

The Legacy of John Hooper and John Fox

by J.I. Packer

This sermon explores the legacy of John Hooper and John Fox, highlighting their contributions to the development of Puritanism and the establishment of reformed church order.

Duration: 48:49

Scripture: Exodus 20:1

Topics: "Biblical Obedience", "Faithfulness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of following the examples and precepts set forth in the Bible. He highlights the actions of Bishop Hooper, who was unwilling to do anything without a biblical example or precept. The speaker also mentions a questionnaire that Hooper sent to his clergy, asking them basic questions about the commandments and articles of faith. The sermon emphasizes the need for a true and positive heart in following God's word.

Transcript

We began yesterday with a talk about the perspective which went to the making of the distinctive Puritan point of view. And I spoke first of the legacy of Tyndale, who first thought of the lordship of the Bible, and second the thought of the justified man in covenant with God, and then secondly I looked at the legacy of Bradford, which I defined as a piety of repentance preached, written about, lived out. I described to you from my sources something of the rule, the rule of life that Bradford made to himself with regards to prayer.

I ought perhaps to have said, when I was doing that, that you mustn't misunderstand that it's precisely not in Bradford the artificiality that it might be in any of us who imitated Bradford. Bradford did what he did precisely in order that he might be real with God regarding sin and regarding repentance. If we imitated some of these Puritans and supposed that thereby we should find spiritual quickening for ourselves we might very soon be disappointed.

Nobody gave Bradford this idea, he just did it because he felt it would help him to be real with God. And as I told you, lots of Puritans afterwards followed his example and they too found that it helped them to be real with God. But here, and well certainly in many of the other things that I'm going to tell you about in this course, I wouldn't want you to believe that the short and easy way into new spiritual vitality for ourselves is just to ape the Puritans for the very good thing.

The principles which they applied have got to be reapplied to us. I do indeed believe, and as it comes through by the way that I describe these things, I do believe that the Puritans have got a great deal to teach us. But you can't you can't short-circuit the business of the application.

The applications are not really made. We've got to consider the principles that they worked on and go on how they have to be reapplied to us still today. Well I told you about Bradford because here you've got a priorlier example of the kind of what the Puritans called experimental piety practical and experimental godliness would have been their phrase for it, which was reproduced again and again in the history of this movement.

And I should have added that in the letter of Bradford, which were published after his death you find him doing something which again became a staple Puritan activity in later years that is bringing, well we'll use the phrase they used bringing comfort to afflicted consciences by resolving what the Puritans were to call cases of conscience, problems and complexities about the life of faith and obedience. Haller, in his book *The Elect Nation*, page 208, writes of these letters of Bradford, what Bradford did in them was what Greenham and Richard Rogers and the long succession of spiritual preachers would soon be doing. At this point too, therefore, Bradford was a pioneer.

At Milton's name Greenham and Richard Rogers, you'll hear more of them before very long. Here then is the legacy of Bradford, a piety of repentance lived out, preached, written about. And now we will move on to consider the third element in the making of the Puritan mind that which I've called the legacy of Hooper, Hooper the man and Frankfurt, Frankfurt the place and I've characterized this as a passion for pastoral care and reformed church order.

Hooper exhibits both passions, but chiefly the passion for pastoral care Frankfurt also displays both concerns but chiefly the concern for a reformed order. And I thought it was most helpful, therefore, to lump these two together under the same main heading. Here first then is some text about John Hooper He was born at the end of the 15th century into a prominent Somersetshire family and he became a Cistercian monk His convictions became Protestant in a very decided way through reading the writings of Zwingli and Bullinger sometime in the 1530s.

In 1539 Henry VIII, who had so far not opposed moves in the direction of reformation faith and practice carries through Parliament, well that's how it was for a feudal sovereign. He said what Parliament was to pass and Parliament passed it He carries through Parliament then the so-called Acts of the Sixth Article. Described by contemporary Protestants as a whip with six strings It was an act laying down various principles concerning religion in England One of them was that any denial of sense of sensation was punishable by burning as a heresy.

And when the Acts of the Sixth Article came out Hooper, whose doctrine of the sacraments was thoroughly whip, Zwinglian, Bullingerish decided that England was no healthy place for him and left the country and he went first to Strasbourg and then he went to Zurich and he was away apart from one small visit till 1549 Then, when Edward VI had come to the throne Hooper came back and immediately became a prominent man. Because though he was a somewhat rough and austere man, and indeed a somewhat tactless and outspoken man, he was a very fine preacher. Priorless in preaching and extremely popular when he preached.

A contemporary writes that people hung on his words and regarded him as a prophet. Dickens in his history of the Reformation calls him dynamic. And straight away he attained prominence in London as a

great Reformation preacher.

In 1550 he was appointed to preach the length and course of sermons at the court of Edward VI and he chose to expound the prophet Jonah because, as he wrote in a letter, it enabled him quote, freely to touch on the duties of an individual as we would say in 1967 England, I don't know if you say it in 1967 America, to tear strips off people and we know because we got the texts of his lectures that he actually did tear strips off people and denounce ungodliness and summon the courteous to repentance and holy living in no mealy-mouthed tone. So that's the kind of man he was. And in his closest friend was John Alasdair whose name you may know, he was a Polish nobleman who had at one time been ordained as the Commarch Beacon of Warsaw.

But then he'd become a convinced civilian, swift in his doctrine. He'd moved to Emden as Superintendent Minister of the Reformed Churches in Priestland. And then in 1548 he came to England again you see when Henry VIII died and a Protestant monarch offended the English throne, Protestants who were finding things difficult all over Europe came to England and Alaska and London.

And he was put in charge of the so-called Stranger's Church, a large congregation in London which had four other ministers besides Alaska and it was a church organised on the full Reformed pattern and Alaska himself was a man of certainly Reformed convictions on the sacraments on justification, on other matters, and he was Hooper's closest friend and Hooper liked the pattern that he saw in the congregation on which Alaska presided. It was a proper Presbyterian set-up with a group of elders, lay elders as well as the five ministers, two hours preaching every Sunday, an hour each of the two services, and a preaching service in the week, and a monthly communion preceded by discipline, that is the examination of intended communicants by the elders. That's the kind of pattern that Calvin campaigned for in Geneva and that's the kind of pattern which Alaska set up in the Stranger's Church in London.

Now these were things, these were all things which fired Hooper's imagination and seemed to him to be ideal. Now, in 1550 he was nominated to the Episcopal See of Gloucester. He had no addiction to being a bishop indeed he looked forward right from the start to the good that one might do as bishop of an English diocese with two or three hundred churches and clergy under your control but yet he had his difficulties about the means whereby constitutionally he must enter on his bishopric.

He had to swear an oath of supremacy to the sovereign by God and the faith. He didn't object to the thought of the sovereign's supremacy but he did object to swearing by the faith equally he had to be consecrated in traditional medieval Episcopal vestments, that is a white rochet, as this was called, r-o-c-h-e-t, it was a sort of fancy surface, with a scarlet chenille c-h-i-n-e-r-e, that the gown that bishops wore then still wear as a necessary over their surface with a good deal of red in it that is a still official Anglican Episcopal dress rochet and chenille. The one they were wearing as of long ago in 1550 you see the Church of England never changes not very much anyway.

And who could object to the thought of being consecrated in these vestments the ordinal of 1550 under which he was to be consecrated it was a reformed ordinal in its doctrine, it was thoroughly protestant in its delineation of the ministry, there was nothing about the offering of the mass in sacrifice, all the questions and the commissioning of ministers had to do with the pastoral care and the evangelistic ministry that they must fulfill towards their flock. But the old vestments remained and Hooper objected to the prospect of having to wear them he judged they were sinful, positively sinful Alasco agreed with him, nobody else did. He protested there was a debate, eventually because of his unspokenness in debate he was put into

prison for contempt because of the way in which he denounced the ordinal that contained these vestments.

In prison the arguments went on Archbishop Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury and Ridley, Bishop of London, debated with Hooper and persuaded him eventually that his original judgement had been wrong and that these clerical clothes were in fact matters of indifference and they didn't therefore impose any real obstacle or caution upon Hooper, an obstacle I mean that would stop him from accommodating this rhetoric. And so in 1551 he was released from prison and was given a consecrated bishop, wearing the ascending vestments. Although they had given in to him a little they had allowed him to make a public statement in which he said that he would not be wearing these vestments regularly and nobody must expect that he would So, whatever you think of Hooper's judgement on this particular issue, you can see purism scripturalism coming through.

Hooper's thinking on this matter, at least until he was persuaded to change his mind, was the thinking of a man who wasn't prepared to do anything for which he hadn't got such an example or such a precept. Now, when he got to his diocese he showed himself to be a man with a true compassionate heart. Here's just one or two sentences which will illustrate that.

In 1551 he made an inquiry of his clergy He sent round a questionnaire. He asked them the following nine questions You may feel they're pretty basic and that any clergyman worth his salt ought to be able to answer them. Question 1 How many commandments are there? Question 2 Where are they to be found? Question 3 Repeat them.

Question 4 What are the articles of the Christian faith? That meant the creed Repeat them. Lesson 5 and Question 6 Prove them from Scripture. 7 Repeat the Lord's Prayer.

8 How do you know it is the Lord? 9 Where is it to be found? Well, you might not think that a questionnaire like that would cause clergy very much trouble but Hooper had 311 clergy in his diocese. Of those 311 only 50 could answer all the questions Of those 50, 19 could only answer them mediocrity, that is in a mediocre manner 39 didn't know the location of the Lord's Prayer in Scripture. 34 didn't know the author.

10 couldn't repeat it 8 couldn't answer a single one of the nine questions Such was the ministry of England Now, it's important that you should note this and bear it in mind for the next 50 years of this history. In country areas not merely in England but in all over Europe, in Germany also, the rural clergy were absolutely abysmal as far as Christian knowledge and Christian practice went. Luther had to face exactly the same things in some of the rural areas where the Lutheran Reformation went and it's important to bear this in mind because the Puritans all the way through were taking their sort of guiding star and their ideals from Swiss city-states Zurich, Basel, Geneva.

And in Swiss city-states this sort of problem, the problem of ignorant clergy in country districts simply didn't arise. This was a new problem which the Puritans had to face and try and deal with and doing that involved them in attempts to apply their principles that the Swiss, whose principles they had taken over never had to make. Here then was one of the areas in which the originality of the Puritan movement was to come out.

As you will see later on, they had their methods for dealing with this kind of situation. But for the moment, all that I'm concerned to tell you about Hooper is that he sent round this questionnaire in order to discover what the clergy were like in order that then he might send round to them episcopal addresses of different

sorts, articles, injunctions, and so forth charges, and all the rest of it, in order that he might educate them a bit and bring them to a better mind, so that they might fulfil a better ministry. Another testimony to his quality as a Diocesan Bishop is given by Dickens in his History of the Reformation in England where he notes on the basis of an article written by a local historian who has rubbed through the court records of the Diocese, research upon Hooper's short but intensive career as a Diocesan Bishop has intended to enlarge his stature.

Finding his clergy and officials lethargic and ineffective Hooper went to work among them with all his superhuman energy. He presided in person over his Diocesan court, he made frequent tours of the Diocese on the spur of the moment. His charity and concerns of the poor were a daily manifest, and he made it clear that his social sympathies lay not with the landlords, but with the underprivileged.

Mr Price, this local historian, has written that the personal touch of the Bishop regularly shines through the dull formal records of the Diocesan administration. We see him bringing together unhappy husbands and wives, restoring concord among families divided against themselves over disputed wills, pointing out their follies to gossiping and quarrelsome women, and giving good advice to all in subject. So you see, though he may in his earlier career have given the impression of being a wild man, he was a good pastor.

And this is the point that I want to make at the moment. Here in Hooper you've got the pioneer of a man who, once put into a pastoral situation, sends his strength in it, and gives himself tirelessly to the preaching of the gospel and the applying of it to human lives, in order that there may be true spiritual life, holiness unto the Lord, in terms of real living piety. And so Hooper continued until he was arrested in 1563, after Mary had come to the throne, and then condemned, of all the Marian martyrs, were condemned for unorthodoxy in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, rejecting transubstantiation, and in 1565 he was burned, just about ten minutes from the place where I was brought up as a boy, in Gloucester.

We move on now from Hooper to the Frankfurt story, which we take from a volume published in 1574 called, A Brief History of the Trouble at Frankfurt. It was written almost certainly by William Whittingham, W-H-I-T-T-I-M-G-H-A-M, who by then had become Dean of Durham, and who was, in fact, one of the central figures in the story of the Frankfurt Trouble. From one standpoint, this is the story of a storm in a teacup, but it was a significant story because of the men in the teacup.

Amongst the little refugee community of Frankfurt, who had been troubled, there were eleven future bishops, five future deans, fox of archaeologists, and at least one of Queen Elizabeth's future privy counsellors, as well as some other men of lesser knowledge. But it is a story. In 1554, a company of English exiles, remember there were about 800 English exiles altogether under Mary, they went to different reform centres on the continent, and in 1554 a company of them came to Frankfurt.

William Whittingham, an Oxford man, an aristocrat, a layman, at that time at any rate, he was ordained later, he led up this party to Frankfurt, and the first thing that he did was to get permission from the magistrate for the party of exiles to use the Church of the White Ladies, as it was called, which church was already being used by another party of Protestant exiles from England, the Church of Flemish Weavers, who had been planted under the pastorship of Valéran Poulin, at the weaving centre of Glastonbury and Somerset, as its congregation had set up there in the days of Edward V. And they'd already come to Frankfurt, and they were worshipping regularly in the Church of the White Ladies, lent to them for that purpose. And the magistrate granted Whittingham and his party permission to worship in the Church of the White Ladies, on condition that they should use a service similar to that which the Flemish Weavers were

using. Well, this presented no problem to Whittingham and his friends, and they drew up a similar service, which was much more like the austere orders of worship used at Zurich and Geneva, than it was like the second prayer book of Edward VI, which the Englishmen, of course, had been using until they left the country.

So the order, muddled on the chaldeans, the Zurich and Glasgow's order, was drawn up. There were no scruples at all, there were no responses said, there were even, to our surprise, no readings from Scripture, only the expounding of Scripture in the sermons. The constitution for the congregation was drawn up too, on the Alasco pattern.

And they chose themselves a minister, and settled down to live their church life, as an emigre community. And since they knew that they were the only English church that had managed to organise itself a full church life, in any of the continental centres to which English exiles had gone, Whittingham, in the church's name, wrote a letter to the other exile communities, summoning them, in very parently words as a matter of fact, summoning them to come and join the Frankfort Party, and enjoy the benefits of the full church life, which the Frankfort community had. Undoubtedly Whittingham and his friends had, as part of their motives here, the desire to establish at Frankfort a pattern more like that of other reformed churches which could then be taken back to England when the tyranny of Mary came to an end, and be made the pattern for the new establishment of reformed religion in that country.

So they summoned as many Englishmen as they could hear of on the continent, to come and join them at Frankfort, in order that there might be as large and impressive a community there as possible, taking this reformed order back. That at least was the plan. While they were waiting for answers to their letters, the famous John Knox came from England, and joined the congregation at Frankfort, and was elected a second minister.

Well, when the letters came back they were not all of them in favour of the Frankfort project. The exiles of Zurich wrote that they, at the moment, when they could get together for worship, were using the second prayer book of Edward VI, and they declined to stop using it, or to join a community that had stopped using it, lest it should reflect badly on the Reformation martyrs. That is, those bishops whose dignitaries would have stayed at home in England, under Mary, and were even at that time being sent one after another to the French.

They had, after all, been the sponsors of the second prayer book. Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was burned in 1555 had actually been responsible for drawing it up, and the Zurich exiles didn't want to do anything that would involve an adverse judgment on the prayer book, and so, in effect, cut the blot on the memory of those who had drawn it up, the Marian martyrs. So, they said, you must have a little bit more light.

The prayer book we are used to, we are used to doing it. So, letters went to and fro, and negotiations took place, and the order of worship which Whittingham and his friends had drawn up was amended, so as to conform more closely to the 1552 pattern. They brought Calvin's 1550 Geneva Liturgy as a model, and took some details from that, and the compromise was being agreed on.

They sent the letter to Calvin, asking him what he thought of the 1552 English prayer book, and they got back the letter, saying that though it wasn't too bad, it wasn't too good either. It contained various tolerables in it, foolish things which could be endured, and so the argument went on until in February 1555 they finally agreed on a liturgy with which everybody was going to be happy, and it seemed that the Zurich

people would come and everything in the garden was going to be lovely. That was February 1555.

It only lasted six weeks, this happy, tranquil state, because in March of that year, a new group of English exiles arrived, led by a certain Richard Cock, who in his day had been tutor to Edward VI, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and Dean of Westminster, and obviously, with all that behind him, would have regarded himself as quite a significant figure. He came, leading this party of exiles to Frankfurt, and as soon as they got there, they broke the agreement. They broke it straight away, at least Cock broke it, by insisting on intoning responses in public worship, whereas the Frankfurt form had no responses from the congregation, and when the future Bishop Jewell, John Jewell, another of the Cock's party, was asked to read the service one day, he read the liturgy of the 1552 prayer book, which wasn't part of the Frankfurt order, and so arguments broke out, and the Frankfurt people said very reasonably, look, this is not what we've agreed to do, and the Cock'sian party replied in a very terrifying way, that we will do as we have done in England, we will have the faith of an English church.

And he said that in the hearing of John Knox, who made a very proper comment on this statement, the Lord granted, said John Knox, the Lord granted to have the faith of Christ's church. But he wasn't able to reduce that teacher Cock's deal by making remarks like this. The argument continued, Cock's and his party were not yet members of the congregation because they hadn't yet accepted the pattern of discipline.

And there was a meeting at which it was seriously questioned whether they ought to be admitted since it looked as if they were going to be a destructive insult. Knox very generously pleaded that they should be admitted to the congregation, provided they would accept its order. And so they were admitted.

And they repaid Knox's generosity, I'm sorry to say, by going to the magistrate telling them that Knox was a seditious character and suggesting to them that they should ask Knox to leave the city as being a seditious person. And he was asked to leave the city and he had to go. So in the battle of the, what was called the battle of the Knoxians against the Cock'sians, the Cock'sians won out.

And in Frank's book they established the second prayer book of Edward VI, almost unchanged. Interestingly they made the whole church subscribe to 42 articles, Cranmer's original version of the present Anglican 39. They did, to be sure, set up a pattern of order which was more like the Continental Reformed pattern than the inherited English one.

They had a congregation of two ministers, four lay elders the prayer book hadn't been provided for lay elders but the congregation had one, four lay elders, also some elected deacons, and they dropped some of the ceremonies of the prayer book, like private baptism, confirmation, the keeping of faith days, the wearing of the surplice, kneeling at communion, and the using of the sign of the cross. But still, their way of doing things was more like the taste of the Reformed English church from which they'd come than the original Frankfurt liturgy would have been. So there it was.

Whittingham and a number of the others who felt that really this was to substitute inadequate worship for the ideal sort of worship, they left Frankfurt and some of them went to Basel and others of them went to Geneva. And in 1559 those who'd been to Basel and Geneva came back to England, resolved, perhaps resolved all the more strongly because of this dispute, to do everything they could to ensure that a pattern corresponding to that of the best Reformed churches in the Swiss townships was established as the pattern of worship in England. What's the significance of this little story? Nelson describes it as a clash between nationalism and internationalism.

That is, between Englishness and a willingness to go the way that Europeans were going. Well, that isn't wholly wrong, but it's much too secular a way of describing it. A better way to describe the contrast would be to think of it as a contrast between national solidarity and Reformed solidarity.

This was, you see, was ecstatically a religious and a theological question and it was a question of whether the English Christian pattern should have precedence over the continental Swiss Reformed Christian pattern. The Puritans were later to think that solidarity with the other Reformed churches of Christendom was more desirable than adherence to the pattern which had been set up by those who, or credited to them had gone to the stake rather than deny their faith. They did in fact believe that more reformation of the 1552 pattern was desirable.

And when later Elizabeth restored the 1552 pattern almost unchanged they campaigned for it. And that became one of the big issues in Puritanism for many decades following Elizabeth's accession to the throne. Well, there's another element in the Puritan heritage.

Pastoral concern as exemplified particularly in Hooper concerns the conformity to the pattern set by the best Reformed churches as exemplified by at any rate one of the parties who got into trouble at Frankfurt. And now we move to the final element in the making of the distinctive Puritan tradition and this is the legacy of John Fox. Are there any questions let me ask about the troubles of Frankfurt before we move on to John Fox? I'm not sure I see how exactly the problems in Frankfurt influenced the Puritan proposal, but Puritanism had reflected the problems in Frankfurt.

Well, the influence was simply this, that the wishing of parties who had been foiled in their ideal of something more Reformed than the 1552 prayer book came back to England in 1559 and went on campaigning for what they wanted. And they were the first people, you see, to lead this campaign in England after the Elizabethan restoration the Elizabethan settlement for an altered form of worship. Abolishing the serfdom, abolishing the sermonist, abolishing the responsive abolishing some of the things which compelled or some of the things which were held to crown the sermonance and so on in favour of something comparable to what the other Reformed churches were using.

That is the point. In other words, the Carthaginians won out of Frankfurt, but actually Whittingham won out in England. No, no, he didn't.

He lost in England too. The Puritans never won out in their campaign for a church modeled on Geneva and Zurich. Not at any stage.

That's the history that we're going to study and that we're going to start up in this next lecture. But they spent the whole of Elizabeth's reign and the first 40 years of the 17th century campaigning for it. And this was a regular element of the Puritan pastoral.

And, you see, the convictions on this point were to lead them into constant non-conformity so far as the prayer book was concerned. Particular things that the prayer book prescribed they wouldn't do and so they got themselves into trouble. They ended up in the Ecclesiastical Court.

Let us say that there wasn't church discipline in the Reformed Church of England after 1558. There was, and it was used against the Puritans. Many of them were deprived of their living.

And this is a major element in the Puritan story. That's why I am focused on it here. Well, if the rest of you are happy or at least not too miserable, we'll move on to the legacy of Bob.

In the end I have actually a double legacy. A belief in the calling of England and the ideal secondly the ideal of the Puritan hero. You know a culture by asking what's this ideal of heroism.

You know the Puritan culture by asking what's the Puritan ideal of the hero. Of course the Puritans didn't talk in terms of heroism. They weren't sufficiently man-centered in their thinking ever to do that.

But there were some people whom they particularly admired and whose example they thought to follow it's those people that I'm referring to as the heroes. And I'm going to suggest to you that it was from John Fox, the meteorologist, that the Puritan ideal of heroism the Puritan picture of the ideal Christian man, in other words, came to be crystallized and formulated. Well now here are the basic facts about John Fox.

Fox was what a clerical friend of mine was once called a literary bloke. I don't want to talk that language over here, but it's got quite a different meaning in English. He was a literary bloke.

He was born in 1517 He went to Oxford. He was fellow of his college between 1539 and 1545 He was ordained in 1550 When Mary came to the throne he went to Frankfurt and was involved in the troubles, though he tried to keep out of the hotter arguments of the function of the peacemaker. He didn't do too well.

Then he went to Basel and as a literary bloke, as a literary bloke might be expected to do, he got himself a job as a proofreader for one of the Basel publishers. And that's how he kept himself going, because he hadn't got any money, until the time came to return to England. When he came back to England in 1559, because of the decidedly reformed character of his views about how church order should be reformed, he wasn't offered a job and so he went on working in his character of a literary bloke He laboured on a martyrology ever since 1552 When already Protestants had had it's martyrs, men like Tyndale and others who'd been burned for the faith on the continent ever since 1552, Proxford had the idea of writing a history of the movement for reformation in the church, starting with Wispeth and the Lallards, going on to John Huck, who of course was burned, and Jerome of Prague and Savonarola, and ending up with the first of the reformation martyrs.

When he got down to the job again after 1555, 1559, there were of course a lot of new martyrs to be added to his list. Approximately 300 had been burned in the state under Mary, and when in 1663 he brought out the first edition of his work, it had not merely a huge title, but also a huge sign. It consisted of 1800 folio pages, and the title was as follows I shouldn't bother to take this down You can find it if you really want it on Parler, the Elect Nation page 118.

I take a deep breath and I begin to read.
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