

Bishop John Jewel

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WHEN we read in the Scriptures of ‘the day of small things’ and look around Salisbury we may well think that this describes our times. Ignorance of God abounds, and proud, hard-hearted sinners resist the Gospel invitation to come to a gracious Saviour. But Salisbury has not always been like this. There have been a number of times when God has singularly blessed Salisbury.

It is impossible to say when Christianity first reached Salisbury. It is certain that the British church had its origins in the spread of the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire beginning in the time of the Apostles. Tertullian writing in the third century tells us that Christians had reached beyond the area of the Roman occupation in Britain. There is no doubt that believers were found in the Salisbury area though records lack detail. About 150 years after the Roman legions retreated from England, Birinus was sent by the Pope in 634 to ‘preach baptism to the West Saxons’ in the year 634. Some remnants of the British church seem to have survived for Birinus found bishops throughout Wessex.

Even after the Roman church gained ascendancy throughout most of England following the Synod of Whitby in 664, there were times of refreshing from the Lord. Alfred, King of Wessex from 871-899, was determined that his people would receive a Christian education and also incorporated part of the Exodus chapters 20-28 unto the law of the land. Alfred also translated many of the Psalms into Anglo Saxon.

In the latter reign of Henry I, and in the reign of King Stephen (1135-1154) there seems to have been a revival of piety under the preaching of Cistercian friars. With the translation of the Bible into English by Wycliffe and his teaching and sending forth of

his followers, the Lollards, God blessed most areas of England in the 14th century. These Lollards were well known in the diocese of Salisbury. In the 16th century following the spread of the teachings of Luther and the Bible translation of Tyndale, believers again came to the fore in Salisbury. We know of a few of these believers through Foxe and his recording of the martyrdom of the Salisbury martyrs in the time of Queen Mary Tudor.

After the death of Mary the reign of Queen Elizabeth brought to prominence numerous godly ministers. This brings us to Bishop John Jewel, the first notable minister of the Gospel in Salisbury.

His Youth and Studies

Jewel was born on May 24th, 1522, at the village of Buden, near Ilfracombe, North Devon. He was one of ten children. From an early age he showed signs of an excellent intellect, and was educated by his mother’s brother, John Bellamy, rector of Hampton. John Ayre comments: ‘But already in his youth his diligence was remarkable. To a natural quickness of parts he added a patient industry; and his forwardness was tempered with such simplicity and modesty as to win the affections of his tutors, and to inspire them with the highest expectations of his future career.’

In 1535 Jewel went to Merton College, Oxford. Here he studied under John Parkhurst, who is said to have first introduced him to Reformed doctrines. Like many of his age his day began at 4am and he often only finished work at 10pm. In 1539 he transferred to Corpus College where he astonished and delighted the President and other Masters of Arts. During these years he became deeply acquainted with the work of Augustine, and his studies led him further in the direction of Reformed theology. By 1546 Jewel

was 'considered as a decided and open friend to the Protestant cause' (Charles Webb Le Bas, M.A.). This was evidenced by his receiving six pounds a year from a fund collected among the nobility and others in London for the purpose of supporting indigent scholars professing the Reformed doctrines. These were the latter years of Henry's reign, when Cranmer was cautiously introducing reforms which had their influence from Lutheran sources. At this stage the teachings of Zwingli and Calvin were only slowly beginning to take effect.

In 1549, Peter Martyr came to Oxford as a lecturer, and a strong friendship developed between him and Jewel. Jewel regarded Martyr as a father; and Martyr in return cherished him as a son. He greatly admired Martyr's oratory and copied out the important disputation between him and Chedsey upon the subject of the Lord's Supper.

In 1552 he graduated B.D. and was made vicar of Sunningwell, Berkshire, and public orator of the university.

Exile

Jewel was not a man of controversy, and after the death of Edward he was not prepared for the persecutions awaiting the Church under Mary. Not all at his College were happy with Jewel and they took advantage of the accession of Queen Mary. No sooner was she established upon the throne than it was decided that Jewel was no longer fit to hold his office there. He was expelled from the College for having attended the lectures of Peter Martyr, for being a preacher of heresy, and for not attending the Mass. After this alarming event Jewel sought and found asylum in Pembroke Hall, one of the other colleges at the University.

1554 marked a year of doctrinal conflict for Jewel. So esteemed was he in Oxford that when Cranmer and Ridley gave their disputation he was there as the notary. However, later that year, in a moment of

weakness he signed Romanising articles. We would do wrong to judge Jewel harshly at this stage. If we know anything of our own hearts, this momentary fall of a gracious man is something we can look upon with compassion and empathy. 'Who can understand his errors?' (Ps 19:12). Even with the signing of these articles, Jewel was under suspicion and it was no longer safe for him to remain in England. With the help of Latimer's faithful servant Bernher, Jewel fled to the Continent. He went to Frankfurt first, where he was not well received by Knox and Whittingham, who saw him as a weakling and a traitor. Perhaps more significantly, he remained committed to the teaching of Cranmer and sided with Cox who would not go as far as Knox and Calvin in Reformation principles. He did atone for his earlier fault by public confession, having been encouraged by friends of the propriety of such a step. Jewel said: 'I am fully resolved upon it, and, if no one had suggested it, I was intending to do it of my own accord; for sacred things are not to be played with; neither can God, the searcher of the heart and reins be mocked.' The split among the Reformed movement was growing and Jewel sided with those who followed the teachings of Cranmer rather than those of Calvin. In 1555 he joined Martyr in Strasbourg and there enjoyed the fellowship of many leading Reformers. He then moved on to Zurich where Martyr became professor of Hebrew and was greatly assisted by Jewel in his studies.

On the death of Queen Mary, Jewel returned to England desiring to re-establish the work of reform.

Bishop of Salisbury

In 1559 Jewel preached a stirring sermon at St. Paul's Cross based on the text from 1 Corinthians 11:23: 'For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread...'. In this sermon he outlined twenty-seven doctrines held by the Church of Rome, and offered to become a Papist

if anyone could prove the practice of them in the first six hundred years after the death of Christ.

Jewel was appointed Bishop of Salisbury on January 21st, 1560. In this year he once again repeated his challenge against Rome. This time it was from the Scriptures again, but with the addition of several fresh articles. Dr. Henry Cole took up the challenge. This resulted in Jewel's *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, published in 1562 and considered by some to form the groundwork for all subsequent controversy the Church of England would have with the Church of Rome.

It was in May 1560 that Jewel set out from London to commence his charge as bishop of Salisbury. As bishop, Jewel devoted himself wholeheartedly to the conscientious discharge of his pastoral duties. His predecessor, Capon (who was one of the bloody actors in the Marian persecution), had greatly abused the office, and Jewel sought to redress the evil done by him. Due to the impoverished state of the diocese, there was scarcely a living left to maintain a minister, so Jewel took it initially upon himself to undertake the preaching in all parts of the diocese. He had a particular concern to have faithful ministers that would preach the Word of God, and therefore sought by his own preaching to show forth the claims of the Gospel upon the souls of men. He was greatly exercised by the desire to see pure religion promoted among his people. As a scholar he saw the necessity and advantage of having well taught men in the church and so gave particular attention to any that showed promising signs. Among these was the well known Hooker who learned much from Jewel and gained his full support (Hooker, like Jewel maintained his loyalty to the Edwardian Reformers and was known later to dispute with the Puritans and Separatists). Hooker's indebtedness to Jewel for his patronage is recorded in his work the *Laws*. In it Hooker characterizes Jewel as the 'worthiest divine Christendom hath bred for the space of some

hundreds of years.' Southgate records that by the year 1564 the diocese of Wiltshire 'seems to have been singularly free of trouble-makers, Romanist and Puritan alike.'

He was as much concerned for the souls of his household as he was for the souls of his parish. While the early part of the morning was spent in private devotion and study he set aside the evenings for household prayer and for the enquiring into the spiritual state of his servants. In this he sought to fulfill the biblical mandate of ruling his own house well.

Jewel's greatest adversary was Thomas Harding. Harding was an Oxford contemporary of Jewel and graduated B.D. in 1552. He bore a grudge against him (Jewel), for his ejection from Salisbury Cathedral for recusancy when Jewel was a commissioner for the South West of England. Harding had initially embraced the Protestant reforms during Edward's reign and was made chaplain to Lady Jane Gray's father, the Duke of Suffolk. However, on Mary's accession he became a zealous Papist again and was duly rewarded by her. He was happy to forsake Reformation truths for his own furtherance and advantage and in due time became confessor to Bishop Gardiner and then canon-in-residence and treasurer of Salisbury Cathedral.

A great literary and theological battle began between Jewel and Harding. This controversy was not to bring the downfall the Romanists desired, but rather in God's sovereign will it was to advance the cause it aimed to destroy. Jewel's greatest works were the fruit of this long and heated debate. His *Apology of the Church of England* is the most widely read of his works. It was soon translated into English. The great *Defence of the Apology* appeared in 1568 and was later enlarged in 1569/70. In these works we see Jewel the Biblical scholar addressing the vital issues of his day and engaging his time and ability in the promotion of Gospel truths. The

Defence was reprinted in 1571 and at this stage may be considered to have closed the controversy.

Jewel attended the Convocation and Parliament of 1571 and saw the Thirty-Nine Articles firmly established by Parliament as the norm of doctrine of the Reformed Anglican Church. However, the controversy with the Puritans was intensifying and Jewel stood firm on the Vestiarian and Presbyterian issues. His last sermon at Saint Paul's Cross spoke against his opponents of established rule.

Last Days

Jewel was not yet 50 years of age, but years of ill health and the difficult conditions of exile were at last taking their toll upon him, and his days upon this earth were drawing to a close. His last visitation of the diocese ended abruptly due to extreme weakness which forced him to take to his bed and to consider that his end was now not far off. Having called his household around him, he gave a blessed exposition of the Lord's Prayer. He entered into his last address to all present seeking their prayer and strengthening in his final hour. He then made request for Psalm 71 to be sung, and at the end of singing, on hearing someone present pray that his life might be extended, replied in Last Days the words of Ambrose: 'I have not lived so that I am ashamed to live longer; neither do I fear to die, because we have a merciful Lord. ...This is my To-day: This day quickly let me come unto thee: This day let me see the Lord Jesus.' The Lord heard and answered his request bringing him into his rest on September 23rd 1571. He was buried in the Cathedral and a brass on the floor outside the north choir transept marks this place.

His Works and Writings

In 1609, under the direction of Archbishop Bancroft, the works of Jewel were collected and published

in a folio. Although the total number of Jewel's works is not large, what he did write is of a very extensive nature and gives clear demonstration of his theological and literary skills.

His doctrinal works address the critical issues facing the emerging Protestant church under great threat and persecution from the Church of Rome. At a time when many were afraid to hold convictions contrary to established teachings, Jewel spoke out clearly and wrote authoritatively on such issues as the Mass, the sacraments, and even on the Roman Antichrist. In his exposition of the Second Epistle of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians he deals clearly and powerfully with the question of Antichrist. When Marian martyrs were known to have suffered for speaking out against the Pope as Antichrist, Jewel was not afraid to identify himself with the Reformers who were setting the teachings of Scripture above the teachings of the Church. On verse 7 of Second Thessalonians chapter two he says: 'He [Antichrist] shall be a Christian, he shall be a bishop, and a holy father, and a bishop of great shew and countenance in the world. Mark, he shall not be a king, nor an emperor, nor a tyrant, nor a temporal prince, but a bishop.'

Jewel's Apology, though comparatively short, is regarded as his greatest work. Bancroft ordered it to be placed in all the churches and even to this day can be seen in some churches, where it is chained to the lectern.

The Apology is divided into six main sections:

1. Section one addresses the attacks made against Protestantism in Jewel's day.
2. Section two expounds Protestant doctrine.
3. Section three makes the bold claim that the

Protestant churches are in the true line of succession from the early Church Fathers.

4. Section four exposes the scandals of the Church of Rome and the errors into which it had plunged.

5. Section five discredits the claims of Rome to have the support of the Church Fathers.

6. Section six shows the impossibility of accepting the judgments of the Council of Trent.

Many of Jewel's letters have been preserved, and these furnish us with rich insights into the friendships and confidences that existed between him and many of his contemporary Reformers.

During his years of exile Jewel established close friendships with men such as Bullinger, Gualter, Simler, Weidner and others. After Jewel's return home he maintained a close correspondence with some of these men. These letters (of Jewel and others), along with those of Bullinger are to be found in the Zurich archives. The Zurich Letters comprise copies of these letters procured originally by Rev. John Hunter of Bath, who then passed them on to the Parker Society. Below are extracts from Letter XCV:

BISHOP JEWEL TO HENRY BULLINGER

Dated from Salisbury, March 2, 1571.

Much health in Christ. I wrote to you most accomplished sir, and much esteemed father in Christ, towards the beginning of September, and at some length, concerning the general posture of our affairs. I know not what has become of that letter ... Should I hear that it has reached you in safety, I shall be more encouraged to write to you in future.

Our churches are now, by the blessing of God, in peace. The most holy father has endeavoured to create confusion by every means in his power. He sent over to us by stealth his most senseless bull, by which he would

deprive queen Elizabeth of the government of the state, and Christ of his kingdom. I sent a copy of it to you at the last fair, that you might know with what solemnity that old and foolish man is raving. All his secret counsels have been so ably detected, and skillfully and opportunely counteracted by those who hold the helm of government, that they are now perceived even by children.

The queen of Scotland is still kept here...she is in custody, which she bears with impatience and indignation, and complains that she is unjustly dealt with ... The affairs of Scotland, meanwhile, are under the direction of those who profess the Gospel.

Grindal [Archbishop] of York, Sandys [Bishop] of London, Horn of Winchester, are a great way from me, each on his watch tower. All of them, however, desire your welfare, and send their respects.

I owe my friend Julius forty French crowns, being his pension for the two past years. I have desired him by letter once or twice to let me know to whom he wishes me to pay them. The money is forthcoming.

Farewell, my father, and much-esteemed master in Christ.

May the Lord Jesus very long preserve you in safety to his church!

Yours in Christ,

JOHN JEWEL,

Bishop of Salisbury.

We see in this letter something of the man who walked by faith and not by sight. He delighted in things spiritual, and greatly desired the advance of the Gospel. He knew what was happening in his day, and yet was not overly alarmed having his confidence in a Sovereign God who would work all things out according to His good pleasure.

The heart of Jewel was bound up in the furtherance of the Kingdom and with those like-

minded brethren who named the name of Christ. He knew much of the joys of Christian fellowship and was zealously affected by those he highly esteemed.

As we remember the life and controversies of Jewel, let us consider the advances which Roman doctrine is presently making within the Protestant churches. Our zeal for pure doctrine in the Church

of Christ ought to be like that of Jewel and other Protestant Reformers. We are debtors to these men who have left us the foundations of Reformed principles. Let us ask ourselves: Are we willing like Jewel to both suffer and exert ourselves for the cause of Christ despite great opposition?