILLIAM PERKINS AND TRAINING OF**  
**PREACHERS IN THE ELIZABETHAN**  
**PURITANISM (SUMMARY)**

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**Key Words:** Art of Prophecy, Calling of the Ministry, Cambridge, Christ College, Church of England, Elizabeth I, Hermeneutics, Homiletics, Perkins William, Puritans, Puritanism, Preaching – in Elizabethan time – style- in puritanism, Ramus Peter, Reformation in England, Sermons, Training for preaching, Word of God.

## INTRODUCTION

The Puritan Reformation can be studied from many angles. For example, the interaction with the biography of the puritan leaders gives the impression of meeting the giants of theology and of practical Christian life.<sup>1</sup> There are great studies about the religious, historical, social and political context which facilitated the development of the movement. Many studies present the puritan theology, emphasizing not only the unity, but also the doctrinal diversity of the movement.<sup>2</sup> Others present the spiritual living and the progress in spiritual life.<sup>3</sup> Their way of living is fascinating, but also the way in which the biblical conception about work, Sabbath, family, relaxation or worship was brought in daily life,<sup>4</sup> or in Ryrie's words, "What did it mean to be Protestant Christian during the Reformation in England? How did they lived between conversion and death?"<sup>5</sup> For those involved in pastoral ministry, a research in the puritan concept and practice regarding this topic would be useful.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the quality of the written puritan literature or of the works influenced by puritan thinking can't be neglected, every research from this perspective proving the great contribution of the puritans at the development of English Literature.<sup>7</sup> It is almost impossible to talk about puritans and to avoid the topic of preaching. Preaching was a great element in puritan practice and thinking.<sup>8</sup> Great preachers,<sup>9</sup> different topics,<sup>10</sup> the exposition of biblical texts,<sup>11</sup> the portrait of puritan preacher<sup>12</sup> or the purpose of preaching<sup>13</sup> can be different perspectives of research in puritan preaching. Another view for research, of real interest for those involved in the formation of preachers, is the way in which

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans: Containing a Biographical Account of Those Divines Who Distinguished Themselves in the Cause of Religious Liberty, from the Reformation Under Queen Elizabeth, to the Act of Uniformity in 1662*, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Londra: J. Black, 1813).

<sup>2</sup> Joel R Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> J. I Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Leland Ryken, *Sfinți în lume* (Oradea: Reformatio, 2004). Vezi capitolele despre muncă, bani, căsătorie, închinare sau educație.

<sup>5</sup> Alec Ryrie, *Being a Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence A. Sasek, *The Literary Temper of the English Puritans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961).

<sup>8</sup> See the chapter about the importance of preaching in puritan movement. Erroll Hulse, *Who Are the Puritans? And What is their Doctrine?* (Oradea, Editura Faclia, 2002), 161-171.

<sup>9</sup> Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Peterson, *Meet the Puritans* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Mariano Di Gangi, *Great Themes in Puritan Preaching* (Ontario: Joshua Press, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Robert P. Martin, *A Guide to the Puritans* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997).

<sup>12</sup> Ryken, *Sfinți în lume*, 89–91.

<sup>13</sup> Hulse, *Cine sunt Puritanii? Și care este doctrina lor?*, 161.

puritans trained their preachers. It is obvious that the emphasis put on preaching involves puritan well-prepared preachers in all the parishes, who, as in this work would be observed, were missing in England. „One out of a thousand” is the expression used by Perkins (inspired from Job 33:23), to describe the rarity of true servants in his time. What was the remedy in that situation? Who were the most efficient leaders? What strategies were used? What were the writings which inspired the preachers? Reading puritan biographies and writings, the reader will often find references to William Perkins and to his writings, fact that proves that William Perkins formed generations of preachers and the book written by him, *The Art of Prophecy*, had a great role. After the research, it can be said that William Perkins, through his life and works, contributed at the change of the puritan homiletic paradigm and at the formation of the next generation of puritan preachers and not only. Moreover, the first purpose of Perkins was the raising of a new generation of preachers. The work *William Perkins and the Formation of the Preachers in Elisabethan* explores the way in which Perkins formed the preachers who later brought vitality in the England`s pulpits.

This PhD thesis is inspired by the author`s interest regarding the role of preaching in the puritan movement in general and the teaching of the preachers in particular. The thesis can be regarded as a part of the church history, but it interactions in the same time with Practical and Biblical Theology and it will use, mostly, the analytical and synthetic method.

## SUMMARY

The thesis “*One of a Thousand*” *William Perkins and the Preachers’ Formation in the Elizabethan Puritanism* is structured and developed in seven chapters. The next lines contain a general presentation of each chapter.

In the first chapter is presented the historical time frame of the life and activity of William Perkins. There are pieces of information which facilitate the proper understanding of his personality and of his fruitful work. The first section of the chapter talks about the Reformation in England with details about historical, theological and ecclesiastical time in which the events were. Under the reign of Elisabeth I, when William Perkins worked and lived, reformation was in expansion. The second section of this chapter presents the state of preaching in Elizabethan England. We will discover a Church of England that is in the process of reformation and because of that, a new emphasis on the value and importance of serious and competent preaching of the Word, but with an inappropriate and untrained clergy for this task, an aging clergyman, confused by historical circumstances, and whose role was to administrate the Sacraments, not the exposure of the Word. The third section of the first chapter shows how Perkins chooses to respond to the needs of the Church in his time. We will notice that his intention was to develop the pastoral reform of the Church by preparing a competent generation of preachers.

Perkins chooses deliberately to avoid the ecclesial policy and to invest in pastors` education and training. In this sense, Perkins will use all the possible tools: activity as a teacher at Cambridge, his own preaching work, his publishing activity, the pastoral mentoring and the prophesying conferences.

Chapter two is entitled William Perkins: The man and his ideas. For a long time, Perkins was neglected, but he was rediscovered mostly due to Ian Breward through his PhD thesis and also by publishing the writings of Perkins. The chapter continues with the biography of Perkins. The biography section presents details of how the events, concepts, educational and ecclesial institutions, persons and of course the social, economic, political and ecclesial framework contributed to his academic and spiritual training, to his work and identity. The last section of the chapter presents the works of Perkins. His well-known writings tried to fill up a gap in the Christian literature written in that time. His serious theological knowledge and his inclination to

simplification and applications, helped simple people from congregations to deepen Christian life and have contributed to the formation of new generations of preachers.

Chapter three explores the way in which Perkins contributed to preachers' training through his book: *The Art of Prophecyng*. Because Perkins admits the interaction with others authors, this chapter presents the previous homiletic textbooks, indicating influences and differences from textbooks written by Augustin, Erasmus, Hyperius and Hemmingsen. Then every section of the textbook of Perkins is presented with details.

Chapter 4 shows the contribution of Perkins to the training of the preachers through another work, written for this purpose. The *Calling of the Ministry* is based on the text from Job 33:23-24 and in fact, it contains a series of sermons preached in front of his students from Cambridge. The importance of this work is that it was created in the critical context of clergy in England and it is the answer of Perkins to this situation. The main themes are: the preacher's identity, the quality of the servant, the main role of the servant and the blessing for the preacher's effort.

Chapter 5 details the way in which Perkins' preaching contributed to the teaching of the preachers. Even though we didn't have access at the exact homiletic structure, neither to the word by word told by Perkins, it can be observed that, in spite of the transformations which appear after the editing and publishing process of the sermons, it is obvious the concordance between the theory exposed in his writings and Perkins' practice. In this way, the homiletic structure emphasized by Perkins is practiced and illustrated in his preaching through a book from the Bible, but also in the occasional preaching, in which he speaks about important topics for the public. Perkins used preaching as a didactic tool in hermeneutic methodology. The hermeneutical reformed principles exposed in the book were exemplified in his activity as a preacher. Perkins offered to the puritan movement from England and not only the simple style of preaching. In opposition with the Anglo-Catholic preaching or in contrast with Canterbury preaching, Perkins used the logic and rhetoric of Ramus. The simple style didn't mean the avoidance of the rhetorical elements, but the use of them in order to facilitate the understanding of the doctrines and the way in which they can be applied.

Chapter 6 presents the way in which the Puritans were involved in the Conferences of prophesying as a means and context in which the beginners in preaching could practice the art of preaching in order to exercise their exegetic and oratorical abilities. Preaching involves audience,



so the laic public was encouraged to be part of these meetings, but the main purpose was the practice of preaching by the beginners. It was always a session without public, in which, in a familial context, the errors were corrected and the suggestions regarding the improvement in the exegetic and homiletic field were told. The Cambridge sessions, organized by Laurence Chaderton, represented an inspiration for Perkins. The book *The Art of Prophecyng* was written in the times in which he organized these sessions at Emmanuel, after the Queen Elisabeth interdicted them approximately ten years ago and requests support for these meetings. The preaching conferences were considered the ideal means in which the beginners could practice preaching, a place in which *The Art of Prophecyng* could be practiced.

Finally, the last chapter presents the influence and the impact of William Perkins. Perkins is an obvious influence, being well-known not only in England or in the West of Europe, in Transilvania, and also, beyond Atlantic. At Cambridge as a professor or at St. Andrews as a preacher, Perkins didn't cease to exercise a strong attraction for those interested in teaching preachers. Puritan preachers and theologians and bishops from the Church of England recognize this influence upon them. It will be observed, also, that Perkins had a strong impact upon the way in which simple people, businessmen, governors or whole families lived their life day by day. Unsurprisingly, we would discover that the literary world brings tributes and admits Perkins's influence in this field. The chapter ends with the importance of Perkins' influence in general through his writings, but also in particular, through his work, *The Art of Prophecyng*.



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