

## Article reprinted from *Cross†Way* Issue Winter 2012 No. 123

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### JEWEL'S APOLOGY

By David Phipps

This year (2012) is the 450th anniversary of the publication of the *Apology for the Church of England* by John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury. Strictly speaking, that statement is inaccurate! What he published was *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae*. He wrote in Latin because this was the universal, scholarly language, and he wanted to explain to the whole of Europe exactly where the Church of England stood. Two years later it was translated into English – interestingly enough by Lady Ann Bacon, the mother of Francis Bacon, the playwright – with a preface by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

We must not misunderstand his use of the word Apology. Nowadays, it means that we are saying “Sorry.” He is saying anything but “Sorry!” He uses the word in the way that Newman would use it 300 years later in his *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, to mean an explanation and a justification of his position.

Jewel's is not a famous name today. I recently spoke to a vicar who had never heard of him! Most of us have heard of Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley, but Jewel's contribution is of the same order as theirs. We all know the importance of the 39 Articles for the Church of England. Who made the final revision of them in 1571? Jewel! Fewer have heard of the Homilies, although the Articles recommend them as a fuller statement of Anglican doctrine, but who edited the Second Book of Homilies? Jewel! What is more, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Archbishop Bancroft gave instructions that every parish church should have a copy of Jewel's *Apology* on display so that all could read it.

Why is Jewel so little known? There are two main reasons. Many of the early Reformers died heroic deaths. Jewel didn't. He kept a record for Cranmer at the latter's trial, but later signed up to a statement of Roman doctrine in order to save his skin. It was only when he found out that they were out to get him anyway, that he fled to the Continent, where the other exiles at first gave him a very cool reception. Like them, he could only return when Queen Mary died, and her (Protestant) sister, Elizabeth, came to the throne.

The other reason why Jewel is relatively unknown, is that he was not a man of action. He became a conscientious bishop of Salisbury, but above all, he was a scholar. He was steeped in historical and theological knowledge. He did not, like Luther and Calvin, make bold statements which shocked people – he plodded away at the details, convincing his fellow scholars of the truth by weight of argument.

So, what does the *Apology* say? Jewel's works are dauntingly long because they include a reply to Thomas Harding's<sup>1</sup> criticisms of his sermon at St. Paul's Cross and his *Defence of the Apology*, again in answer to Harding, both of which are much longer than the original works, and much else besides. The *Apology* itself is actually a very short book. What it does is set out to answer some of the accusations made by the Roman Catholics against the Church of England – on subjects which are very relevant today.

As we look at how he answers these charges, we ought to notice that he is firmly on the Reformed side of the Reformation divide. Some people have tried to portray the Church of England as a kind of halfway house between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism – Newman even called it a *Via Media*. Jewel would have had none of this. He was a Bible-believing Protestant, who was justified

by grace through faith, who wanted to define the Church of England over against Roman Catholicism, and against the radical Anabaptist wing of the Reformation which wanted to destroy everything and start the Church all over again. In this sense, he was a moderate.

## **1. Teaching**

In the first place, even a very superficial reading of Jewel shows that he was absolutely soaked in history and the teaching of the early Church Fathers. He claims that the Church of England maintains a continuity of teaching with the church throughout the centuries. The Church of England is not a new thing, it is a restoration of the Church to what it used to be. As he says to Harding in his *Defence of the Apology*:

This it is that so much grieves you, that we reform our churches now according to the pattern and sampler of Christ and his apostles' first institution. For thereby the disorder and deformity of your churches the more appear.

Specifically, he uses his patristic knowledge to show that they, like the Anglican Church, based their teaching firmly upon the Bible:

We receive and embrace all the canonical scriptures, both of the old and new testament; and we give our gracious God most hearty thanks, that he hath set up this light for us, which we ever fix our eyes upon, lest by human fraud, or the snares of the devil, we should be seduced to errors or fables.... In them all that is necessary for our salvation is abundantly and plainly contained, as Origen, St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom, and St. Cyril, have taught us.... No law, no tradition, no custom, is to be received or continued, if it be contrary to scripture

If anyone doubts our teaching, they ought to do what the Fathers did, and check it by Scripture:

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 a heretic, whose error they could not perspicuously and clearly prove such by scripture.... If therefore we be heretics, why do they [the Roman Catholics] not convince us out of the holy scriptures?

Why is it that so many so-called Evangelicals have so little interest in doctrine, and the way it has been understood over the centuries. In particular, why is it that so few of us are interested in the earliest years of the church? We cannot afford to leave this whole area to those who want to subvert the Gospel of Grace. Jewel would have something to say to us.

## **2. Preaching the Gospel**

Secondly, the Church of England treasures the sacraments, but puts them in their proper place – as visible expressions of the Gospel.

We receive also, and allow the sacraments of the church, that is, 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.

In particular, the Lord's Supper is seen as a public proclamation of the death of Christ, in which all Christian people are expected to participate:

We say that the eucharist is the sacrament or visible symbol of the body and blood of Christ, in which the death and resurrection of Christ, and what he did in his human body, is in a manner represented to our eyes, that we may give him thanks for his death, and our deliverance by it.... To this great and solemn feast the people are to be invited, that they may all communicate together, and may publicly signify and testify, both their union and society among themselves, and that hope which they have in Christ Jesus.

There is no place for private celebrations, and extravagant devotions:

We justly blame the bishops of Rome for presuming, without any command of God, without any authority of the holy fathers, and without any example, not only to propose the sacramental bread to be adored by the people with a divine worship.... So they have turned the sacraments of Christ into pageantry and pomp ; that, in the very thing in which the death of Christ was to be celebrated and inculcated, and the mysteries of our redemption ought to be piously and reverently represented, the eyes of men should only be fed with a foolish show, and a piece of ludicrous levity.

There has been a consistent attempt, over the last 150 years, to shift the focus of the Church of England away from preaching the Gospel and towards celebrating the sacraments. Nowadays clergy are turned out – I hesitate to say trained – who are perfectly capable of reading the Communion Service, but do not have the first clue about preaching the Gospel. Jewel would have something to say about this! He would remind us that

The power of loosing consists in this, that the minister, by the preaching of the gospel, offers to dejected minds and true penitents, the merits of Christ, and full pardon, and doth assure them of a certain remission of their sins, and the hope of eternal salvation.

### **3. The Church of England does not encourage confusion**

Clearly, Jewel had no time for those who replaced the rigid authoritarianism of Rome with chaos. He believed that everything had to be done “decently and in order”:

We confess, that, upon the beginning of the Reformation, there arose some new and unheard-of sects; but we render our unfeigned thanks to God, that the world is now well satisfied, that we neither brought forth, nor taught, nor maintained those monsters. Whoever thou art who thinkest otherwise, be pleased to read our books, which are every where to be had.

On the contrary, the church needs a properly trained and appointed (he does not say episcopally ordained) ministry if it is to function properly.

We say that a minister ought to have a lawful call, and be duly and orderly preferred in the church of God, and that no man ought at his own will and pleasure, to intrude into the sacred ministry. So that a very great injury is done us by them, who so frequently affirm, that nothing is done decently and in order by us, but that all things are managed confusedly and disorderly, and that with us, all that will, are priests, teachers, and interpreters.

He also believes that the church has its proper place within the nation to which it pertains:

If we be guilty of treason who reverence our princes, who submit to them in all things as far as the scriptures will permit us.... Our profession, our doctrine, is this, that every soul, whose ever it is, whether it be a monk, or an evangelist, or a prophet, or an apostle, it ought to be subject to kings and magistrates.

For Jewel, this clearly meant that the Pope’s claim to authority over nations was specious. It also meant the Establishment of some kind of national church:

We publicly teach, that princes are to be obeyed as men sent by God, and whosoever resists them, resists the ordinance of God, (Rom. xiii. 2.).... Besides all these things, I say, we see by histories, and the examples of the best times, that pious princes never thought the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, a thing that was foreign to their duty.

There are those who are not happy with this, but we have to remember that it was the State, in the

form of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, which saved the Church when the highest ecclesiastical court, the Court of Arches, ruled in the Gorham Case that it was obligatory in the Church of England to hold the doctrine that every baptised person is regenerate; and it was Parliament which rescued us from the Anglo-Catholic 1928 Prayer Book.

Jewel's book is old-fashioned. There would be something odd if it were not so. It was written 450 years ago in a very different world, but he still has these things, and many more, to teach us.

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Endnotes:

- 1) Thomas Harding too came from North Devon and attended the same Grammar School in Barnstaple as Jewel. He studied at Oxford and Henry VIII appointed him Regius Professor of Hebrew. He had belonged to the Reformed camp and became Treasurer of Salisbury Cathedral, but, under Mary, changed sides and became a Jesuit.