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John Jewel and the English National Church: The Dilemmas of
an Erastian Reformer (review)

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(Review)

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Gary W. Jenkins. *John Jewel and the English National Church: The Dilemmas of an Erastian Reformer.*

St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006. viii + 294 pp. index. append. bibl. \$99.95. ISBN: 0-7546-3585-6.

A revisionist account of the life and work of John Jewel is long overdue and admirably provided here by Gary Jenkins. Jenkins's main purpose is to argue that, contrary to what earlier writers on Jewel have asserted, Jewel was not a positive constructor of an Anglican religious identity, a *via media* predicated on a theology drawn from the Fathers. Instead, Jenkins portrays Jewel as a rhetorician and polemicist rather than a theologian, whose fundamental and driving ideas were "the primacy of the prince and the primacy of Scripture" (243). According to Jenkins, Jewel's use of the Fathers was entirely negative, its purpose to refute Catholic claims to being normative by denying any Catholic unity among the Fathers. Jenkins demonstrates that Jewel's religious convictions were firmly Reformed, albeit more beholden to Zurich than Geneva, but that Jewel's equally firm Erastianism forced him to embrace a doctrinal minimalism.

Bifurcation and reconciliation between conflicting impulses is a major theme of this book in other ways. Besides being equally committed to Erastianism and *sola scriptura*, Jewel was divided by his work as a scholar and his duties as a bishop, and by his public persona as a staunch defender of the Elizabethan settlement and his private, precisian leanings, which often left him frustrated with the pace and direction of English reform. Jenkins does an excellent job of showing how Jewel, with varying degrees of success, integrated all of these divergent aspects in his life and thought. Jenkins himself, however, similarly has two aims in this book: to provide a portrait of the man John Jewel — scholar, exile, prelate, and polemicist — and to undertake an in-depth analysis of Jewel's thought. Quite rightly, Jenkins points out that these are connected, and yet their integration in this work is not always smooth.

In the introduction, Jenkins sets out his main thesis: that Jewel's main significance is the legacy he bequeathed to the Church of England, a legacy that Jenkins argues is much more complex and ambiguous than previous writers have allowed, an ambiguity and complexity that arises out of Jewel's use of the Fathers, a use predicated on his determination to adhere to the principles of both Erastianism and scriptural supremacy. The first chapter, on Jewel until 1588, is the weakest. While successful in delineating the influence on Jewel of Peter Martyr, Jenkins's narrative of events, particularly during the reign of Henry VIII, is fairly superficial, following what is basically an Eltonian outline and making no recognition of the recent work on the 1540s, such as that by Alec Ryrie and Rory McEntegart, that has added much depth and subtlety to our understanding of the Henrician Reformation. The next two chapters, which deal with Jewel's published writings and the Catholic response to them, are much better, the one on the Catholic response in particular making excellent points about the weaknesses in Jewel's rhetoric and logic. These are followed by a chapter that reconciles Jewel's public and private positions on religious issues through an emphasis on Jewel's

Erastianism, and Jenkins demonstrates that, viewed in this light, Jewel's foundational principles were consistent in his arguments against both Catholics and Puritans. After a sixth chapter that delineates Jewel's life as bishop, the final chapter, "Jewel and the Identity of the English National Church," sums up both Jewel's bifurcated legacy and his treatment by recent historians.

There is a great deal to praise in this book. Jenkins's analyses are perceptive, nuanced, and convincing; he does more than any previous author in assembling a portrait of Jewel and his thought that encompasses all aspects of Jewel's life and work. On the negative side, Jenkins's writing style can be baroque and clumsy, with some sentences almost Germanic in their construction. He also has a tendency to be redundant, both in making points and in using certain phrases. As a result of both style and content, this is not an easy read, but it is a rewarding one.

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Craig M. Rustici. *The Afterlife of Pope Joan: Deploying the Popess Legend in Early Modern England*.

Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006. xiii + 210 pp. index. ill. bibl. \$65. ISBN: 0-472-11544-8.

Few legends associated with the history of the Roman Catholic pontificate have been as persistent as that of the "popess" Joan — the cross-dressing "she-pope," or "whore-pope," who allegedly ruled the see as John VIII before succumbing two years later to lust, pregnancy, and death either from childbirth or a Roman lynch mob. Attempts to prove the veracity of the legend have always been complicated by the lack of a written record until four hundred years after her supposed rule in 855, and even then, in the thirteenth century, the narrative of her life was already beginning to gather around itself layers of invention and textual elaboration. However, as Craig M. Rustici demonstrates in *The Afterlife of Pope Joan*, the significance of the story rests not in its truth so much as the manner in which it illuminates the interests and obsessions of societies that lent their own constructions to it. In the case of early modern England, such constructions took on heightened importance even if they also remained representationally unstable and wholly unpredictable in the end.

Popess Joan was not always depicted as a harlot fated to dangle from a gibbet in hell — Boccaccio had imagined her as basically virtuous despite her "wicked fraud" (15–17) — but anti-papal reformation discourse seized upon her as an especially powerful tool in its polemic against the Catholic Church. Ironically, however, in the absence of solid textual proof for Joan, Protestant writers "sought evidence from sources they conventionally approached with deep distrust: Catholic traditions, images, and ceremonies" (43). The most popular English treatise on Joan, Alexander Cooke's *Pope Joane: A Dialogue between a Protestant and a Papist* (1610) typified this dilemma over evidence, forcing the author to rely upon