

THE EXEGETICAL METHODS OF SOME  
SIXTEENTH-CENTURY PURITAN PREACHERS:  
HOOPER, CARTWRIGHT, AND PERKINS

PART I

ERWIN R. GANE  
Pacific Union College  
Angwin, California

This article and a subsequent one will deal with the exegetical methods of three sixteenth-century Puritan preachers: John Hooper (d. 1555), Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603), and William Perkins (1558-1602). Where did these three preachers fit into the Puritan milieu, and what relationship do their biblical exegetical methods have to the exegesis of the four prominent Anglican preachers discussed in my two previous articles?<sup>1</sup> What, indeed, was the characteristic approach to the Bible of leading sixteenth-century Puritans that distinguished them from their orthodox Anglican counterparts? Before we direct our attention to such questions, it is necessary to provide a brief discussion of the nature of sixteenth-century Puritanism and of the parts played by Hooper, Cartwright, and Perkins in the movements of their times.

1. *The Nature of Sixteenth-Century Puritanism*

The term "Puritanism" as used in the latter half of the sixteenth century in England referred to the Protestant discontent with the official religion of the realm. It was an ultra-conservative attempt to render Protestantism more Protestant and less Roman Catholic. Many of the Puritans never left the official Church of England. The differences, whether theological or practical, between them and orthodox Anglicans were largely matters of emphasis. Both Anglicans and Puritans recognized the Bible as the sole ultimate authority in religious and theological matters, but the

<sup>1</sup>My treatment of Hugh Latimer, John Jewel, Richard Hooker, and Lancelot Andrewes appeared in *AUSS* 17 (1979): 23-38, 169-188.

Puritans insisted on a closer conformity to the letter of the Scriptures in a manner which sometimes did an injustice to the actual literal meaning of the text. As we shall see, they were at times superficial interpreters because they were overly anxious to find their particularly inflexible mode of theological and religious practice supported by the text of the Bible. In this sense we can speak of them as ultra-literalists.

In classifying Hooper, Cartwright, and Perkins within the rather broad spectrum of Puritanism, it is useful to consider Leonard Trinterud's division of sixteenth-century Puritans into three parties.<sup>2</sup> Hooper may be categorized as a member of the early antvestment party in the Anglican Church. It was organized in the 1560s against the wearing of clerical vestments and was instrumental in launching the opening phase of the Puritan movement. Perkins belonged to the passive-resistance party, which wanted to change the structure of the official church and to introduce further Reformed elements into its theology, but which refused to use the aggressive, activist tactics of the more extreme Presbyterians. Cartwright aligned himself with the Presbyterian party within Anglicanism. He sought drastic changes and was willing to resort to a more polemical campaign as a means of achieving them.

All three of these Anglican Puritans regarded matters of church polity and Christian practice discussed in the Bible as having timeless application. They were not satisfied to see certain issues as being relevant to the apostolic church but irrelevant to the Anglican Church. Whatever was done in the age of the Apostles must, as a matter of principle, also be done in their era. In general, they felt that the Church of England, or any other church, had no right to invent customs for which there was no scriptural authority. All of man's activities had to be based on a "Thus saith the Lord."

By contrast, the orthodox Anglicans were prepared to admit some latitude in the contemporary application of Bible polity and practice. They too held to *sola scriptura*, but their hermeneutic allowed for diverse methods of implementing the basic principles of the Bible. Herein lay a major difference between sixteenth-century Anglicans and Puritans. It was a hermeneutical difference,

<sup>2</sup>Leonard J. Trinterud, ed., *Elizabethan Puritanism* (New York, 1971), p. 10.

based not on different concepts of Bible inspiration, but on different understandings of the interpretation and application of specific scriptural passages. The results of the Puritan hermeneutic were theological as well as practical, and there was a dynamic interaction between their over-literal theological interpretations and their stringent practical demands. As a basis for their extreme biblicism, the Puritans stressed, more than did the orthodox Anglicans, the perfection of the Scriptures, and they derogated human literature by comparison.

## 2. *Overview of the Careers of the Three Preachers*

Before we turn our attention more specifically to the exegetical practices of Hooper, Cartwright, and Perkins, it will be helpful to provide a brief overview of the careers of these three Puritan preachers.

### *John Hooper*<sup>3</sup>

After graduating from Oxford University in 1519, John Hooper entered the Cistercian monastery at Gloucester, where he evidently received holy orders. After the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII he became much impressed with the writings of Zwingli and Bullinger. Returning to Oxford with the intention of disseminating his reformist doctrines, he was obliged to flee three times, twice to the Continent. In 1547 he went to Zurich where he remained for two years, becoming quite intimate with Bullinger and corresponding with Bucer and à Lasco. In May, 1549, Hooper returned to England and became chaplain to Protector Somerset. From this point on, he became the leader of the stricter group of English reformers. Appointed to preach the Lent lectures before Edward VI in 1550, he chose as his subject the book of Jonah and seized the opportunity to present his views on the "First Prayer Book" (1549), on the oath by the saints required of clergy at their

<sup>3</sup>For further detail regarding biographical information presented herein on Hooper, see especially *Dictionary of National Biography* (hereinafter cited as *DNB*), "Hooper, John"; Samuel Carr, ed., *Early Writings of John Hooper* (Cambridge, 1843); Cunningham Geikie, *The English Reformation* (New York, 1879); Philip Hughes, *The Reformation in England*, 3 vols. (New York, 1950, 1963).

consecration, and on the vestments. Archbishop Cranmer had him brought before the council, but the king supported him, as did the Lord Protector Warwick, and Hooper was offered the see of Gloucester on July 3, 1550.

Hooper refused the bishopric on two grounds: the wording of the oath, and the requirement that the vestments must be worn at the consecration ceremony. After a royal dispensation, a bitter debate with Cranmer, a house arrest, and a period in Fleet prison (January, 1551), Hooper was released and consecrated Bishop of Gloucester on March 8, 1551, wearing the episcopal vestments.

Hooper preached frequently in his diocese and pastored his flock with great conscientiousness. He introduced a program of discipline and reform and saw to the instruction of the clergy. His organization of the Church followed the Zurich custom in that he appointed superintendents instead of rural deans and archdeacons. In 1552, he was also given the see of Worcester. Later Gloucester was reduced to an archdeaconry, and Hooper was titled Bishop of Worcester. Early in the reign of Mary, he was sent to the Fleet on the trumped-up charge that he owed a debt to the queen. On January 22, 1555, he was accused of heresy, largely on the basis of his eucharistic teachings. He was burned at the stake on February 9, 1555.

His sermons that I shall consider are "A Funeral Sermon," based on Rev 14:13, preached January 14, 1549; and "An Oversight and Deliberation upon the Holy Prophet Jonas," the sermons preached before Edward VI in Lent of 1550.<sup>4</sup>

### *Thomas Cartwright*<sup>5</sup>

Thomas Cartwright spent his early career largely at Cambridge. During the reign of Mary he was obliged, along with others who were attached to Reformation theology, to leave the University for a time. He became a clerk to a counsellor-at-law. After the

<sup>4</sup>Carr, pp. 435-558, 561-572.

<sup>5</sup>For further detail regarding biographical information presented herein on Cartwright, see especially *DNB*, "Cartwright, Thomas"; Hywel R. Jones, *Thomas Cartwright 1535-1603* (London, 1970); Donald Joseph McGinn, *The Admonition Controversy* (New Brunswick, 1949); A. F. Scott Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism 1535-1603* (Cambridge, 1925).

accession of Elizabeth, he returned to Cambridge, and on January 16, 1562, he became junior dean of St. John's College. In April, 1562, he was appointed a major fellow of Trinity College, and he established an excellent reputation as a theologian, preacher, and disputant.

On August 7, 1564, he took part in a disputation before Queen Elizabeth, who was visiting the University. Even though this was only an academic discussion, the nature of the subject and the potency of Cartwright's arguments were not likely to endear him to the queen, for he attacked the thesis that God's sovereignty supported an earthly monarchy and opposed the idea that the monarchical principle was bolstered by natural phenomena. He cited Aristotle against the rule of an individual and advocated that a commonwealth was best governed when the monarch shared the government with others. The queen favored Cartwright's opponent, John Preston, singling him out for royal recognition. From this date on, Cartwright gradually built a reputation at the University for adherence to Puritan opinions regarding such issues as clerical dress and church organization.

When he returned to England in 1567 after a two-year absence in Ireland, he was appointed Lady Margaret professor at Cambridge. He now began lectures on the Acts of the Apostles, criticizing the constitution of the Church of England and comparing it unfavorably with the church of the first century. John Whitgift, who was later to become Archbishop of Canterbury, attempted to answer him but was no match for the scholarly and loquacious Cartwright. In June, 1570, conferral of the Doctor of Divinity degree upon Cartwright was vetoed, and in December he was deprived of his professorship by Whitgift, who at this time was master of Trinity College and Rhegius professor of divinity. Whitgift also withdrew Cartwright's fellowship in Trinity College in September of the following year. Leaving England, Cartwright went to Geneva, where he came under the direct influence of Theodore Beza, John Calvin's successor.

It was in response to the entreaties of scholarly friends that Cartwright returned to England in November, 1572. In that same year the "Admonition to the Parliament," written by John Field and Thomas Wilcox, was published. It argued strongly for a presbyterian polity for the Anglican Church. Cartwright was in sympathy

with the "Admonition" and also with its successor, "A Second Admonition to the Parliament," but there is no evidence that he had any part in the writing of either document. But when Whitgift published a response to those "Admonitions," Cartwright wrote "A Reply to an Answer made of M. Doctor Whitegife, agaynst the Admonition to the Parliament." Whitgift defended his answer and Cartwright wrote a second reply, which was published in two parts, one in 1575 and the other in 1577.

The debate raged around six propositions which Cartwright set forth, dealing with orders of clergy and with their offices, duties, and calling. The real issue would seem to be, as H. R. Jones implies, the extent to which the church organization presented in the NT should be regarded as authoritative for the church in all ages.<sup>6</sup>

On June 11, 1573, a royal proclamation required the suppression of both of the "Admonitions," and on December 11 the Court of High Commission issued a warrant for Cartwright's arrest. Once again he left England, first going to Heidelberg, later to Antwerp, and finally to Middelburg. At this time he further dramatized his dissent from Anglicanism by writing the preface to Walter Travers's *Disciplina Ecclesiastica* (1574), which was destined to become the textbook of Puritanism. In 1574 he also translated Travers's book into English, publishing it under the title, *A full and plaine Declaration of Ecclesiastical Discipline owt of the Word off God, and off the declininge of the Churche off England from the same*. When he returned to England without royal assent in 1585, he was imprisoned but soon released.

The years 1595-1601 he spent on the island of Guernsey, but died in Warwick on December 27, 1603. Although he modified his method of working in the later years of life from that of "revolting

<sup>6</sup>Jones, p. 9. The six propositions may be summarized as follows: (1) The names and functions of archbishops and archdeacons should be abolished. (2) The ministry of the church should be brought in line with the apostolic church. There should be only two orders of clergy, bishops to preach and pray, and deacons to care for the poor. (3) Each church should be governed by its own minister and presbyters, not by bishops, chancellors, etc. (4) Ministers should be confined to the care of particular flocks. They should not be at large. (5) No man should be a candidate for the ministry, or solicit an appointment. The ministry is a divine calling. (6) Bishops should not be appointed by secular authority; they should be selected by the church.

critic to that of a loyal, constructive, and friendly reformer," Cartwright remained to the end thoroughly loyal to presbyterian ideals.

The Cartwright sermons that I shall consider are those which comprise his *Commentary upon the Epistle of Sainte Paule written to the Colossians*.<sup>7</sup>

### *William Perkins*<sup>8</sup>

William Perkins entered Christ's College, Cambridge, as a student in 1577. There he studied under Laurence Chaderton, from whom he seems to have received his predilection for Puritanism. After a profligate early career, Perkins settled down to serious scholarly work, was elected a fellow of his college, and began to build a reputation as a preacher. He preached to the prisoners in the castle and, as lecturer at Great St. Andrews, attracted large congregations. His Puritan sympathies soon drew attention. In a sermon delivered in his college chapel on January 13, 1586 or 1587, he objected to kneeling when taking the sacrament and to the practice of turning to the east. Perkins was among the group or "synod" which met at St. John's College in 1589 to revise a treatise "Of Discipline," which afterwards became known as "The Directory." It contained a statement of Puritan doctrine which those present promised to uphold. The same year Perkins joined the petitioners on behalf of Francis Johnson, a fellow of Christ's College, who had been imprisoned for his support of efforts to achieve a presbyterian form of polity for the Anglican Church.

Perkins's works were enormously influential in his own era and in the seventeenth century. His preaching was as practical in emphasis as it was theological. T. F. Merrill says, "He firmly believed that the word of God should be communicated to men unadulterated by human learning, and in a plain manner which

<sup>7</sup>Thomas Cartwright, *A Commentary upon the Epistle of Saint Paule written to the Colossians* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, STC 4708, 1612).

<sup>8</sup>For further detail on biographical information presented herein on Perkins, see especially *DNB*, "Perkins, William"; Thomas F. Merrill, ed. *William Perkins 1558-1602: English Puritanist* (Nieuwkoop, 1966); H. C. Porter, *Puritanism in Tudor England* (Columbia, S. C., 1971).

they could understand.”<sup>9</sup> He wrote *Art of Prophecyng*, which was the first manual of its kind for preachers in the Church of England. In this work Perkins states that it is a mistake to allow “humane wisdom” to conceal the message of the Bible, because preaching of the word is to give the testimony of God himself.<sup>10</sup> Yet he saw the great importance of scholarly preparation for the preacher.

His work *Armilla Aurea*, or *Golden Chain*, published in 1590 and 1592, and thenceforth in numerous editions, defines theology as he understood it, providing an exposition of the Ten Commandments, the sacraments, predestination, calling, justification, sanctification, the Christian life, and the state of immortal souls in heaven and hell.

The publications of Perkins’s *Reformed Catholike* in 1597 clarified his position regarding the Scriptures as the sole religious authority. Perkins wrote two influential works on casuistry. *A Discourse of Conscience Wherein Is Set Downe The Nature, properties, and differences thereof: as also the way to get and keepe good Conscience*, and *The Whole treatise of the Cases of Conscience*. The first treatise was designed to answer questions regarding the assurance of election. Perkins sought to examine the nature of the conscience as a basis for a sound moral philosophy. The second work was concerned with guidelines for the resolution of moral problems faced by Christians in their practical day-to-day lives.

Though he sympathized with those who wished to change the polity of the Anglican Church in a Presbyterian direction, Perkins was very much opposed to those with separatist aspirations, and he personally avoided a divisive, polemical attack on the ecclesiastical status quo. His Puritanism seems, in the main, to have consisted of a strong doctrinal Calvinistic bias which placed him in intellectual conflict with certain major theological emphases of the established Church. His sermons reveal that his differences with the establishment were to a considerable degree matters of emphasis rather than marked divergence.

<sup>9</sup>Merrill, pp. ix, xvi.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, pp. xvi-xvii.

The collection of sermons which I use for the present discussion is that which is contained in the 1631 3-volume edition of his collected works.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. *Concept of the Bible*

The question concerning the use of the Bible by Anglicans and Puritans is not whether they gave credence to the early-church fathers or human reason as additional sources of truth. Rather, the two questions which were answered differently by Anglicans and Puritans are these: (1) To what extent are matters of church polity and Christian practice, which are discussed in the Bible, of universal and timeless application rather than local application to specific times and places? (2) To what extent does the church have the right to retain certain customs and invent others for which there is no scriptural injunction? (In other words, must all our religious practices have a "Thus saith the Lord," or does God allow man some latitude in such matters as vestments, kneeling, order, mode of worship, and organization of the church?)

In answer to the first question, the Anglicans held that the polity of the apostolic church was not necessarily intended to be applied in every detail in the sixteenth century. The Puritans, on the other hand, felt that only a very literal application of apostolic polity would do justice to the divine intention for the church as laid down in the Bible.

In answer to the second question, the Anglicans argued that when God's word says nothing regarding certain ceremonies, customs, and modes of church organization, a degree of latitude is, indeed, justifiable. The Puritans thought otherwise, wanting to retain only those ceremonies and organizational procedures which they detected in earliest Christianity as described in the NT. Both parties valued the NT supremely, and both accepted the principle of *sola scriptura*. But the Puritans were ultra-conservative and ultra-literalist. This is why they emphasized even more insistently than did the Anglicans the doctrine of *sola scriptura*. Hooper enunciated in the following manner the general principle to which he clung:

<sup>11</sup>M. Willim Perkins, *The Works of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Vniversitie of Cambridge, M. William Perkins*, 3 vols. (London, 1631).

Who taught you to bring any religion into the church of God without God's commandment, and the decrees of the universal church, which is the church of the patriarchs, prophets, and the apostles, whose faith, life, death, and doctrine is and ought to be the ground and foundation of christian religion, as Saint Paul writeth, Ephes. ii?<sup>12</sup>

In the particular context, Hooper was opposing the doctrine of purgatory, which he found to be quite unscriptural. In practice, however, he applied the same principle to matters of difference between him and the Anglican Church. The vestments were an addition to Bible religion and therefore unacceptable. He was very much attached to the principle that "the scripture canonical, which is sufficient," under no circumstances ought to be added to, either in respect to doctrine or church ceremonies.<sup>13</sup> The fourth of his "Sermons upon Jonas" forcefully expressed the same concept:

So judge thou of every religion that is not contained within the word of God, to be nothing else than vanity, from whencesoever it cometh; though the world would bear thee in hand, it were as true as the gospel. But ask that true judge, the word of God, and it will shew thee it is superstition, beggary, and treachery unto the soul; and those do lose the benevolence and mercy, that God hath promised in Christ to as many as seek him in truth and in verity. Out of this text ye see the doctrine of Christ true, that it is written Matthew vi., "No man can serve two masters," the true religion of God, and the superstition of man.<sup>14</sup>

The truth, Hooper argued, "appeareth out of the book of God, and out of none other man's writings."<sup>15</sup> No council of the church, general or provincial, and no learning of man can provide a safer guide than the writings of prophets and apostles.<sup>16</sup> The only doctrine which can be regarded as truly catholic and godly is that which agrees with prophets and apostles.<sup>17</sup> Since the Bible teaches

<sup>12</sup>Carr, p. 567.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 568.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 500.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 445.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 566.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 442, 568.

that prayer is to be offered in a certain manner and always only to God, those who invent any other method, or supplicate saints in any sense, are rejected by God.<sup>18</sup> The will of God is always to do what the Bible commands, not what man commands.<sup>19</sup> In Moses' time God had a few who knew the true source of truth. So, Hooper asserted, he had in the sixteenth century a remnant who were able to direct their contemporaries to this source. Hooper quoted Scripture to substantiate his point:

Moses, instructing the people in the truth of the first question, whence the will of God should be known, commandeth them neither to look [for] it in Egypt nor elsewhere, but in the word of God, Deut xxx; and Saint Paul doth the same, Roms. x. and St. John i saith, "No man hath seen the Father, but the Son, and he unto whom the Son hath opened the Father" unto. God, therefore, and his blessed will is known unto us, because he hath spoken unto us by his dear beloved Son, Heb i., as he spake beforetime unto the world by his prophets. From Christ, therefore, and his word cometh the knowledge of God's will; for the Father bid us hear him. Matt. iii. xvii. John x.<sup>20</sup>

Just as no earthly king would allow his laws to be supplemented or modified by any subject, so God refuses to permit his statutes and laws to be tampered with.<sup>21</sup> Reason establishes tradition and custom, but this is the basis of idolatry.<sup>22</sup> In the secular realm, any vocation is unlawful which is opposed to the principles of the Bible, "as the vocation of bawds, idolaters, mass-mongers, common receivers, and maintainers of dicers and dice-houses, with such like."<sup>23</sup> A man's convictions as to his special calling must result from his existential relationship with God, but the basic principles governing the pursuit of his calling are to come from the Bible.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 457, 592.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 444.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 444-445.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 436.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 453.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 456.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

Hooper drew an analogy between Jonah as the troubler of the ship bound for Tarshish and those who were troubling the "ship and commonwealth of England."<sup>25</sup> England's Jonahs were those who opposed the kind of "free and indifferent speaking of God's word" as engaged in by Hooper.<sup>26</sup> And they included those who wished to suppress the circulation of the Bible in English.<sup>27</sup> The road to national prosperity and individual spiritual perfection is the avenue of strict conformity to Bible teaching. "For the word of God written is as perfect as God himself, and is indeed able to make a man perfect in all things, 2 Tim. iii."<sup>28</sup>

Cartwright's concept of the authority of the Bible was substantially identical to that of Hooper. The Bible is the word of truth which, like purified metals, contains no dross (Ps 12).<sup>29</sup> It is the source of holiness (John 17), and the "touch-stone of all truth."<sup>30</sup> It is the standard on the basis of which "all is to bee tryed in the Church of God, and the Church itselfe to bee gouerned by it: which confutes the Papistes, which makes the word of God to bee controuled by the word of the Church."<sup>31</sup> The Bible is "the Epistle of God to his creature."<sup>32</sup> It is the means of perfection for both minister and people, because it perfectly dispenses truth.<sup>33</sup> "And therefore howsoever the Papists will not deny that it is a perfect word, yet wil they haue the Canons of Counsels, & decrees of men. But the perfection of the word appeareth heere to haue no need of mans inventions."<sup>34</sup>

The only source of truth for the "poore silly fishermen," who were Christ's disciples, was the Bible.<sup>35</sup> The means by which they and we must interpret it is to allow it to interpret itself:

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 468-469.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 469.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 472.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 509.

<sup>29</sup>Cartwright, pp. 25-26.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.; cf. pp. 24-25.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

The occasion is drawne from the text it selfe: for whosoever will know the drift of the Scripture, must take it from the place of Scripture it selfe, being sometimes set in the beginning, as in the books of the Proverbs: sometimes in the later end, as in the generall Epistle of Peter: Sometimes in the middest, as in 1. Tim. in one verse the drift is delivered. Sometimes of the whole body of the Scripture, that is handled, whether Psalme, Prophecy, Epistle, &c.<sup>36</sup>

The hermeneutical implications of this statement are considerable: It implies the theological and doctrinal unity of the Bible, by which the teachings of one book are to be interpreted and supplemented by those of another, even though the books were written centuries apart and in cultural settings enormously diverse. It also implies equal authority for Old and New Testaments, with no dispensational denigration of the Hebrew Scriptures. Hence the entire Bible is an instrument of truth.<sup>37</sup>

Cartwright denied that truth is to be detected in the canons and decrees of popes. It is to be found in the Gospels.<sup>38</sup> This truth is to be enjoyed by all people. "It belongeth to all men and all women even to all Gods children of what sort and condition soever they be."<sup>39</sup> Moreover, it is not merely doctrinal knowledge, but experiential relationship. Truth, Cartwright said in effect, must walk and talk.<sup>40</sup> Those who have it are to impart it. Irrespective of his calling, but without assuming any other calling than his own, each person who knows the truth of the Bible is to impart it to others. "Thus those that have knowledge, should teach & instruct them that are ignorant in that which they know not: & in this regard a woman may teach another, one brother another, those that have knowledge to teach the ignorant."<sup>41</sup>

In a similar vein, Perkins declared that no man has authority over any part of canonical Scripture.<sup>42</sup> Monarchs and princes have

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-2.

<sup>37</sup>See *ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 200-201.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>42</sup>Perkins, 3:209.

pre-eminence over all persons within their domains, "but in the Church, they with all others owe homage unto Christ," who requires all to be subject to his laws as contained in the Scriptures.<sup>43</sup> The dispensation of the word, and the administration of the sacraments are divine ordinances, "over which none may dare to claim rule or authority."<sup>44</sup> Hence the papal determination of who should have the Bible and who should not, Perkins said, is a usurpation of the prerogative and authority of Christ. The power of expounding the Scriptures belongs only to Christ. Man is given the power of interpreting one scriptural passage by another, but only as a gift from Christ; "men have no power of themselves, to determine of the proper sense of Scripture."<sup>45</sup>

Indeed, the church is determined by Scripture, not vice-versa. However excellent man's writings may be, they are all inferior to the Bible, for it emanates from God and is his direct gift to the church.<sup>46</sup>

One of the sins of his age, Perkins thought, was the exaltation of human thought above the Bible. Scholarly-type preaching tends to abase the Scriptures.<sup>47</sup> The writings of men are "full of darknesse, of errour and deceit: but the word of God is most holy and pure, and every way perfect."<sup>48</sup>

It is the Holy Spirit who is Christ's special instrument in interpreting the Bible to those human minds which are committed to him.<sup>49</sup> Reason cannot determine with certainty any point of truth. Arguments from natural phenomena may teach correctly that there is a God, "but by the Word of God only I doe beleeve it."<sup>50</sup> Spiritual knowledge, which is undiscerned by instinct or reason, is conveyed only by the Holy Spirit.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.; cf. p. 541.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 213, 6.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 323.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 209; cf. pp. 213, 220, 421.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 39, 210, 431.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 492.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 545.

Every part of the Bible is immutable. Hence the Christian is to retain confidence that what God promises will indeed be fulfilled.<sup>52</sup> In fact, Bible study would result in greater effectiveness for the individual in the practice of his particular vocation.<sup>53</sup> The doctrine of the Bible is an infallible guide by which the true prophet can be distinguished from the false.<sup>54</sup> God predicted that false prophets would arise (Deut 13), but all are to be judged on the basis of the consistency or otherwise of their teachings with Scripture. Perkins rejected the papal view that miracle is the mark of the true prophet.<sup>55</sup>

By "Scripture," Perkins, like his contemporaries who had repudiated Roman Catholicism, meant only the canonical Scriptures; the Apocrypha were not considered to be inspired.<sup>56</sup> He argued that Luther's Reformation was a rediscovery of the canonical Scriptures, but he would not have condoned the type of reasoning by which Luther concluded that some books of the Bible were less authoritative than others.<sup>57</sup> Nor did he condone the claim of various radical reformers to revelations quite independent of the canonical Scriptures. "If the Lord had thought it best, he would have taught these Churches by Revelation: but they must learne by the word written."<sup>58</sup>

The belief of all three of these Puritan preachers in the primary authority of the Bible was not markedly different from the position taken by orthodox Anglicans such as Latimer, Jewel, Hooker, and Andrewes. The difference lay in the frequency with which the Puritans broached the subject and the additional emphasis they gave to their pronouncements. They tended to stress more than did the Anglicans the perfection of the Scriptures. Also, they denigrated mere human literature by comparison, doing so in a

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>57</sup>See *ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 243.

manner which went beyond the statements of the four orthodox Anglicans mentioned above.<sup>59</sup>

The presuppositions of Hooper, Cartwright, and Perkins in regard to the inspiration of the Bible were bound to result in exegetical ultra-literalism. They neglected to take due cognizance of the variant historical settings of the Bible books and of the human element involved in their writing. In practice, as we shall see in our next article, these Puritans supported certain of their doctrinal and procedural commitments by interpretations which were substantially superficial. They tended to read their beliefs into the Bible text, and failed to discern profound and interconnected themes within any one book. Even though their method involved phrase-by-phrase exposition of particular Bible books, their most characteristic exegetical approach was the proof-text method. Particular phrases and texts became stepping-off places for discussion of favorite doctrines, which were then supported by isolated references from many parts of the Bible. The method was the offspring of their presuppositions in regard to Bible inspiration.

In the next article I shall continue the analysis of the exegetical methods of these three preachers under the categories of "Allegory," "Typology," "Literal Exposition of Scripture," "Other Features of Puritan Exegesis," and "Use of the Church Fathers."

*(To be continued)*

<sup>59</sup>Cf. my treatment mentioned in n. 1, above.