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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the role of William Perkins (1558–1602), preeminent Puritan theologian and Cambridge lecturer, as an interpreter of Scripture in the Elizabethan era. Seeking to address a recent scholarly gap, the study analyzes Perkins's hermeneutical practice in his treatise The Combat Between Christ and the Devil Displayed, a series of sermons on the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4:1–11. The investigation follows a three-stage methodology: first, it contextualizes Perkins's life and his conviction in the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture; second, it provides a historical, literary, and grammatical exegesis of Matthew 4:1–11; and finally, it evaluates Perkins's interpretative process in his treatise. The analysis reveals Perkins to be a sensitive reader who prioritized the "natural" or literal sense of the text through literary structure and grammatical analysis, while also considering the broader canonical context. Nevertheless, he occasionally extrapolated semantic meanings to fit the text into categories from Systematic Theology.

KEYWORDS:

William Perkins; Biblical Hermeneutics; The Gospel of Matthew; Jesus's Temptation; Puritanism.

RESUMO

Este artigo investiga o papel de William Perkins (1558-1602), proeminente teólogo puritano e professor em Cambridge, como intérprete das Escrituras na era elisabetana. Buscando suprir uma lacuna recente na pesquisa acadêmica, o estudo analisa a prática hermenêutica de Perkins por meio de seu tratado *The Combat Between Christ and the Devil Displayed*, uma série de sermões sobre a tentação de Jesus em Mateus 4.1-11. A investigação segue uma metodologia em três etapas: primeiro, contextualiza a vida de Perkins e sua convicção na inerrância e na suficiência das Escrituras; em seguida, apresenta uma exegese histórica, literária e gramatical de Mateus 4.1-11; por fim, avalia o processo interpretativo de Perkins em seu tratado. A análise revela Perkins como um leitor sensível, que priorizou o sentido "natural" ou literal do texto por meio da análise da estrutura literária e da gramática, ao mesmo tempo que considerava o contexto canônico mais amplo. Ainda assim, ele ocasionalmente extrapolou significados semânticos para enquadrar o texto em categorias da Teologia Sistemática.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:

William Perkins; hermenêutica bíblica; Evangelho de Mateus; tentação de Jesus; puritanismo.

INTRODUCTION

When we think of the Protestant Reformation movement, it is almost impossible to overestimate the Bible's importance as a fundamental and driving element of what its leading figures promoted and defended. Luther himself recognized this in a sermon in March 1522 in Wittenberg: "I have opposed the indulgences and all the papists, but never by force. I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And then while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my Philip and with Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy, that never a prince or emperor inflicted such damage upon it. I did nothing; the Word did it all" (LUTHER, 1916, p. 399–400).

The influence of Scripture in the unfolding of the Protestant Reformation extended not only to Luther's Saxony but also to the England of the Elizabethan period (1558–1603). As Patrick Collinson observes, "the English Bible, in the hands of the preachers and the ears of their congregations, forged the English nation as a new kind of nation, a Protestant nation and a biblical people" (COLLINSON, 2011, p. 15–16).

One such preacher in 16th-century England was William Perkins. Recognized for his influence as a lecturer at Great Saint Andrew's Church and a fellow of Cambridge University, Perkins has been studied as an important Puritan thinker. However, a gap in Perkins's studies has been identified more recently. Little has been researched and written about Perkins as an interpreter of Scripture (BALLITCH, 2017, p. 5). Aware of this gap and desiring to reduce it, our aim in this paper is to analyze Perkins as a biblical interpreter based on his treatise The Combat Between Christ and the Devil Displayed, a series of sermons on Matthew 4:1–11.

Our investigation will follow three main stages. First, we will study William Perkins's historical context and thoughts on the Holy Scriptures and their correct interpretation. Next, we will present an exegetical analysis of Matthew 4:1–11 to help us evaluate and better understand Perkins's interpretative process. Finally, in the last section, we will study Perkins's interpretative process in the exposition of Matthew 4:1–11 in *The Combat Between Christ and the Devil Displayed*.

1. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF WILLIAM PERKINS AND HIS PERSPECTIVE ON THE SCRIPTURES

This section presents a contextual summary of William Perkins's life and ministry and a brief analysis of his thoughts about the Scriptures and the importance of their correct interpretation. Through this investigation and exposition, we aim to demonstrate the need to study Perkins as a biblical interpreter and pave the way for a better understanding of his thought and interpretation of the Scriptures in *The Combat Between Christ and the Devil Displayed*.[2]

2 Throughout this paper, unless otherwise stated, we use the most recent edition of this specific work: PERKINS, William. The combat between Christ and the devil displayed: or a commentary upon the temptations of Christ. In: **The works of William Perkins**. vol. 1. Edited by J. Stephen Yuille. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014.

1.1 CONTEXTUALIZING WILLIAM PERKINS: A SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE AND MINISTRY

William Perkins was born in 1558 in Marston Jabbett, a village in the Bulkington Parish of Warwickshire (BEEKE, 2019). His lifetime coincided with the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603) (YUILLE; BEEKE, 2014, p. ix; FERGUSON, 2019), dying only some months before the Queen of England in 1602 (LONG, 1989, p. 53).

Perkins's parents, Thomas and Hannah Perkins, seem to have some financial means or were close to the gentry, as his son enrolled as a pensioner at Christ's College, Cambridge, in June 1577 (SCHAEFER JR., 2011, p. 65; BALLITCH, 2017, p. 24; BEEKE; BALLITCH, 2018, p. 126). Perkins studied there from 1577 to 1584. Cambridge University was known for its Puritan sympathies and strong Protestant influence (PEDERSON; BEEKE, 2006, pp. 469–471; SCHAEFER JR., 2011, p. 65; DICKENS, 1981, pp. 66–69, 239). After receiving his BA in 1581 and MA in 1584, Perkins became a fellow at Christ's College (REVELL, 2024, p. 259; YUILLE, 2011, p. 68).

During his university training, Perkins experienced a conversion, though the exact moment is unclear (SCHAEFER JR., 2011, p. 65). While the story of a drunken Perkins being awakened to his sins by a mother pointing him out to her child is likely fictional (PIPA JR., 1985, p. 69; SCHAEFER JR., 2011, p. 65–66),[3] his early writings condemning astrology, magic, and witchcraft suggest a shift from esoteric interests to a commitment to a godly life.[4] The influence of Laurence Chaderton, his tutor in Cambridge and friend (COLLINSON, 2021, p. 125), probably contributed to this change of religious orientation in Perkins's life (YUILLE; BEEKE, 2014, p. xi). Chaderton was a prominent Puritan and critic of the established church (SCHAEFER JR., 2011, p. 65).

From 1584 until his death, Perkins was a lecturer at Great St. Andrew's Church in Cambridge, a significant pulpit near Christ's College (REVELL, 2024, p. 259). He also held the position of Fellow at Christ's College from 1584 to 1595, during which he was expected to preach, lecture, and tutor students, serving as both an educator and a moral guide (PEDERSON; BEEKE, 2006, p. 471). On Thursday afternoons, Perkins catechized students at Corpus Christi College, lecturing on the Ten Commandments (PIPA JR., 1985, p. 74). On Sunday afternoons, he provided counsel to those facing spiritual distress (PEDERSON; BEEKE, 2006, p. 471; BEEKE, 2019).

Perkins held various roles within the University, including serving as Dean of Christ's College from 1590 to 1591 (YUILLE; BEEKE, 2014, p. xiii; PIPA JR., 1985, p. 74). On July 2, 1595, he married Timothye Cradocke, a young widow from Grant Chester, and resigned his fellowship at Christ's College (SCHAEFER JR., 2011, p. 68; FERGUSON, 2019).

Like many of his time, Perkins struggled with health issues, notably kidney stones. After enduring several painful weeks in 1602, he passed away on October 22 at the age of forty-four (BREWARD, 1966, p. 127; BEEKE; BALLITCH, 2018, pp. 127–128; LONG, 1989, p. 54; BALLITCH, 2017, p. 28; PEDERSON; BEEKE, 2006, p. 474). At the time, "his wife was pregnant with their seventh child while caring for three children and mourning the loss of others" (BALLITCH, 2017, p. 28). His close friend James Montague, who later became the bishop of Winchester, delivered Perkins's funeral sermon, using the text from Joshua 1:2: "Moses my servant is dead" (LONG, 1989, p. 54; YUILLE; BEEKE, 2014, p. xvi).

3 Nevertheless, many of Perkins's biographical presentations narrate this supposed incident without any observation about the uncertainty of the episode. See, for example, Beeke; Ballitch, 2018, p. 126; Ballitch, 2017, p. 24. In *Meet the Puritans* (2006, p. 469), Pederson and Beeke are more cautious by saying: "Perkins experienced a powerful conversion that *probably began* when he overheard a woman in the street chide her naughty child by alluding to 'drunken Perkins'" (emphasis added).

4 Perkins mentions his previous involvement with prognostication and astrology in "A Resolution to the Country Man" (Perkins, 2020a, p. 409). See Breward, 1966, p. 116–117; Pipa Jr., 1985, p. 70.

Recognized by many scholars as an important figure in the Puritan movement and the Elizabethan Church of England,[5] William Perkins exerted a significant influence during his lifetime, both in academic (as a fellow of Christ's College) and literary contexts (as the author of several works), as well as in his responsibility as lecturer at Great Saint Andrews (BOZEMAN, 2004, pp. 68, 84–85; BEEKE; BALLITCH, 2018, pp. 126–127). While he was not satisfied with the condition of the worship and piety in the Church of England, he did not believe that the Elizabethan church was incapable of reform (BLACKETER, 2005, p. 40).

Some incidents during William Perkins's career reveal a critical attitude towards specific aspects of the Church of England of his time. At the beginning of his work as a fellow of Christ's College in 1587, Perkins questioned whether it was appropriate to kneel to participate in Communion, one of the ritual elements established by the Elizabethan Religious Settlement (BREWARD, 1963, p. 25; SCHAEFER JR., 2011, p. 66; YUILLE, BEEKE, 2014, pp. xiv–xv). Later, he was also summoned by the Star Chamber and questioned about his attendance at a 1589 meeting that debated discipline in a Presbyterian system (MULLER, 2020, p. 11).[6] In his texts, Perkins recognizes that there were "many and grievous" "sins and abuses" as well as "corruptions" in the Church of England of his time. However, it did not prevent him from saying that "in England God has His true church" (PERKINS, 2014, p. 123; see also SCHAEFER JR., 2011, p. 69).

On the other hand, Perkins was openly critical of the separatists of his time, calling them "'sectaries,' who addict themselves to the opinion of some man" (PERKINS, 2019, p. 569). This kind of person is a "schismatic and indiscreet company who would seem to cry out for discipline." According to Perkins, they "are full of pride, thinking themselves to be full when they are empty, to have all knowledge when they are ignorant, and have a need to be catechized" (PERKINS, 2019, p. 569–570). Since the Church of England preaches the gospel and ministers the sacraments, "none should sever themselves from our church ministry and service of God. Those therefore that make a separation from our church because of corruptions in it, are far from the Spirit of Christ and His apostles" (Perkins, 2014, p. 123).

Therefore, to some extent, William Perkins was a conformist who was not wholly content with the Elizabethan Church's situation. He defended the remaining in the Church of England but was nevertheless critical of spirituality (PIPA JR.; YUILLE, 2020, p. xi) and collective worship that needed reform. His preaching and writings, grounded in the Scriptures, were the weapons he had at his disposal to advance the Reformation in his country.

Perkins's reach through his texts is astonishing. Bozeman describes Perkins as the "Puritan pietism's greatest publicist" and "greatest literary disseminator of the new spirituality" (BOZEMAN, 2004, p. 68). During his lifetime, Perkins saw forty editions of his works published and became a bestseller in his day (BRUHN, 2003, p. 107; REVELL, 2024, p. 259, n. 11). As stated by Breward:

> These gifts for popularization, his ability to produce a steady stream of books of readable length and a spiritual stature which made a deep impression on many who knew him, gave him the attention of many who would have neither

5 Collinson, for example, calls Perkins "the prince of puritan theologians" (Collinson, 2021, p. 125). A. G. Dickens considers him one of the "Elizabethan England Puritan preachers" and "the great master" in the art of preaching (Dickens, 1981, pp. 314–315). According to Richard A. Muller, "Perkins' thought, therefore, can be described as contextually situated in the Elizabethan Settlement, framed by a distinctly English version of Reformed orthodoxy, and, in some of its accents, adumbrating the rising tide of Puritanism" (Muller, 2020, pp. 9–10)

6 Collinson discusses this incident in one of his works and finds Perkins's participation in this meeting surprising, given that he had practically no other association with the Presbyterian movement of his time (Collinson, 2021, pp. 401–402). Schaefer Jr. suggests that Perkins's "presence at the Star Chamber appears to have been as a witness for the prosecution!" (Schaefer Jr., 2011, p. 67). See also Ballitch, 2017, p. 26.

> the time nor the energy to read his sources. He was far more than a clever plagiarist whose work was a jumble of extracts from unacknowledged sources. Reading with discrimination and with catholic breadth, he stamped his books with simplicity, deep pastoral concern and sensitivity to the needs of the time. (BREWARD, 1966, 127)

By his death, Perkins had produced an enormous volume of commentaries, theological treatises, and devotional works that became extremely popular in England and on the Continent (REVELLL, 2024, p. 259, n. 10). His writings were more popular in England than those of Calvin, Beza, and Bullinger (BLACKETER, 2005, p. 48; BEEKE, 2019; YUILLE, 2014, p. xxxiii). Between 1602 and 1635, eleven editions of around fifty of his works were published. At least fifty editions of his texts were published in Switzerland and Germany. His works were translated into Spanish, Welsh, Irish, French, Italian, Hungarian, and Czech (YUILLE; BEEKE, 2014, pp. xvi–xvii; LONG, 1989, p. 53; BRUHN, 2003, p. 107–108).

All these data, such as the scope of his works, his ministerial influence, and his middle-way stance (neither absolute conformism nor radical separatism), underscore the importance of analyzing Perkins's life and thought. Nevertheless, as Ballitch has observed, "Perkins was a creative man of his times who devoted his multifaceted career as preacher, teacher, theologian, polemicist, and popular author to one thing: the exposition of Scripture for the purpose of further reformation" (BALLITCH, 2017, p. 4).

This statement by Ballitch aligns with the perspective of Joseph Pipa Jr., who recognizes the preaching of the Scriptures as the primary instrument of Puritanism in advancing reform in the Church of England. "Noting the important role of the sermon in English society, one ought not be surprised that the Puritans laid hold of the pulpit as their great engine of reform. In their day, preaching was the most effective way to capture the minds and hearts of the people" (PIPA JR., 1985, p. 31).

In this way, analyzing Perkins's relationship with the Scriptures and how he interpreted them will help us understand his hermeneutical process in practice and offer an example of how the Bible was read and understood by one of the leading theological thinkers of the Elizabethan era. If a researcher does not understand Perkins's view of Scripture, "any attempt to analyse his theology is doomed to failure" (BREWARD, 1963, p. 35).

1.2 PERKINS'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SCRIPTURES AND THEIR CORRECT INTERPRETATION

The Scriptures were central to William Perkins's preaching ministry at Great Saint Andrew's. According to Breward, to never forget the seriousness of his task of bringing men before God through preaching the divine Word, Perkins wrote in the flyleaf of his books: "Thou art minister of the word; mind thy business" (BREWARD, 1963, p. 35).

Perkins believed in the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture,[7] establishing both his life and ministry upon this conviction (BEEKE; BALLITCH, 2018, p. 131). By its very nature, it is the Word of God, a truth that emerges from its divine inspiration by the Spirit.

7 "The Word of God is the wisdom of God concerning the truth which is according unto godliness, descending from above. ... The perfection is either the sufficiency or the purity. The sufficiency is that whereby the Word of God is so complete that nothing may be either put to it or taken from it, which appertains to the proper end thereof. ... The purity thereof is whereby it remains entire in itself, void of deceit and error" (Perkins, 2020b, p. 291)

> Divine are the books of the Old and New Testament, penned either by prophets or apostles. And these are not only the pure word of God but also the scripture of God, because not only the matter of them but the whole disposition thereof with the style and the phrase was set down by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost. And the authority of these books is divine—that is, absolute and sovereign—and they are of sufficient credit in and by themselves, needing not the testimony of any creature, not subject to the censure either of men or angels, binding the consciences of all men at all times, and being the only foundation of our faith and the rule and canon of all truth. (PERKINS, 2017, p. 7)

He still held that the Bible was the primary vehicle used by the Holy Spirit for people to believe in the gospel and have their minds renewed to grow in holiness; there is no true spirituality dissociated from the Word of God in the Scriptures (SCHAEFER JR., 2011, p. 84; BREWARD, 1963, p. 35; PERKINS, 2018, p. 187). According to Perkins, "The Scripture is the Word of God written in a language fit for the church by men immediately called to be the clerks (or secretaries) of the Holy Spirit ... the elect, having the Spirit of God, do first discern the voice of Christ speaking in the Scriptures" (PERKINS, 2020, p. 292, 297).

The need to interpret the Bible correctly is a corollary of the authority of the Scriptures and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit to understand them. In this sense, Perkins's emphasis on the process of interpreting Scripture in his book on preaching, *The Art of Prophesying*, is striking. As Ferguson noted, for Perkins, "These two disciplines cannot be separated. Hermeneutics and homiletics form one marriage; exegesis gives birth to exposition and application" (FERGUSON, 2019).

This researcher analyzed the percentage of the text dedicated to hermeneutical discussion in *The Art of Prophesying* and observed that Perkins devoted 37.65% more content to the interpretation process and principles than to homiletics proper. The table below draws on the most recent edition by Joseph A. Pipa Jr. and J. Stephen Yuille (PERKINS, 2020, pp. 281–356). The whole content of each chapter was calculated, excluding only the chapter's title.

The Art of Prophesying: Hermeneutics and Homiletics Sections			
Chapters on Hermeneutics	**Words**	**Chapters on Homiletics**	**Words**
Chapter 4	3,127	Chapter 6	1,594
Chapter 5	7,918	Chapter 7	4,320
		Chapter 8	1,323
		Chapter 9	280
		Chapter 10	507
Total Words	11,045	*Total Words*	8,024

This simple analysis of word count reveals how vital the interpretative process was to Perkins. Perkins's primary focus, therefore, seems to be not on the form in which the content is delivered in a preaching, but, first and foremost, on a faithful interpretation of the text and its consequent application to those to whom the minister proclaims the Holy Scriptures.

Although he was a precritical interpreter (BALLTICH, 2017, p. 29), Perkins rejected the fourfold sense of Scriptures, which was quite common in the medieval period, and defended a "natural sense" or "literal

sense" (PERKINS, 2020, p. 303; see also BALLITCH, 2017, p. 29; PIPA JR., 1985, p. 90),[8] which must be respected and discovered by the reader. This literal sense is understood in terms of "a grammatical, rhetorical, and logical analysis" (PERKINS, 2020, p. 301), which includes many hermeneutical principles he expounds in chapters 4 and 5.[9]

Since this paper will investigate Perkins's hermeneutics practice in *The Combat Between Christ and the Devil Displayed* in an inductive way, our purpose in this subsection is not to expound Perkins's method in *The Art of Prophesying* but only to show the importance this Puritan gave to the adequate biblical interpretation for a faithful preaching of God's Word. In the last section, we will examine how Perkins interpreted the Scriptures and what hermeneutical principles emanated from his practice.

2. AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW 4:1–11

An adequate interpretation of Matthew 4:1–11 and a proper evaluation of its reception in William Perkins's *The Combat between Christ and the Devil Displayed* require, first of all, an investigation of the biblical passage's canonical context and an analysis of the Greek text's literary, syntactic, and semantic elements. Therefore, this section will use synchronic and diachronic[10] approaches' components to examine the biblical text and understand its message before investigating how William Perkins interpreted and applied Jesus's Temptation pericope in the Gospel of Matthew.

2.1 THE CANONICAL AND LITERARY CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 4:1–11

The beginning of Matthew's Gospel establishes a striking identification between Jesus and Israel, showing how Jesus embodies and experiences the nation's history and destiny and fulfills the hopes of the Old Testament (OSBORNE, 2010, pp. 38–39; HAYS, 2016, p. 113; FRANCE, 1985, pp. 73–74; MCLENNAN, 2023, p. 42). In Matthew 2:13–18, for example, Jesus relives the story of God's people going to Egypt with their fathers and, from there, returning to the Land of Promise. This leads the Evangelist to say that "thus was *fulfilled* [*plēroō*]" the words of Hosea 11:1: "Out of Egypt I called my son" (Mt 2:15). Here, in a typological way, Jesus fulfills the destiny of the nation by reliving the Exodus and being identified as the Son of God, in the same way that Israel is called Yahweh's "firstborn" in Exodus 4:22–23 (HAYS, 2016, pp. 113–114).

In an even more explicit way, Jesus will be recognized as the Son of God in the baptism scene: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17; cf. Ps 2:7; Is 42:1). The use of the verb *plēroō* ("to fulfill") once again, now in the mouth of Jesus himself (Mt 3:15), points to his identification with sinful

8 Blacketer does not affirm that Perkins rejects totally this fourfold sense: "In the midst of this discussion of commonplaces, Perkins argues that the traditional fourfold interpretation of Scripture (the literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical senses) really boil down to the literal sense. While Perkins says that this fourfold scheme must be 'exploded and rejected,' he in fact preserves these senses by condensing them into the literal sense, and allowing for their use as means of making practical application of a text" (Blacketer, 2005, p. 48).

9 See Ballitch's detailed analysis in his dissertation (2017, p. 69–81) of the hermeneutical principles in *The Art of Prophesying*.

10 The *synchronic approach* is concerned with the final form of the biblical text. It investigates elements related to the literary structure and cohesion of the biblical passage, its relationship to the broader context, and the rhetorical criticism of the text. The *diachronic approach* focuses on the origin and development of a text and involves the following elements: textual criticism, syntactic and semantic studies, analysis of redactional layers, and study of the historical-cultural environment of the text's production (see Gorman, 2001, p. 12–17). As our focus will be the canonical form of Matthew 4:1–11, we will not, in our diachronic approach, discuss the historical process behind the text, giving more attention to the syntactic and semantic elements.

Israel ("he will save his people from their sins," 1:21), who crosses the waters and enters the Promised Land (3:15–17) (HAYS, 2016, pp. 116–117).

This typological link between Jesus and the nation of Israel continues in chapter 4. As Israel "emerged" from the sea waters to wander through the desert and experience the testing of the hearts (Deut. 8:1–5), Jesus emerged from the Jordan to be tested in the desert (Matt. 3:13–4:11) (TALBERT, 2010, p. 60). The "forty days and forty nights" that Jesus spent fasting in the desert go back to the forty years that the Israelites wandered before finally entering Canaan (CARSON, 2010, p. 52–53; OKOYE et al., 2024, p. 495). As we will see later, this relationship is reinforced by Jesus' first quotation of Scripture (Deut. 8:3 in Matt. 4:3), since the Deuteronomistic text reminds Israel of their journey through the desert as a period of trial in which the nation's heart was tested (Deut. 8:1-5).

The sequence of temptations in Matthew 4 is also reminiscent of Israel's experience in the desert: doubt about God's care because of the famine (Ex. 16); the people testing God because of the lack of water (Ex. 17); finally, idolatry at the foot of Mount Sinai (Ex. 32) (Talbert, 2010, 60).

Recovering the Deuteronomistic context of Jesus' words implies shedding immediate light on the meaning of Jesus' temptation. Like Israel, he is at the end of his time in the desert; the Devil's proposals will test whether Jesus has humbled himself and will obey God's commandments. If Jesus accepts the suggestion to turn stones into bread, he will show his lack of trust in the God who can provide manna from heaven for those who are hungry. But if he rejects the temptation, Jesus will show his trust in God's word, which is, in fact, perfectly represented by his quotation of what is written (HAYS, 2016, p. 118).

In the episode of Jesus's temptation, "there is ... a movement from lower (desert) to higher (pinnacle of the temple) to highest (a high mountain)" (TALBERT, 2010, p. 60). Also, it leads the reader from the last preparatory episode (Matt. 4:1–11) to his initial public ministry in the region of Galilee (4:12–25) (TURNER, 2008, p. 124). The attestation of the heavenly voice in the Jordan baptism and Jesus's success in the testing are introductory qualifications for the ministry he will develop in the following chapters of the book (NOLLAND, 2005, 151–152; KEENER, 1997).

In Matthew 4:1–11, the Devil makes three proposals to divert Jesus from the mission the Father had reserved for him. During this period of temptation in the desert, Jesus quotes the Hebrew Scriptures three times in response to the adversary's attacks. By quoting passages related to Israel's test in the wilderness, Jesus defeats Satan and fulfills his vocation as the perfect Israel (MORRIS, 1992, p. 71; HAGNER, 1993, p. 62; AN, 2018, p. 18).

The passage's structure is not complex. It contains three scenes of temptation (vv. 3–10), which are framed by an introduction (vv. 1–2) and a conclusion (v. 11) (LUZ, 2007, p. 147; NEWMAN; STINE, 1992, p. 77; HAGNER, 1993, p. 62; see LARSEN, 1986, pp. 33–41). Thus, a brief exegetical sketch of the passage is presented below:[11]

a. Introduction: Jesus's Temptation Scenario (4:1–2)
b. The First Temptation and Biblical Response (4:3–4)
c. The Second Temptation and Biblical Response (4:5–7)
d. The Third Temptation and Biblical Response (4:8–10)
e. Conclusion: The Departure of Satan and the Ministry of the Angels (4:11)

11 This outline is adapted from Turner, 2008, p. 125.

2.2 INTRODUCTION: JESUS'S TEMPTATION SCENARIO (MATT. 4:1–2)

The "Spirit" (*pneuma*) in the introduction of Matthew 4:1–11 connects this passage to the preceding pericope (LUZ, 2007, p. 148). The same "Spirit" who had descended on Jesus at his baptism in Matthew 3:16 now led him into another desert (4:1) (OSBORNE, 2010, p. 131), a place not as populated as the one where John the Baptist had proclaimed his message (cf. Mt 3:1). The purpose of taking him there was so that he would be tempted by the Devil (Greek: *diabolos*), a term used in the Greek version of the OT to translate the word "Satan" (Hebrew: *śāṭān*), the "adversary" of God (e.g., 1 Chr. 21:1; Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7; Zec 3:1–2; cf. 2 Cor. 2:11) (CARSON, 2010, p. 140).

The verb *anagō* ("lead up", "bring up") does not mean the Spirit just *went before* or *showed him the way*; instead, the Spirit *brought* or *took* Jesus into the wilderness (*eis tēn erēmon*) (NEWMAN; STINE, 1992, p. 78; BAUER et al., 2000, p. 61). Matthew uses the verb *anagō* in the passive voice: Jesus "*was led up* by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." The next passive verb is in the infinitive (*peirasthēnai*, "to be tempted") and indicates purpose (QUARLES, 2017, p. 39; TURNER, 2008, p. 126; NEWMAN; STINE, 1992, p. 79).[12] "In Jesus' 'temptations', God clearly purposed to test him just as Israel was tested, and Jesus' responses prove that he understood" (CARSON, 2010, p. 141). The Spirit is the true initiator of this situation ("Jesus was *led up by the Spirit* "), and it confirms the Judaism and NT understanding that the Devil is not God's equal opponent but works under God's sovereign design (LUZ, 2007, p. 151; OSBORNE, 2010, p. 131).

Therefore, the opening note of verse 1 warns against two widespread mistakes: blaming God for the temptation (Matthew says that "Jesus was led up [...] *to be tempted by the Devil*") and crediting the Devil with the power to act independently of God (the Evangelist also says that "Jesus was *led up by the Spirit* [...] to be tempted by the Devil") (BLOMBERG, 1992, p. 83). Although the Devil is clearly the agent of temptation, it is not outside God's design and purpose (FRANCE, 1985, p. 103; OSBORNE, 2010, p. 131).

The fast established by the Jewish cult only covered the day, i.e., from sunrise to sunset (RIENECKER, 2018, p. 65). However, Jesus spent forty days in complete abstinence from food, as indicated by the expression "forty days and *forty nights*" (Mt 4.2). This fast undoubtedly involved a time of intimate communion with the Father and preparation for the temptation he would soon face.

The forty days in the desert in which Jesus is tempted evoke the forty years in which the people of Israel had been tested in the desert (Deut. 8.2) (VILJOEN, 2020, p. 2; FRANCE, 1985, p. 103; BLOMBERG, 1992, p. 83; TURNER, 2008, pp. 126–127). "Jesus' fast ... of forty days and nights reflected Israel's forty-year wandering (Dt 8:2). Both Israel's and Jesus' hunger taught a lesson (Dt 8:3); both spent time in the desert preparatory to their respective tasks" (CARSON, 2010, p. 141; OKOYE et al., 2024, p. 499; NOLLAND, 2005, p. 163).

Besides that, Jesus's "forty days and forty nights" (*hēmeras tesserakonta kai nyktas tesserakonta*) fast harks back to Moses himself, who spent "forty days and forty nights" (LXX: *tesserakonta hēmeras kai tesserakonta nyktas*) without "eating bread nor drinking water" on Mount Sinai (LUZ, 2007, p. 151; OSBORNE, 2010, p. 132; NOLLAND, 2005, p. 163). There, he received the divine commandments and guidance for building the Tabernacle (Ex. 34:28, LXX; Deut. 9:9, LXX; cf. Deut. 9.11, 18, 25; 10:10). Unlike Moses, however, Jesus was not in a life-sustaining proximity to YHWH at the top of Mount Sinai, which makes Jesus' fast extraordinary hard and points to someone greater than Moses (cf. Heb. 3:1–6) (MOUNCE, 2011, p. 29; LUZ, 2007, p. 151).

12 The Blass, Debrunner, and Funk's Greek grammar (1961, p. 197, §390) identifies Matthew 4:1 as an infinitive of purpose. According to them, the "infinitive of purpose likewise dates very far back and it certainly has a much wider range of usage in Homer than in Attic authors, who use it mostly after verbs meaning 'to give, appoint, present, send', etc. (1) In the NT it has become common again in a wide sphere (probably under Ionic influence) with a variety of verbs of motion (cf. LX X, Thack. 24; Huber 80), and is the equivalent of a final clause."

2.3 THE FIRST TEMPTATION AND BIBLICAL RESPONSE (MATT. 4:3–4)

It was only natural that, after so long without eating, Jesus would feel hungry, as the text tells us. Taking advantage of this situation, the "tempter" approaches[13] Jesus and makes his first proposal: "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread" (v. 2). In this diabolical approach, there is a questioning of God's previous declaration in the baptism scene: "*This is my beloved Son*, in whom I am well pleased" (3:17). As has been his *modus operandi* since Eden (Gen 3.1), the Devil here casts doubt on God's Word (TURNER, 2008, p. 128).

Jesus as the Son of God is a recurring theme in the previous context of Matthew's Gospel. While implied in the nativity narrative (1:18, 20, 23), it becomes explicit in the flight to Egypt and the baptismal scene (2:15; 3:17). Now, in Jesus's testing, it is the central theme that goes back to God's statement at the end of the preceding pericope (HAGNER, 1993, p. 61; FRANCE, 1985, p. 74; MORRIS, 1992, p. 71; QUARLES, 2013, p. 148).

> Here in all three temptations a *positive* statement is central: Jesus authenticates his divine sonship that was pronounced to him in the baptismal narrative. He does so in obedience to the word of God in the OT and in this way he defeats Satan. In all three temptations the Son of God proves his relationship to God in his obedience to the Bible. (LUZ, 2007, p. 150)

By calling the Devil *ho peirazōn* ("the tempter"), Matthew links the verb of Jesus' temptation (*peirasthēnai*, "be tempted") to its fundamental agent, "the tempter." This adjective use of the participle *peirazōn* will be applied to the religious leaders in other parts of the Gospel (see Matt. 12:38; 16:1; 19:3; 22:15, 18, 35) (TURNER, 2008, 127).

The proposal to turn the stones into loaves is only properly understood when seen in the light of Jesus' response.[14] The tempter was questioning Jesus' divine sonship by suggesting the incoherence of someone who claims to have all power and sufficiency at his disposal and yet goes hungry. He induces Jesus to use his power to satisfy his needs without depending on the Father. If stones can become Abraham's children (3:9) or provide water for Israel in the desert (Ex 17:1-7), they can satisfy Jesus's hunger (BLOMBERG, 1992, p. 84; see TURNER, 2008, p. 128).

Fleeing suffering meant fleeing the self-emptying that accompanied his mission and God's purpose for his Son (cf. Mt 26:53–54) (MITCH; SRI, 2010, pp. 74–75; CARSON, 2010, p. 141). Later in Matthew's Gospel, a similar question about divine sonship occurs during the crucifixion: "You who destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! *Come down from the cross if you are the Son of God!*" (27:40).

Instead of yielding to the tempter's proposal, Jesus resists the Devil's assault by quoting Scripture and recognizing that his want experience is part of God's design (FRANCE, 1985, pp. 103–104). Jesus' response to the Devil is not based on a logical argument but on the Word of God itself.[15] "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'" (Matt. 4:4, quoting

13 "The arrival of Satan is expressed by the participle προσελθών. The verb προσέρχομαι occurs more than fifty times in Matthew, often describing the arrival of Jesus's disciples or opponents at the beginning of a pericope." (Turner, 2008, p. 127).

14 "The stones may well have been small ones, resembling in size and general appearance the small loaves that were often used" (Morris, 1992, p. 74).

15 "*Every word* is comprehensive: Jesus is not suggesting that parts of Scripture may safely be neglected, but affirming that it is profitable in its entirety. The reason is apparent in the words *that goes out through God's mouth.* Jesus views God as the author of Scripture, and because of this, it must be heeded carefully" (Morris, 1992, p. 75, emphasis original).

Deut. 8:3). Just as God had led Israel into the desert to teach them to depend on the Lord for their provision and trust God's care for his people (for example, the manna in Deut. 8:3), Jesus, when tempted in the desert, had to trust and wait on the Father, not try his way to eliminate his physical suffering (OSBORNE, 2010, p. 133; BLOMBERG, 1992, p. 84).

As Carson commented: "Israel demanded its bread but died in the wilderness; Jesus denied himself bread, retained his righteousness, and lived by faithful submission to God's word" (CARSON, 2010, 142; LUZ, 2007, 152).

At the end of the temptation, the Father supplied his Son's needs through the angels who served him (Mt 4:11) (see KEENER, 1997). Although he was the Son of God, he was also a "man" (*anthrōpos* in 4:4), and like every man, he had to depend on and submit to the Word of God (cf. John 4:34) (MAIER, 2015, p. 192; CARSON, 2010, p. 142; MOUNCE, 2011, p. 29). Jesus is determined to endure the conditions of human existence in their entirety. Using God's gifts to free oneself personally from hardship and suffering is anti-divine! As Israel's true representative and fulfillment, Jesus succeeds precisely where the nation failed (Ex. 16:1–30) (RIENICKER, 2018, p. 66)!

2.4 THE SECOND TEMPTATION AND THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE (MATT. 4:5–7)

Confronted with the failure of his initial temptation, Satan resorts to a different strategy in his attempt to defeat the Son of God. He leads Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple,[16] in the "holy city," a common designation for Jerusalem (Matt. 27:53; Isa. 52:1; Neh. 11:1, 18; Dan. 3:28, LXX) (HAGNER, 1993, p. 66). There is some debate about where this temptation occurs in the sanctuary (OSBORNE, 2010, p. 133, n. 20; LUZ, 2007, p. 152, n. 38; HAGNER, 1993, p. 66). However, the central element is that the temple was considered the dwelling place of God and where his glorious presence and protection were manifested (VILJOEN, 2020, p. 2).

Within this sacred space, the Devil challenges Jesus to demonstrate God's paternal care by casting Himself into the depths below. The tempter "uses Jesus' own weapons against him and also quotes the Bible" (LUZ, 2007, p. 152). The satanic proposal is rooted in Psalm 91:11–12, wherein God assures protection to the faithful on their path. The implicit argument suggests that if such promises are extended to ordinary believers, they would be all the more applicable to Jesus, who has been affirmed as the Son of God by the divine proclamation at His baptism (Matthew 3:17) (HAGNER, 1993, p. 67).

Jesus identified a danger behind this proposal. Throwing himself off the top of the temple was a way of manipulating God, testing how genuine his care for him was. It meant challenging God's faithfulness in an undue way (BLOMBERG, 1992, pp. 84–85; CARSON, 2010, p. 142). For this reason, the Son of God once again quotes Scripture, showing that a text cannot be used apart from the whole of Scripture. "It is also written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God'" (Matt. 4:7; cf. Deut. 6:16).

Jesus quotes a passage from Deuteronomy that refers to an earlier event in which the Israelites questioned God's faithfulness in supplying the water they needed in the desert (Ex. 17:2). To demand that God take care of Jesus when he was thrown down from the temple was to force God to use his caring

16 From the context ("throw yourself down", Matt. 4:6), it is probably a physical rapture, not just a visionary experience. See Maier, 2015, p. 192.

power in a miraculous way that he had not promised (FRANCE, 1985, p. 104; BLOMBERG, 1992, pp. 84–85). "Trust in God cannot be turned into presumption" (TALBERT, 2010, p. 61).

"In repelling this temptation, Jesus declares that the miraculous measures of help promised to him by the Father will only be used to help him in those situations in which the Father leads him and from which he again wants to save him" (RIENECKER, 2018, p. 68). It is not Jesus who tells the Father when he shows his care, but the Father himself in situations he establishes in the Son's mission. Jesus' response here also anticipates the next time he will enter the temple: not performing signs and wonders, but as a humble king full of zeal for his Father's house (LUZ, 2007, pp. 152–153).

2.5 THE THIRD TEMPTATION AND THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE (MATT. 4:8–10)

Finally, Satan resorts to the last temptation. He takes Jesus to a "very high mountain" (*oros hypsēlon lian*) and from there shows him, in vision, "all the kingdoms of this world and their glory" (Lk 4.5,6). Mountains play an important role throughout Matthew's Gospel. Jesus' longest sermon in Matthew is delivered on a mountain (Matt 5:1; 8:1), and Jesus' last words are also spoken on a mountain (28:16). However, the text with the closest linguistic parallel to Matthew 4:8 is the transfiguration scene, in which Jesus climbs a "high mountain" (*oros hypsēlon*) with three of his disciples (Matt 17:1). The supernatural events of the two "high mounts" (Satan's appearance to Jesus and Jesus' glorious transfiguration before his disciples, who hear a voice from heaven) may be the link that connects both texts (NOLLAND, 2005, p. 166; OSBORNE, 2010, p. 135).

John Nolland observes that "a steady rise in altitude—from wilderness, to temple pinnacle, to a mountaintop from which all the kingdoms of the world are visible—is appropriate to the role of the third temptation as climax" (NOLLAND, 2005, p. 166).

As the "god of this age" (2 Cor 4:3), Satan offers Jesus the supreme power and riches a man could have, more than the Roman emperor of the time. However, there is one condition for Jesus to receive them: he must no longer devote his exclusive loyalty to the Father but to Satan himself (NETO, 2022, p. 141; FRANCE, 1985, pp. 104–105). "Since the issue of political domination is significant to the Jews, the appeal was for political authority, a dream that had long haunted the Jews" (OKOYE et al., 2024, p. 502).

The Devil's proposal is no more glorious than the promise of the Father himself to the Son: "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps 2:8–9, ESV). The big difference is that the kingdom guaranteed by the Father went before the humiliation of the cross, whereas the Devil guaranteed him a pathway to glory without suffering (Mounce, 2011, p. 31; Keener, 1997; Blomberg, 1992, p. 85). Before taking on the crown of the anointed King, Jesus had to take up the cross of the Suffering Servant (CARSON, 2010, pp. 142–143; OSBORNE, 2010, pp. 134–135).

The condition set by Satan called into question Jesus' exclusive loyalty and worship of the Father (FRANCE, 1985, p. 104). To receive the diabolical gift, Jesus would worship the world and its god and would turn away from exclusive devotion to the true God. This would mean falling into the same sin that Israel fell into so many times during their wanderings in the desert (e.g., Ex 32:1–6; Num. 25:1–9) (TURNER, 2008, p. 130; OSBORNE, 2010, p. 135). Therefore, in contrast to the former Israel, Jesus responds with Scriptures again: "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve" (Deut. 6:13).

The authority of Scripture allows Jesus to take the attack position in this battle against the tempter and to identify him as the "adversary" (*satana*) of God's people. With just two words, Jesus commands

Satan to withdraw (*hypage, Satana*, Matt 4:10). The use of the imperative and the brevity of the command are common in New Testament exorcisms (e.g., Matt 8:32; Mark 1:25) (OSBORNE, 2010, p. 135).

Just as Jesus resisted Satan's offer of authority on a mountain (Matt 4:8-10), so on a mountain, he will declare to his disciples that he has received from the Father "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matt 28:16–18, ESV).

> After Jesus, as the obedient Son of God, has rejected divine demonstrations of power, has suffered, and has died on the cross, there finally takes place, again on a mountain (28:16), the proclamation of his power not only over all the kingdoms of the world but over heaven and earth (28:18). The renunciation of power by the earthly Jesus points ahead to the authority of the risen Jesus. (LUZ, 2007, 153)

2.5 CONCLUSION: THE DEPARTURE OF SATAN AND THE MINISTRY OF THE ANGELS (MATT. 4:11)

Confronted with Jesus' command grounded in Scripture, Satan retreats, defeated in this first confrontation (RIENECKER, 2018, p. 69). The use of the present aspect in the Greek *aphiēsin* (usually translated as "left") may indicate that Satan left Jesus only for a while (cf. Luke 4:13) (OSBORNE, 2010, p. 136).[17] Later in the Gospel, Jesus will face new temptations (see Matt. 16:22–23; 26:36–46) (NOLLAND, 2005, p. 168).

At the beginning of the pericope, the Devil *approached* (*proserchomai*) Jesus to tempt him (Matt 4:3); now, the angels of God *approach* (*proserchomai*) Jesus to "serve" him (Matt 4:11).

Matthew emphasizes the significance of angelic appearances in his Gospel by frequently using the term *idou* ("behold") as an interjection. Notably, Matthew incorporates *idou* to highlight the importance of the angel's intervention and interaction with characters in several instances (Mt 1:20; 2:13, 19; 4:11; 28:2), as he does in the last verse of this text (4:11) (VILJOEN, 2020, p. 3).

The angelic provision is not merely a fleeting blessing but a continuous one, as suggested by the imperfect tense's inchoative use (or inceptive use) (WALLACE, 1996, pp. 544–545). While Jesus chose not to fulfill his hunger by miraculously turning stones into bread, he is now supernaturally nourished. The verb *diakoneō* ("attended"), which is often associated with food (see Matt. 8:15; 25:44; 27:55; Acts 6:2),[18] reinforces this idea. In some way, this scene is reminiscent of the miraculous provision for Elijah in 1 Kings 19:6–7 (CARSON, 2010, p. 143).

17 Or it is simply a "historical present" (Quarles, 2017, p. 41).

18 "διακονεῖν can mean 'serve' in a quite broad sense, but in the present context the original verbal imagery of serving at table makes a reference to providing food very likely. Cf. the reference in Ps. 78:25 to 'the bread of angels' provided in the wilderness, and 1 Ki. 19:5–8, where Elijah is fed by an angel" (Nolland, 2005, p. 169, n. 62).

3. WILLIAM PERKINS'S INTERPRETATION OF MATTHEW 4:1–11

The Combat Between Christ and the Devil Displayed is the fruit of a series of sermons on Matthew 4:1-11 that Perkins preached in Cambridge (BALLITCH, 2017, p. 109). The first edition was compiled and edited by a former acquaintance of Perkins and a fellow student at St. John's College (PERKINS, 2014, 76, 83; cf. BALLITCH, 2017, 109). After Perkins's death, the executors of Perkins's will commissioned Thomas Pierson to revise and expand the first edition based on a more complete copy of the sermon notes (PERKINS, 2014, p. 71). This second edition was printed in 1606 (DRESEN JR., 2023, p. 27).

At the beginning of his exposition, Perkins presents a pastoral purpose for preaching based on Matthew 4:1-11. He recognizes that, amid Christians' efforts to maintain a good conscience, they are subject to the enemy's temptations. In this sense, the example of Christ tempted by Satan provides the believer with the best way to deal with temptations (PERKINS, 2014, p. 87; cf. DRESEN JR., 2023, p. 28).

As Yuille observes, the exposition of the biblical passage in Perkins's treatise is shaped by the three reasons the author identifies in Jesus' temptation (YUILLE, 2014, p. xxxiv–xxxv):

> The reasons therefore that moved Him to be tempted, are these: *first*, that He might foil the devil at his own weapon; for the devil overcame the first Adam in temptation, therefore *Christ the second Adam would in temptation overcome him*. *Secondly*, that in His example He might *give us direction whereby to know the special temptations wherewith the devil assaults the church*, as also how to withstand and repel the same. ... *Thirdly*, Christ was tempted, that *He might be "a merciful high priest unto them that are tempted"* (Heb. 2:17–18), for Himself knowing the trouble and anguish of temptation, must needs in a more compassionate fellow-feeling of their miseries be ready to help and comfort His members when they are tempted. (PERKINS, 2014, p. 98, emphasis added)

From this covenantal framework, Christ, as the second Adam, reverses the process set in motion by the first Adam and overcomes the Devil (first Adam), thus becoming a merciful mediator (third reason) and a model for God's people (second reason), which William Perkins develops in his sermon series and current treatise.

In this final major section of the paper, we will examine how Perkins develops his interpretation of Matthew 4:1–11 in his treatise. Since Perkins's text is full of hermeneutical issues that could be analyzed in a broader investigation, for reasons of space and the delimitation of our research in this paper, we will examine three aspects addressed in the exegesis of the previous section: literary analysis of the biblical text, canonical context, and grammatical and semantic aspects in Perkins's interpretation.

3.1 LITERARY ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

One of Perkins's characteristics as an interpreter of Scripture that draws attention in his treatise is his sensitivity to the literary aspects of Matthew 4:1-11. At the beginning of his exposition, Perkins identifies the three main parts of the pericope: "First, a preface or preparation to a combat between Christ and the devil (vv. 1–2). Secondly, the combat or conflict itself (vv. 3–10). Thirdly, the issue or event of this combat (v. 11)" (Perkins, 2014, p. 87). Throughout the text, as evidenced by the outline of the 1631 edition of volume 3 of Perkins's works, he further divides the central part of the combat into three subsections, or conflicts, between Satan and Jesus.

Perkins's division of the text is similar to that of the current commentaries[19] and to the one we proposed in the previous section, which reveals an interpreter sensitive to the biblical passage's literary structure.

Another example of his sensitivity to Matthew 4's literary context is his commentary on the first temptation. Perkins is attentive to the immediately preceding literary context, especially the baptism scene. First, the Puritan preacher notes the use of the temporal conjunction "Then," which links the Temptation event (4:1–11) to the former Jordan River baptism scene (3:15–17) (PERKINS, 2014, p. 87).

Second, Perkins addresses the syllogism in the devil's argument by relating Jesus' identity as the Son of God and his ability to turn stones into loaves of bread. He then identifies the literary connection of the question "If Thou art the Son of God" with God's statement in the earlier literary context of Matthew 3:17: "This is my well-beloved Son" (PERKINS, 2014, p. 87).

3.2. CANONICAL CONTEXT

One of the most surprising elements of Perkins's sermon/treatise is the canonical connection he makes between passages in Matthew 4 and the Old Testament.

Commenting on the introductory part of the pericope, Perkins identifies a canonical link between Jesus' fast in the desert and the fasts of Moses (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 9:9) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8) (PERKINS, 2014, p. 101). His conclusion, based on these two parallels, is that Jesus's fast was intended to prepare him to exercise his ministry with reverence and authority, to demonstrate that Jesus was not inferior to either of them, and, finally, to indicate his total consent with Moses and Elijah (PERKINS, 2014, p. 101).

Later in his commentary on 4:4, Perkins returns to this connection between Jesus' forty-day fast in the desert and Moses and Elijah's forty-day fast on Mount Sinai to discuss God's "miraculous word" that extraordinarily sustains people without physical food.[20]

On the other hand, at no point does Perkins establish a relationship between Israel and Jesus, even though the text of Matthew 4:1-11 is full of purposeful parallels and contrasts, as the exegesis in the previous section demonstrated. One of the moments when we expect him to make this connection is when he proposes: "Let us rather search into the reasons why He chose a desert place for this combat" (PERKINS, 2014, p. 95). Perkins identifies five reasons for Jesus to enter the desert, none of which relate Jesus to ancient Israel or establish a contrast between the nation and its Messiah.[21]

Why does William Perkins not identify this typological relationship? The answer seems to be that he sees Israel as a model or example of the church or humanity in general. For example, the author of the treatise compares "Israel's" experience of temptations and obstacles in the desert before entering and

19 See, for example, Luz, 2007, p. 147; Newman; Stine, 1992, p. 77; Hagner, 1993, p. 62; Turner, 2008, p. 125.

20 Reading Perkins's treatise, the reader gets the impression that the author was unaware that Sinai and Horeb were the same mountain since he says the following: "Other times He ordains that man shall live without all means, *as Moses did in Mount Sinai, Elijah in Mount Horeb*, and our Savior Christ *in this wilderness* for the space of forty days and forty nights together" (Perkins, 2014, p. 116, emphasis added).

21 The five reasons are: (1) "to work our redemption in great humility"; (2) "for the more easy encountering with our adversary Satan"; (3) "to give unto His adversary the advantage of the place"; (4) "the praise and honor of this victory over Satan" would be "peculiar to Christ"; and (5) "He might thence return with more credit, reverence and authority to exercise His prophetic office." (Perkins, 2014, p. 95–96).

enjoying the Promised Land with the situation of the "children of God," who "pass through this vale of tears, and in the wilderness of this world meet with that crooked serpent the devil who will seek to sting their souls to death" (PERKINS, 2014, p. 75).

Other passages draw more parallels between Israel and God's people, or between Israel and humanity. Just as God delivered Israel from Egypt, he will also deliver us from our afflictions, for "as our troubles are many, so are our deliverances many" (PERKINS, 2014, pp. 81–82). The afflictions experienced by the righteous are parallel to Israel's afflictions in the Babylonian captivity (PERKINS, 2014, p. 82). Human beings tempt God by questioning "whether God be so powerful, just and merciful as the Scriptures do affirm Him to be," just as Israel tempted the Lord: "'Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?' (Ps. 78:18-19)" (PERKINS, 2014, pp. 96, 134–135). Instead of tempting the Lord and striving to preserve life at any cost, human beings must trust in divine providence, as Israel had to learn to do (Deut 8:3) (PERKINS, 2014, pp. 96, 115–116).

Therefore, it seems that these collective connections between Israel and the church or humanity, in general, prevented Perkins from linking Israel and Jesus when analyzing the three main conflicts in Matthew 4:1–11.

However, throughout the book, Perkins identifies parallels between the temptation of Adam and Eve and the temptation of Jesus. The author comments that the "scope and drift of Satan" in tempting Jesus consisted of "two things." In the first, in which Satan operated "to overthrow the faith of Christ," Perkins identifies a parallel with the temptation of Eve in the garden. Since Jesus believed the Father's declaration ("This is my well-beloved Son"), Satan tried to make him doubt what he had heard God announce to him at his baptism. Similarly, he acted with Eve in working "to weaken her faith in the truth of God's threatening, which done, he easily brought her to actual disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit" (PERKINS, 2014, pp. 108–109).

Later in the book, Perkins observes another link between Satan's approach to Jesus and his approach to Eve. In the last temptation, "he shows unto Christ all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, that Christ might take a liking of them, and so desire them, and at length accept of them upon Satan's offer" (PERKINS, 2014, pp. 96, 140). In the same way, Satan "shows unto Eve the outward beauty of the forbidden fruit, 'that it was fair to look upon' [Gen. 3:6], and tells her of the good estate they should attain by eating it, and so at length brings her to yield to his temptation" (PERKINS, 2014, pp. 96, 140–141).

Perkins's ease in identifying parallels between Jesus' temptation and that of humanity's first couple,[22] in marked contrast to the absence of typological indications between Jesus and Israel, seems to be based on what we observed at the beginning of this section. Jesus' temptation is interpreted within a federal framework, in which Christ, as the second Adam, reverses the process set in motion by the first Adam and overcomes the Devil (PERKINS, 2014, p. 98).

3.3 GRAMMATICAL AND SEMANTIC ASPECTS

In *The Art of Prophesying*, Perkins says: "Interpretation is the opening of the words and sentences of the Scripture, that one entire and natural sense may appear" (PERKINS, 2020, p. 303). His exposition on Matthew 4:1–11 reveals this desire to interpret the text by studying words and sentences, though at times he seems to extrapolate the "natural sense."

22 See another parallel in Perkins, 2014, pp. 107–8.

In examining the first verse of the biblical passage, Perkins addresses the phrase "was led by the Spirit." At the beginning of his analysis, he tries to understand what "was led by the Spirit" means (PERKINS, 2014, p. 90). Does it mean the Spirit transported Jesus in a kind of physical rapture to a desert place? Or was it an internal action in Jesus, yet not forced or constrained, moving him to decide to go into the desert?

At this point, Perkins resorts to a comparison with the account of Jesus' temptation in Luke, in which another expression appears: "... being full of the Holy Ghost he returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Luke 4:1). Drawing attention to the expression "full of the Holy Ghost," which precedes the phrase "was led by the Spirit," Perkins concludes that both Matthew and Luke refer to "a motion of the Holy Ghost, wherewith Christ was filled above measure and made willing to encounter with Satan in that combat" (PERKINS, 2014, p. 90).

Still, in his analysis of Matthew 4:1, the Puritan author draws attention to the verb "to lead" to indicate the divine intentionality behind the combat between Jesus and the Devil in the desert (PERKINS, 2014, p. 91).

In the exposition of the "second conflict," Perkins reveals his understanding of the Evangelist's use of the adverb "then." For the author of the treatise, the adverb does not primarily indicate sequence but has, above all, a temporal sense. Thus, "then" means "the *time*" when Satan prepared to strike a new blow at Jesus (PERKINS, 2014, p. 120, emphasis original). In other words, "*so soon* as the devil had received a foil of Christ in his first assault, presently he addresses himself unto a second" (PERKINS, 2014, p. 120, emphasis added).

Perkins highlights the importance of observing the connections between words and sentences when discussing the Devil's quotation of Psalms 91:11-12. He notes that Satan alters the meaning of the passage from Psalms, avoiding one of the clauses in 91:11: "to keep thee in all thy ways." According to Perkins, the promise links angelic protection to "all thy ways:" "in all the good duties of Thy lawful calling wherein Thou shalt glorify God ... to such as so walk in their ways does that promise belong" (PERKINS, 2014, p. 130).

Perkins's semantic study reveals some exciting analyses. Working with the concept of "Devil," he explains the meaning of the Greek word: "a caviler, a slanderer, and an accuser" (PERKINS, 2014, p. 99). From this explanation, he elaborates in an approach close to that of systematic theology, three ways Satan acts as an "accuser." Using proof texts, Perkins says that Satan accuses "God to man" (Gen. 3:4), "man to God" (Rev. 12:9; 1 Peter 5:8), and "man to man" (Eph. 2:2; James 3:14-15) (PERKINS, 2014, p. 99).

At times, Perkins seems to extrapolate the meaning of the text, as in his analysis of the term "word" in "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). In both Deuteronomy and Matthew, the reference to the "word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" refers to God's verbal revelation, which both Israel and Jesus were to obey (LUZ, 2007, p. 152; MORRIS, 1992, p. 75; NOLLAND, 2005, p. 164; CARSON, 2010, pp. 141–142; OSBORNE, 2010, pp. 132–133). As observed by Newman and Stine, "for man to have real life, he must have *every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*, that is, 'what God speaks' or 'what God commands'" (NEWMAN; STINE, 1992, p. 81).

Perkins admits this meaning when he says, "it is usually taken for the written Word contained in the books of the Old and New Testaments (1 Peter 1:25)" (PERKINS, 2014, p. 116). Nevertheless, he proposes two other senses: "the substantial Word of God, the second person in Trinity" and "God's will and decree" (PERKINS, 2014, p. 116). While it is true that "word" in John 1:1 refers to Christ, this option does not seem to make sense in the dialogue between Jesus and Satan in Matthew 4:3–4. In what way would Jesus "live by every word [Jesus himself!] that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"?

Concluding our analysis of *The Combat Between Christ and the Devil Displayed*'s hermeneutics, we can observe that, as a Scripture interpreter, Perkins reveals himself to be a very sensitive reader. He is concerned with the literary structure and features of the biblical text, identifying canonical links and endeavoring to understand the meaning of sentences, phrases, and words. Although his interpretative process is not faultless, Perkins consistently seeks what he calls the "natural sense" of the biblical text.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this paper, we hope to have contributed to a clearer understanding of William Perkins's role as an interpreter of the Bible. In the first chapter, we analyzed William Perkins's relationship with his context and the influence he had as a preacher and writer not only in England but also on the European continent. We also noted his high view of the Scriptures as the Word of God and the importance he gave to biblical interpretation in preparing sermons.

In the second section, we developed an exegetical analysis of the text of Matthew 4:1-11, looking at its literary links with the earlier context of Matthew's Gospel, its canonical parallels with the Old Testament, especially the striking contrast between Jesus' responses and those of the people of Israel in their wandering in the desert. Perfect obedience to God's revelation in the Scriptures of ancient Israel guaranteed Jesus, the Son of God par excellence, his victory over Satan.

Finally, our analysis of Perkins's interpretation of Matthew 4:1-11 revealed Perkins as a sensitive reader and Scripture interpreter. He demonstrates a keen awareness of the literary structure and features of the biblical text, actively identifying canonical links and striving to grasp the meanings of sentences, phrases, and words. While his interpretative process may have shortcomings, Perkins consistently aims to uncover the "natural sense" of the biblical text.

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