

John Jewel (1522-1571)

Reformer of the English Church

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A jewel in Christ's crown

One of the largest jewels in Christ's crown during the British Reformation actually bore the name of Jewel himself. This was John Jewel who was born May 22, 1522 in Buden, Devonshire and died on September 23, 1571 in Monkton Farleigh in the diocese of Salisbury over which he had been the Bishop since January 1560. It is no longer customary to call Jewel a British Reformer but this is a mistake of history. Jewel pioneered the break with Rome in an England overshadowed by Bloody Mary and he was one of the first Englishmen to bring the cup back into celebrations of the Lord's Supper. Jewel's works fully deserve to be counted as Reformation literature. Spurgeon rightly classified Jewel with the Reformers in his *Commenting and Commentaries* and Dr Michael W. Dewar in his *They Subdued Kingdoms* says, 'No Scottish or Swiss Calvinist could be more strongly "Reformed" in his doctrine of the Lord's Supper.' The Continentals looked upon Jewel's works as the epitome of the Reformation and they were translated into many languages. The editor of the standard 1837 edition of Neal's *History of the Puritans* says of Jewel's *Apology for the Church of England*, 'It promoted the Reformation from Popery more than any other publication of that period.'¹



John was born into a very large family which quite impoverished his father who had started his adult life fairly well-to-do. From his earliest years, young John showed a great talent for learning. So swift was his academic progress that he was judged mature enough as a scholar to enter Merton College whilst scarcely thirteen years of age. Immediately, he came under the supervision of men with sound doctrines such as John Parkhurst, who became Bishop of Norwich, under whose guidance John received a deep affection for the Word of God then already translated into English by Coverdale and Tyndale.

Jewel studied diligently, rising up at four each morning to do so, paying special attention to the Greek language. So ardent were his early morning labours in his badly heated draughty rooms that he soon developed rheumatism which grew so serious that whilst still at university, he became a cripple for life. Jewel was thankful to escape with his life as many of his fellow-students at the time had died of the plague which spread through the student body. In 1539, Jewel transferred to Corpus Christi College from where he took his B.A. in the following year. By this time Jewel's friends

were becoming anxious for his life as he was working almost non-stop from four in the morning until ten at night and often forgetting to eat. Various university posts were now offered to Jewel and for the next seven years he lectured in Humanities and Rhetoric, taking his M.A. in 1544.

Mary the Bloody

Peter Martyr Vermigli (1500-1562),² the Italian Reformer was at Oxford from 1547 to the accession of Queen Mary, called 'The Bloody', invited there by Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556). Vermigli became very popular with the Protestant school in the university, chiefly through his lectures on Corinthians and Romans, besides assisting the Church with the Reformed Liturgy. Jewel was highly influenced by Vermigli and took his side when the Marian Papists began to protest at Vermigli's influence at Oxford, writing his defence. In 1552, Jewel took his B.D. and became vicar of a small church outside of the town, always walking to and from Oxford to his flock in spite of his lameness. Jewel could have taken any number of wealthy livings at this time but preferred to be poor amongst the poor.

As soon as Mary came to the throne in 1553, Jewel was expelled from Oxford by the fellows for refusing to take the Roman mass which they had introduced. Jewel's farewell lecture to his students is extant and depicts the great sorrow in which he took leave of the calling that had become so dear to his heart. Ironically enough, the university still asked Jewel, because they had no better orator, to convey the universities congratulations on Mary's accession. Naively believing that Mary would keep her promise not to alter the Church of England and threatened by death unless he signed a document accepting Mary and her doctrines, Jewel complied, but still his enemies wished for his death, chiefly because of his support of Peter Martyr. Jewel escaped being murdered by them one day, as, warned of their intention, he fled on foot, eventually receiving assistance from Sir Nicholas Throgmorton to flee to Germany. John Parkhurst, as soon as he heard that Mary intended to break her word and restore the Popish mass, fled too, with many others.

Reformers in exile

At Frankfurt Jewel met up with a large group of British refugees, several of whom had been his close associates at Oxford. They urged Jewel to renounce any allegiance to Mary and her Popish ways and retract his written assent. So on the first Sunday after reaching Frankfurt, Jewel announced from the pulpit of the English Church, 'It was my abject and cowardly mind, and faint heart, that made my weak hand to commit this wickedness.'³ Jewel showed such a genuine distress at the way Britain had been deceived and repentance for his own action that Erasmus Middleton tells us the whole auditorium felt more drawn to Jewel than if he had never pledged allegiance to Mary and her Popish ways. Middleton also adds that it is easy for those who were never tried to criticise Jewel but we can only be guided by the Word of God in this that tells such critics, 'Let him who

thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.'

Vermigli, who had also made his escape from Britain after the sad loss of his wife, settled at Straßburg and now invited Jewel to join him. Meanwhile the Papists worked off their frustration at Vermigli's escape by opening his wife's grave, exhuming her body and re-burying it under a dung heap. Once in Straßburg, Jewel found that many men who had been leading British churchmen under Henry VIII and Edward VI were there and shared deep fellowship with such as Edward Grindal, later to become Archbishop of York. Soon, however, Vermigli was appointed Professor of Hebrew at Zürich university and took Jewel as his assistant with him. There both men soon discovered another group of British refugees and plans were laid for restoring the Church of England after Mary. When the Papist Queen's henchman, Bishop Stephen Gardiner heard of this, he strove to root out and punish all those still in Britain who were supporting their exiled brethren, boasting that he would make the exiles eat their own finger-ends for hunger before he was finished with them.

Back home to a hero's welcome

Comforting himself with the thought, 'These things will not last an age,' Jewel continued his studies throughout the four years of his exile and helped Martyr prepare his works for the press. On November 17, 1558, an anniversary which should be celebrated as a National Holiday in Britain, Mary the Bloody, mercifully for her people, went to meet her Judge. The mass exodus from the Continent back to England was great and Queen Elizabeth gave most of the exiles a hero's welcome. One of the first church reforms Elizabeth put into action, aided by those whom Mary had persecuted, was to put the Church of England service and the epistles and gospels used in worship into the English language. The elevation of the sacrament was now abolished and the prison doors opened to the thousands who had been cast there by Mary's Popish vassals. Jewel was now appointed as a commissioner to travel the country, examining the churches to try and estimate the degree of corruption they had undergone throughout Mary's reign. After making his report, Jewel was made Bishop of Salisbury and his friend Parkhurst Bishop of Norwich. Jewel soon found, however, that his Popish predecessor, John Capon, had embezzled church funds and even sold off the livings attached to the diocese for his own enrichment and the bishopric was financially bankrupt. Jewel also found much Romanism still in his diocese and challenged the papists openly to come forward with any evidence from Scripture or even the early church to back up their superstitious claims for the papacy and he would grant them the freedom of undisturbed public debate. A Mr Harding took up the challenge, both sides publishing a number of works on the topics raised.

The Church of England versus the Papacy

Jewel's greatest work against the Papacy, written in 1562 in Latin was his *Apologia pro Ecclesia Anglicana*, which gained the personal backing of the

Queen and the entire church hierarchy. In it, Jewel shows that the criteria for what is heresy or not does not rest in church history or church traditions but solely in the acceptance or non-acceptance of the Word of God. Similarly, church authority has nothing to do with ideas of succession as such but on whether a church is built on the Word of God and lives by it. He thus says in his Introduction to his great work:

But seeing they (the papists) can produce nothing out of the Scriptures against us, it is very injurious and cruel to call us heretics, who have not revolted from Christ nor from the apostles, nor from the prophets. By the sword of Scripture Christ overcame the devil when he was tempted by him; with these weapons every high thing that exalteth itself against God is to be brought down and dispersed; 'for all Scripture', saith St. Paul: (2 Tim. 3:16), 'is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction, that the man of God may be perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works;' and accordingly, the holy fathers have never fought against heretics with any other arms than what the Scriptures have afforded them. St. Augustine, when he disputed against Petilianus, a Donatist heretic, useth these words: 'Let not (saith he) these words be heard, I say, or Thou sayest, but rather let Thus saith the Lord; let us seek the church there, let us judge of our cause by that.' And St. Jerome saith, 'Let whatever is pretended to be delivered by the Apostles, and cannot be proved by the testimony of the written word, be struck with the sword of God.' And St. Ambrose to the emperor Gratian, 'Let the Scriptures (saith he), let the apostles, let the prophets, let Christ be interrogated.' The Catholic fathers and bishops of those times did not doubt but our religion might be sufficiently proved by Scripture; nor durst they esteem any man an heretic, whose error they could not perspicuously and clearly prove such by Scripture. And as to us, we may truly reply with St. Paul, Acts, 24:14 'After the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are in the written law and the prophets;' or the writings of the apostles.

Jewel's Apologia was seen in England as primarily a defence of the Anglican Church, but the Continental Reformed churches also saw it as a defence of Protestantism and the Reformed Faith par excellence. This alone puts to flight the odd idea propagated by the Presbyterians that Jewel was really one of them but merely lacked the courage to come out. Jewel was an Anglican through and through. In this work, Jewel refutes the fond idea of the pope that Trent was a general church council representing all the churches, therefore its findings were to be accepted by the Church of England. Peter Martyr Vermigli, still at Zürich was delighted to receive a copy of Jewel's work and promoted the book in Europe during the closing months of his life. His letter of thanks to Jewel is still extant and shows how respected amongst the Continental Protestant churches was not only Jewel but the Church of England at large. Vermigli writes:

By the favour of the bishop of London, most worthy prelate and my very good lord, there was brought me one of your Apologies for the Church of England; which neither I nor any others hereabouts before had seen: It is true in your last letter you rather intimated that it might come out, than signified that it should; but however it came not hither till about the middle of July. And from hence your lordship may consider how much we suffer from the distance of places. It hath not only given me an entire satisfaction, who approve and am strangely pleased with all you do; but to Bullinger and his sons, and sons in law: And it seems so very wise, admirable and elegant to Gualter (Zwingli's son in law) and Wolfius, that they can put no end to their commendations of it, as not thinking there hath been any thing printed in these times of so great a perfection. I do infinitely congratulate this great felicity of your parts, this excellent edification of the church, and the honour you have done your country; and I do most earnestly beseech you to go on in the same way; for though we have a good cause, yet the defenders of it are few in comparison of its enemies; and they now seem so awakened, that they have of late won much upon the ignorant multitude, by the goodness of their style, and the subtlety of their sophistry. I speak this of Staphylus and Hosius, and some other writers of that party, who are now the stout champions of the papal errors. But now you have, by this your most elegant and learned Apology, raised such an hope in the minds of all good and learned men, that they generally promise themselves, that whilst you live, the Reformed religion shall never want an advocate against its enemies. And truly I am extremely glad, that I am so happy as to live to see that day which made you the father of so illustrious and eloquent a production. May the GOD of heaven of his goodness grant that you may be blessed in time with many more such.

Zurick, Aug. 24, 1562.

This was one of the last letters written by Vermigli. He had lived to see a great work written by his former pupil which would rally Reformed believers throughout Europe around the cause of the Reformation in their battle against the corrupt machinations of Rome. Peter Martyr Vermigli died on November 12, 1562.

The work of Reformation

The Church of England at this time, with men like Jewel at her head, was seen internationally as the very spearhead of the Reformed movement with Presbyterian churches willingly allowing her the lead. Vermigli himself was one of the greatest of Reformers and most radical in stripping church officers of any vestiges of popish power. Bullinger (1504-1575), Zwingli's successor, is famous for his co-work with Luther, Calvin and Zwingli in

which church offices were hardly considered of any importance in the work of Reformation. Bullinger drew up the Second Helvetic Confession which was adopted in Switzerland and in several other German-speaking states such as Bohemia and also by the Reformed Church in Hungary. This confession was also very influential in Elizabethan England and Bullinger was highly respected by the Church of England. Bullinger's hundred or so works are hardly known amongst present day Reformed people and a number of books on justification by grace and the authority of Scripture and various expository works are still awaiting the attention of translators. Several editions of his sermons were printed in English.

Given these facts, it is no surprise to learn that when the British delegates from the Reformed Church of England arrived at the Council of Dort in 1618, they were greeted as representing the furthest extent which the Reformed faith had developed in Europe. Bishop George Carleton, the High Calvinist official leader, was assured that this was because of their church discipline and order which reflected their doctrines. Thomas Fuller in his famous Church History, shows how the Reformed Church of England always looked upon Switzerland as the nursery of the Reformed faith and when Jewel's contemporary Archbishop Whitgift heard that Geneva was in danger of slipping back into papist hands as it had declared itself bankrupt, he organised a national collection to help pay the city's debts. Whitgift, too, was responsible for issuing the Lambeth Articles of which Presbyterian Princeton scholar Samuel Miller says:

The famous Lambeth Articles, drawn up in 1595, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, are acknowledged by all who ever read them, to be among the most strongly marked Calvinistical compositions that ever were penned.⁴

Oxford University now awarded Jewel the degree of Doctor of Divinity. As the papist Council of Trent was sitting at the time (1545-1563), Jewel's book on doctrine and church order was discussed there and two men, an Italian and a Spaniard, were authorised to answer it. Meanwhile it was translated into some fifteen languages, English being one of the last as it had sold well enough in its Latin edition. One of Jewel's major intentions had been to have the book circulated in churches still under Rome's influence. The Apology In Defence of the Church of England had, indeed, an enormous influence on the continental churches as well as the British. Perhaps this is why the two Roman Catholics who were supposed to answer the work never really took on the task. However, Queen Elizabeth associated herself staunchly with the work, which angered the pope no end. He thus decided to condemn Jewel's defence and the Queen's approbation of it by pompously using his empty powers to excommunicate the Queen. Jewel immediately wrote a defence of the Queen entitled A View of the Seditious Bull Sent into England by Pius V. and appended a treatise on the Word of God to it for the pope's pontifical edification.⁵

Preaching the Word

Now Jewel began to publish profusely, most of his works being of an expository kind. Here, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who mistakenly views all Puritans as being Presbyterian and Separatist, shows a most inaccurate view of the Anglican church of this time and her attitude to preaching, arguing:

On the whole, the Anglican method was to take a subject, sometimes a theological subject or an ethical subject, or some general theme, and then to preach a disquisition on this particular subject.⁶

He then explains how true Puritan preachers always took a text, then explained its meaning, after which they drew out the doctrine in the text and applied it to the needs of his people. Here again, the evidence Lloyd-Jones produces, quite contradicts his theory. Thomas Cartwright, the Archbishop's ward, whom Lloyd-Jones regards as the Proto-Puritan, great expositor as he was, often used the method Lloyd-Jones disparages. Some indication of this is found in Spurgeon's *Commenting and Commentaries on the Pastoral Epistles* where he praises the depth, accuracy and discursiveness of Bishop Davenant and the liveliness of Bishop Jewel, but though he praises Cartwright's rich spirituality, he says of his commentary on Colossians, 'This is but a small affair, consisting of scanty and second rate "notes" by a hearer.'⁷ No other comments on Cartwright's works such as his expositions of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and his *Harmony of the Gospels* are made.⁸ Of Bishop Hall's *Contemplations*, however, Spurgeon says, 'If its price were raised in proportion to its real value, it would become one of the most costly books extant.'⁹ This is not so much depreciating Cartwright's preaching skills as affirming that the Reformed Church of England produced expositors of Scripture who ought to be given their rightful place amongst the very best.¹⁰

In all fairness to Cartwright, it must be added that there is a further point where Cartwright failed to meet Lloyd-Jones' criteria for a Puritan at no discredit to himself. He certainly was not a Separatist. Nor did William Perkins, whom Lloyd-Jones sees as a great Puritan preacher, fulfil Lloyd-Jones' criteria in any way apart from his preaching. He never complained of his status in the Church of England hierarchy, he emphasised the catholicity (the word that raises Lloyd-Jones' blood-pressure) of his Reformed faith and he was praised by bishops and archbishops and loved by Arminians as well as High Calvinists. He lived and died a minister of the Church of England and there is no sign of his ever expressing Separatist views. I am not arguing that Perkins was not a Puritan, he most certainly was! I am arguing that Perkins was an Anglican Puritan of Puritans and that Lloyd-Jones theory that Anglicans were at best what he calls 'part Puritans' is denounced in all its fullness by not only Perkins but also by Jewel, Whitaker, Whitgift, Hall, Abbot, Davenant and Ward and a host of

other Anglicans from this period.

Like Perkins, Jewel was an excellent expository preacher. So great was his love of this calling that he always said, 'A bishop should die preaching,' and the words continually impressed on his mind were, 'Happy art thou, my servant, if, when I come, I find thee so doing.' Anyone who feels the Church of England never produced fine preachers should read Jewel's exposition of 2 Thessalonians 2:13 reprinted in Middleton's *Biographia Evangelica*, 'But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you brethren beloved of the Lord because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.' Expounding this text, Jewel says:

GOD hath chosen you from the beginning His election is sure for ever. The Lord knoweth who are his. You shall not be deceived with the power and subtlety of antichrist. You shall not fall from grace. You shall not perish. This is the comfort which abideth with the faithful, they behold the fall of the wicked; when they see them forsake the truth and delight in fables; when they see them return to their vomit, and wallow again in the mire. When we see these things in others, we must say, alas! they are examples for me, and lamentable examples. Let him that standeth take heed that he fall not. But God hath loved me, and hath chosen me, to salvation. His mercy shall go before me, and his mercy shall follow in me. His mercy shall guide my feet, and stay me from falling. If I stay by myself, I stay by nothing; I must needs come to ground.—He hath loved me; he hath chosen me; he will keep me. Neither the example nor the company of others, nor the enticing of the devil, nor my own sensual imaginations, nor sword, nor fire, is able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the comfort of the faithful.—Whatever falleth upon others, though others fall and perish, although they forsake Christ and follow after antichrist, yet God hath loved you and given his Son for you. He hath chosen you, and prepared you unto Salvation, and hath written your name in the book of life. But how may we know that God hath chosen us? how may we see this ELECTION? or how may we feel it? The apostle saith, through sanctification, and the faith of truth. These are tokens of God's election.—This (viz. the Holy Spirit) comforteth us in all temptations; and beareth witness with our Spirit that we be the children of God; that God hath chosen us; and doth love us, and hath prepared us to salvation; that we are the heirs of his glory; that God will keep us as the apple of his eye; that he will defend us; and we shall not perish. 11

Anyone doubting Jewel's Calvinism would also profit from such a reading. Jewel also keeps to the Reformed tradition of going through a whole book

verse by verse rather than preaching on isolated passages. He believed that this gave his hearers a better conception of the entire gospel. It was this commentary which caused Spurgeon to see in it the work of a true Reformer with the positive exception that Jewel was more 'lively' than most others.¹²

Lord Jesus, come quickly

Jewel became very ill shortly before his fiftieth birthday and he knew the Lord was calling him home. His almost super-human labours of preaching, writing, caring for others and walking on foot to his various engagements, though extremely feeble in body and very lame, made him an old man before the usual time. Jewel then made his will, giving all his estate to his servants, the poor and to needy scholars. His last sermon was preached to his own household and was on the Lord's Prayer. On closing, he told his hearers that the time had come for him to leave them. One of them protested, saying that the Lord could restore him. Jewel answered, 'A crown of righteousness is laid up for me. Christ is my righteousness. Father let thy will be done: Thy will I say, and not mine, which is imperfect and depraved. This day, quickly, let me see the Lord Jesus.' Then the Lord Jesus came quickly and took his servant John Jewel home on the very same day.¹³

1 Op. cit. vol. i, p. 183.

2 Usually called Peter Martyr by English-speaking people.

3 Neal's remark in his otherwise first-class mini-biography of Jewel in his History of the Puritans that Jewel had not the courage of a martyr is fully out of place when taking the full situation into account. See vol. i, p. 183.

4 Introduction to Thomas Scott's translation of The Canons of Dort, 1841.

5 Edward Hinson has included this fine work on the Scriptures in his book Introduction to Puritan Theology, Foreword by James I. Packer, Guardian Press.

6 See the chapter on Preaching in Lloyd-Jones' The Puritans

7 P.165.

8 Even though Spurgeon has a special chapter for Gospel Harmonies and records far lesser known authors under all three headings..

9 P. 40.

10 A most sympathetic biography of Cartwright was written by Anglican Erasmus Middleton in vol. ii of his *Biographia Evangelica*.

11 The full commentary is found reprinted in *The Fathers of the English Church*, vol. vii, pp. 125-415. The above quote is on pp. 385 ff. Middleton has omitted parts for reasons of space but I have quoted from him as his works are more available than Jewel's commentaries themselves.

12 *Commenting and Commentaries*, p. 166.

13 The 767 pages of *Fathers of the English Church*, vol. vii are all devoted to Jewel's life and works, including the *Apologia in English*.

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