

JOHN JEWEL
(READERS ON WRITERS AT THE CATHEDRAL, 16 APRIL 2012)

BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

John Jewel was a Devon man, born in 1522. He was one of 10 children. As was customary in those times, when it became apparent that he was a bright boy, he was sent to live with someone who could educate him. In Jewel's case he was sent to his maternal uncle, John Bellamy, the Rector of Hampton, who took responsibility for his education until he was ready to matriculate at Merton College, Oxford, in 1535. He was taught there by John Parkhurst, later Bishop of Norwich, who inspired him with an interest in the new theological ideas which were circulating in Europe and making their way into England.. In 1539 Jewel was elected scholar of Corpus Christi College. He graduated as B.A. in 1540 and was elected fellow of his college in 1542. He made something of a mark as a teacher at Oxford, and, following his graduation as B.D. in 1552, he was made Vicar of Sunningwell. At the same time he became public orator at the university. His might have been a quiet life of academic study and teaching combined with the not too arduous responsibilities that came from his tenure of the living at Sunningwell had it not been for the age into which he was born. Jewel would be a refugee for four years in the 1550s and was able to return to England only following the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558. He was invited to speak during a disputation at a conference in Westminster just after Easter 1559, where the views of the Catholic clergy of the previous reign and the views of the reformers were heard. Unsurprisingly Elizabeth favoured the reformers. Jewel was also licensed to preach at Paul's Cross, where royal proclamations were by custom read to the public and sermons preached. In the autumn of 1559 he was appointed as one of the royal visitors to the western counties of England and was elected Bishop of Salisbury on 27 July 1559, though he was not consecrated until 21 January 1560. He would prove to be an exemplary bishop, but that alone does not explain his significance historically. What makes Jewel stand out from his contemporaries is his defence of the Church of England through the publication of his *APOLOGIA ECCLESIAE ANGLICANAE* in 1562. No doubt the relentless pressure of his responsibilities contributed to his early death at the age of 49 in September 1571.

CONTEXT

We are apt to consider our own age as one of relentless change, but in 16th century England religion was in a state of flux. In 1534, just a year before the young Jewel matriculated at Oxford, the English Parliament had passed into law the Act of Supremacy, which acknowledged that Henry VIII was Supreme Head of the Church of England. This Act was the culmination of a raft of legislation which destroyed the power of the Pope in England, conferring that power instead on the monarch.

For Henry the parliamentary legislation had been the only way to bypass the Pope's refusal to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, enabling him to marry Anne Boleyn by whom he anticipated the birth of a male heir. From Henry's perspective, nothing had changed. Parliament had merely rubber-stamped a situation which he contended had always existed, that is that in England the power of the state had always trumped the power of the church. But from the perspective of Rome, Henry had propelled England into a state of heresy and schism. Henry VIII personally, with the exception of the supremacy issue, never seems to have deviated from believing in what was then regarded as orthodox Christian teaching, and the English Parliament re-asserted Catholic doctrine in the Act of Six Articles of 1539. As a consequence English people were being burned for denying transubstantiation throughout the 1540s. Nevertheless, there existed an unofficial reform group at Henry's court. Some were Protestant, but others are better described as "evangelicals". The latter were either orthodox in their beliefs or unsure, though all wished to remove what they considered superstitious practices and place a greater emphasis on Scripture. Members of this group seized power on Henry's death. But even by the time John Jewel was graduating with his B.A. in 1540, the religious landscape of England had changed irrevocably. The monasteries had been dissolved and their lands, property and wealth had passed into secular ownership. Also an English Bible had been placed in every church and, up to a point, made accessible to the people.

With the accession of Henry VIII's son, Edward VI, in 1547, the English Church, under its Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer, was subjected to a process of intense reform. By the time John Jewel became B.D. and Rector of Sunningwell, the English Parliament was on the verge of passing into law the Second Act of Uniformity, which enforced Cranmer's Second English Prayer Book as the only legal form of worship. Latin had already been replaced by English as the language of the liturgy in the First English Prayer Book of 1549, but now the liturgy, and the rubrics which accompanied the new Prayer Book, made clear that the English church was now a thoroughly reformed church. The move towards Protestant theology was confirmed by the 42 Articles and in the preparation of a new Ordinal, which reduced holy orders to 3. In addition, the chantries had already been dissolved and private masses for the dead outlawed.

The religious changes in the early part of Edward's reign reflected the Lutheran doctrines on salvation and the Eucharist. For instance, the liturgy of the Eucharist outlined in the 1549 Prayer Book was consistent with a belief in CONSUBSTANTIATION. However, from 1552 changes in doctrine and liturgy began to depart from the Lutheran standpoint and to echo the theology of the reformed churches of Zurich led by Ulrich

Zwingli and of Geneva led by John Calvin.

This amazing shift in position in only 5 years happened in part as a consequence of what the historian Hugh Trevor-Roper called "the cult of the Christian prince as the only practical liberator of the church from the Papacy". It's certainly true that in Europe Protestantism, which began in Germany, succeeded wherever the secular ruler embraced it. Whilst this is true also of England, the influence of the universities on the clergy cannot be ignored. New ideas were taking root in Oxford and Cambridge during Henry's reign, but reformation theology was given an impetus by the arrival of foreign scholars such as PETER MARTIRE VERMIGLI, who in England is always known as Peter Martyr. He became first a lecturer at Oxford and then Regius Professor of Divinity; and John Jewel became his disciple.

Now, the significance of the prince in determining the character of a national church meant that when a new ruler succeeded to the throne, the situation could change dramatically. And so it was in England in 1553. The premature death of Edward VI led to the succession of his half-sister Mary, who was the daughter of Catherine of Aragon and a devout Catholic. John Jewel in his role as Public Orator at Oxford had the task of writing a congratulatory letter to the queen on behalf of the university, an institution she was about to purge of its heretical teachers. It was no accident that Archbishop Cranmer and Bishops Latimer and Ridley would all suffer death by burning at Oxford. In the disputations, which took place to determine the extent of their heresy, Jewel acted as notary for both Cranmer and Ridley, but in 1554 he also took the precaution of signing a series of Catholic articles of religion. Nevertheless, he was under suspicion and he decided to cut and run, fleeing from Oxford to London and then to the continent.

Jewel's experiences as a refugee would have a considerable effect on his further formation as a theologian. Those who were in agreement with the reforms of Edward's reign, and who had the means to do so, left England as soon as it became apparent that Mary intended to restore the English church to the Catholic fold. Exile communities sprang up in Frankfurt, Strasbourg, Zurich and Geneva, for example. Some exiles, like John Knox, were drawn to the teaching of Calvin and to his model of church. Because the English Prayer Book of 1552 had had less than a year to bed in, disputes arose among the exiles as to its continued use. In Frankfurt a bitter dispute took place between Richard Cox and John Knox. Cox wanted to hold on to the Second English Prayer Book because it made the English church distinctive, but Knox wanted to establish a proper Calvinist community. Jewel was embroiled in this conflict in Frankfurt and spoke in defence of Cox. He did, however, leave the community in Frankfurt to travel with Peter Martyr to Strasbourg and then to Zurich.

And so, 1558: another year, another ruler. Mary died and her half-sister succeeded her as Elizabeth I. Jewel and many other exiles returned to England where Elizabeth became Supreme Governor of the Church of England and a modified 1552 Prayer Book became the only legal form of worship, though some significant modifications were made to it, particularly centring on the so-called "Black Rubric" and the Ornaments Rubric. Now it was the turn of the Catholics to leave or go underground. Once it was clear that Elizabeth was going to favour the Protestant clerics, all but one of the bishops who had served Mary resigned. That left Elizabeth with 25 sees in England and Wales to make appointments to. Matthew Parker, who became her first Archbishop of Canterbury, had stayed in England during Mary's reign and was not tainted with any of the extremism which affected so many of the exiles. However, the exiles could not be ignored and fortunately those who favoured the retention of the 1552 Prayer Book were among the first exiles to return to England. Therefore they benefited from the episcopal vacancies: Richard Cox was appointed to Ely, Edmund Grindal to London, Edwin Sandys to Worcester, John Pilkington to Durham, Robert Horne to Winchester and, of course, Jewel to Salisbury. These men were Puritan in the sense that they wanted the English church purged of things Roman, but they were not Calvinists or Presbyterians. They often found themselves vilified not only by Rome but also by many who had been exiled in Geneva and were so slow in returning that they had no influence on the Elizabethan Settlement. They also had to contend with the queen herself, who was determined to preserve within her church a number of features which were condemned as popish. Though unlike her father she made no claims to being a theologian, there were occasional disputes between herself and her bishops.

JEWEL'S CONTRIBUTION TO ANGLICANISM

Jewel is remembered most for his *Apologia* whose origins are in a sermon Jewel preached at Paul's Cross in November 1559 based on 1 Corinthians 11:23. In the sermon he outlined 27 doctrines held by the Catholic Church and offered to return to it if anyone could prove the practice of these doctrines in the first 600 years after Christ's death and resurrection. The challenge was taken up by Henry Cole, a former Provost of Eton College. Cole was imprisoned in the Tower while Jewel wrote his *Apologia* which was published in 1562. Then a literary contest developed in the 1560s between Jewel and Thomas Harding, a priest who had been a Protestant but had returned to Rome and who had been sacked by Jewel from his post at Salisbury Cathedral. This caused Jewel to publish *A Defence of the Apology* in 1567.

The *Apology* represents an attempt to provide a statement of faith for the Church of England under Elizabeth I and answers challenges and accusations of the Catholics against the Protestants. It is an appeal to

Scripture, reason and tradition. Jewel establishes the legitimacy of the Church of England and the whole Protestant reformation by demonstrating the continuity between the reformers and Scripture, the Apostles, the Church Fathers and the general councils of the Church. Therefore the Church of England was not a new sect, nor a cult and it held no new or heretical doctrines. Thus in section 2 of the work the Nicene Creed is upheld and affirmed. Jewel makes absolutely clear that the Church of England has defected from Rome for theological and religious reasons.

Jewel makes clear that salvation comes by faith in Christ and asserts that man, because of original sin and his corrupt nature, possesses no resources by which he can bring about his own salvation. Our salvation is dependent on God's grace and has been won for us through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, a sacrifice offered once for all time. When Jewel deals with the sacraments, he emphasises that not the sacraments themselves but the faith of the individual effects salvation.

Most of the Apology focuses on the doctrines of the Church. Jewel refutes the Pope's claim to be the "vicar-general of Christ". However, he maintains there is a need for specially called clergy. He lists the three church offices: deacon, priest and bishop. In addition he extols the "Godly prince" whom he sees as standing between God and man. This forced him to make excuses for Mary, which he did on the grounds that she had known no other religion. Jewel believed obedience to the monarch was essential. For this reason Jewel would enforce the wearing of the surplice because that was what the monarch required, not because he personally believed it had any merit.

Concerning the sacraments, Jewel defines them as "the sacred signs and ceremonies which Christ commanded us to use, that he might by them represent to our eyes the mysteries of our salvation, and most strongly confirm the faith we have in his blood, and seal in our hearts his grace." This is close to Calvin's definition of a sacrament. Jewel recognises two sacraments: baptism and the Eucharist, the former a sacrament of the remission of sins, the latter a reminder of Christ's sacrifice and a nurturer of hope in the resurrection and eternal life. As to the nature of the Eucharistic elements, the Apology is rather vague, though Jewel's position appears to be somewhere between Luther's consubstantiation and the Catholic teaching of transubstantiation. He writes: "the bread and wine are the holy and heavenly mysteries of the body and blood of Christ; and----in them Christ himself---is so exhibited to us as present, that we do by faith truly take his body and blood." This understanding has appeal to both Protestants and Catholics. The Apology devotes much attention to the many abuses and corruptions of the Catholic Church: the making of the mass a sacrifice; the veneration of the saints, which Jewel denounces; clerical marriage,

which Jewel allows; compulsory private confession, withholding the chalice from the laity and private masses, to which he is opposed; and the language of the mass, which Jewel says should be in the vernacular.

Jewel may not have been entirely truthful when he claimed that the Church of England had defected from Rome for purely theological and religious reasons. In England the emergence of a national church was strongly connected with political factors. In recent biographies of Jewel, now more than 40 years old, Jewel is revered for his scholarship, his humanism and his ability to give the Church of England an identity. But a recent work by an American scholar Gary Jenkins called "JOHN JEWEL AND THE ENGLISH NATIONAL CHURCH" casts doubt on this interpretation. Jenkins argues that rather than giving the Church of England a positive identity, one of the unintended consequences of the Apologia was to bring about its "divided and schizophrenic nature". That's a point we cannot ignore in our own time when division is so evident. Personally I am struck when considering the history of the church in the sixteenth century how it seemed to be hi-jacked by what might be called head Christians, who were prepared to die and bring about the death of others to prove that intellectually they had a handle on Christianity.