

Leave The Bones for . .

The claim of Dr Henry Jones to our attention this morning is simply stated: he it was who presented the College with the Book of Kells. As the tourist season gets under way, the queues form, and the tills rustle, it seems appropriate to remember the man who provided the centre-piece of the Trinity theme park and to accord him the traditional courtesy of this day, by finding something nice to say about him.

The text for my discourse has been prescribed by its subject. Paraphrasing Matthew in a funeral sermon, Henry Jones set down the principles of the memorial genre: 'let not what may be good be forgotten, but the good be gathered into vessels, while what is bad is cast away'. It sounds simple. The difficulty is to agree, across three centuries, upon which is which.

It will be easiest if I begin in the traditional way, by detaching his career from its context and treating him as a son of the college and of the church that it existed to serve. He would certainly have approved: he was proud, he said towards the end of his life, 'to have the honour to own Trinity my mother' and prouder still to be able to claim on the same occasion that in its brief 85 years Trinity had produced more archbishops and bishops than any single College 'in the adjoining famous universities, taking in all their time together'.

Jones was the son of a Welsh clergyman, Lewis Jones, who came to Ireland early in the seventeenth century and married James Ussher's sister. This was a career move that proved less shrewd than might have been expected, for it was not until he had reached his eighty-fourth year that he was appointed to a

bishopric. By then, he had sent four sons to Trinity in fairly rapid succession, all of them as scholars. The first was Henry, who entered in 1616 at the age of eleven, took his BA in 1621 and his MA in 1624, and was elected immediately to fellowship. In the following year, however, as soon as he reached the canonical age for ordination, or perhaps a little before, his father presented him with the Deanery of Ardagh, one of two deaneries that he had held for many years. It was in that office, some years later, that he encountered William Bedell, the former Trinity provost who has become posterity's favourite seventeenth century bishop. Bedell was appointed to the combined dioceses of Ardagh and Kilmore in 1630 and shocked his fellow bishops and his clergy both by enforcing reforms and by adopting the forbidden strategy of seeking to convert the Irish through the Irish language. In the controversy which ensued, Henry Jones took Bedell's part, and when Bedell's objection to pluralism led him to relinquish the see of Ardagh, Jones nailed his colours to the mast by exchanging his deanery for the Deanery of Kilmore in 1637.

Meanwhile, Henry's brother Michael had entered Trinity in 1621 and chosen the principle alternative career open to bright and sufficiently connected young men, going on to Lincoln's Inn in London where he settled down to practise law. Oliver, who came to College in 1626, followed Michael into the law and was admitted to the King's Inns in Dublin in 1638, whilst Ambrose, who entered in 1627, left ten years later with a doctorate in divinity to take up his first living. Within two years he was Archdeacon of Limerick. The fifth and youngest of the Jones boys, Theophilus, broke the tradition: he chose a military career, joined the retinue of the earl of Leicester and loitered on the edges of English court society.

In 1645, Henry joined his father on the episcopal bench when he was appointed bishop of Clogher, amidst some confusion, it must be said, for King Charles was initially under the impression that he was translating the father, and sent the prescript in the

wrong name. When it was pointed out to him that the father, at ninety-five, was perhaps best left where he was, Charles readily approved the son. A year or so later, Henry was appointed Vice Chancellor of Dublin University in place of his uncle, James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, a position which he held until 1660, and the tacit obligations of which he more than fulfilled by the presentation to the College Library of those most celebrated of antiquities, the books of Kells and Durrow, together with two carved oak staircases: there can be little doubt, moreover, that he was instrumental also in the acquisition for the College of Ussher's acclaimed library in the early 1660s. In 1661 he was translated to the bishopric of Meath. Six years later, a second noteworthy family double was recorded when Henry preached at the installation of his brother Ambrose as bishop of the neighbouring diocese of Kildare. He died in 1682, leaving a son, William, who was born within the walls, and who graduated from the college in 1673.

This is roughly what you will learn of Dr Jones's career if you consult the College records, official and unofficial. It can hardly be said to do full justice to one of the more controversial figures in seventeenth century Ireland.

Amongst the MSS collections in the College Library is a set of thirty three bound volumes, labelled 'Depositions' and catalogued as 'papers relating to the massacre of protestants in Ireland in 1641'. They contain the sworn statements of men and women who sought refuge in Dublin from the rebellion which broke out in Ulster in October 1641, and they constitute the primary evidence in support of the claim that that rebellion began with a massacre of the colonial population. That allegation, which became central to the protestant perception of Irish catholicism for centuries, has been denied ever since it was first made. At the heart of the angry debate over who killed how many and who lied about

whom has lain the questions of the authenticity and credibility of the Trinity depositions and the integrity of their compiler, Henry Jones, whose working papers in effect they are.

Their origins were matter of fact. Jones was himself a refugee, who arrived in Dublin in December 1641 after some months as a prisoner in Co Cavan where he was, I am pleased to report, courteously treated by the Chancellor's ancestors, the O'Reillys. In Dublin, he promptly suggested to the government that it should allay present anxieties about future restitution by compiling a systematic record of losses resulting from the rebellion. The response of the authorities was to appoint him head of a commission of eight ministers charged with registering the claims of the dispossessed and issuing them with certificates of loss. He did that intermittently for some six years - that and much more besides. From the outset it became clear to him that the refugees were an invaluable source of intelligence. His commission quickly became a kind of filter, and deponents with useful information about the military depositions or logistic arrangements of the enemy, or about the conduct of individuals, were passed on to those who needed to hear what they had to say. Jones's own interest was in the information that elucidated the origins of the rebellion itself, for it became increasingly plain to him that this was not a specifically Irish event, but part of a continuing, papally directed international conspiracy, a further episode in the sequence which had begun with the massacre of the Albigensiens, continued with the excesses of the Inquisition and the Jesuits, and culminated most recently in the massacre of French protestants on St Bartholomew's Day in 1572. It was, in short, the work of Antichrist, and its object, he explained to the English house of commons in March 1642, was 'the utter extirpation of the reformed religion and the professors of it'.

The ground was fertile: his audience had been bred in an English tradition of Anti-Popery that was more than prejudice. Rather, it was a coherent philosophy which fused the protestant

and national identities and presented the post-Reformation situation as an enactment of the prophecies of the Book of Revelation. God's antagonists - Babylon, the seven headed beast, and the whore whom the kings of the earth adore - had materialized as England's enemies and the apocalyptic struggle between good and evil was nearing its climax: almost alone, England stood against that institutionally immortal 'man of sin', the Pope of Rome, and his universal plot to destroy protestantism. When Jones's address was published, with a selection of the evidence on which it was based, it served as a key to unlock the full mystery of iniquity and to reveal that the slaughter of the innocents was not an aberrant event, but one 'grounded on their very doctrine, religion and faith, they being taught that they ought so to do, thereby thinking that they do God service'. Anti-popery of this developed kind had not been common in Ireland, where the catholic threat was too real to need the support of fantasy, but the implication was extremely useful: if guilt was universal, punishment must be comprehensive

It was not coincidental that Jones's pamphlet was published in the context of the passage of an act of parliament designed to raise money for the subdual of Ireland on the security of the property to be forfeited by those in rebellion. In the short term, Jones's object was promotional: in the longer term, it was calculated to lay the basis for the consolidation of the colony by the elimination of the catholic landholding class in accordance with God's declared wish, for the massacre was a sign of his displeasure with expedient policies that had shown 'too little hatred of idolatry, or grief for it'. Jones's bureaucratic task of recording the losses of despoiled protestants went hand in hand with the duty of preserving the memory of the dead and the atrocities committed against them, and establishing indelibly the true character of catholicism as a means of ensuring that the sin of toleration was not repeated.

The peril of protestants in Ireland was compounded by the outbreak of civil war in England in 1642. Though efforts were made to keep the Irish rebellion out of English politics, and to keep the civil war out of Irish politics, the inevitable consequences were that adequate help was not forthcoming and that protestants in Ireland took sides, for king or parliament. Some made that choice on principle: others did so on the basis of interest, backing the side that seemed more likely to provide support. Dr Jones shared the disquiet of many protestants when Charles concluded a truce with the rebels in 1643. He tried to influence the ensuing negotiations by submitting a lengthy disquisition in which he used his growing collection of depositions as a basis on which to develop the theme of universal catholic guilt against God, but he did not publish it. Unlike many of his compatriots, who transferred their allegiance to a parliament which could be relied upon to pursue victory in Ireland, he remained constant to the king and to his lieutenant, the Marquis of Ormond, and was rewarded with his bishopric and his Vice Chancellorship. When the king was defeated, however, and Ormond left Ireland in 1647, having chosen to surrender Dublin to English rather than Irish rebels, Jones remained behind to welcome the city's new governor, his brother Michael.

Henry

It was just before his elevation, in 1644, that Jones found time to have his portrait painted. This is not it, but it may be a later copy, modified to include episcopal robes. Certainly it matches the description: 'full brown eyes, high brow, meditative and mild expression, brown curled hair, light moustache, skull-cap'.

His brother Michael, who had spent most of his adult life in England, was a committed parliamentarian. Henry's priorities were altogether different: they had nothing to do with English political quarrels and everything to do with the defeat of the Antichrist and the preservation of the protestant colony in Ireland. Together, they prompted him to a course of action which his contemporaries viewed as profoundly disedifying. The

parliamentarians had already abolished episcopacy: within a year or two, they executed the king, abolished the monarchy and the house of lords, and declared a republican commonwealth. But they also sent the new model army to Ireland, avenged the dead at Drogheda and Wexford, and brought the rebellion to an end. The response of protestant laymen in Ireland was understandably collaborationist: if the only saviour to hand was Oliver Cromwell, then Cromwell would have to do. The clerical response was to take cover, in Ireland or in exile. The response of Henry Jones was to accept an offer of appointment as Scout Master General [or Chief of Intelligence] of the army. The position was one for which he was uniquely qualified, but the offer almost certainly came to him through the influence of his youngest brother, Theophilus, who had commanded Cromwell's advance guard into Dublin. But Henry made the limits of his compliance very plain by carrying out his duties under his proscribed title: it was as 'Henry Clogher' that he signed himself for several years until he was compelled to desist, and the force of his personality is suggested by the fact that it was as Bishop Jones that he was listed on the army's payroll. It was as Dr Jones that he approached the commissioners in charge of Irish government in 1652, at a time when they were debating the details of a post war settlement and inclining, according to their own account, to favour leniency. Jones's object was to present them with what was, in effect, a selection of horror stories drawn from his collection of depositions and intended to press home the danger of neglecting this opportunity to secure Ireland for protestantism. The commissioners were duly shocked by the 'barbarous wickedness' revealed to them, and wondered (as they put it) if they could ever 'sufficiently avenge the same'. They sent Jones's submission to their masters in parliament 'fearing', they explained, 'lest others who are at a greater distance, might be moved to the lenity we have found no small temptation in ourselves'. No doubt there is a certain amount of humbug in this recitation, but the commissioners' own report is unequivocal: they had been, at the least, considering the political advantages of

a moderate settlement before Jones's intervention convinced them that it was wrong to do so.

The settlement that followed went far to meet Jones's prescription. Famously, it forbade catholics to own land outside Connaught and paid the debts incurred in conquering Ireland in land grants to investors, soldiers and suppliers. For the next seven years, the government busied itself with the administration of a gigantic process of confiscating and redistributing the 60% or so of Irish land that had been in catholic ownership when the rebellion began. It proscribed not only popery, but its close relation, prelacy, and with it the book of common prayer, the articles of the Irish Church, unrestricted access to communion, Christmas, and the rest of the superstitious remnants and leavings of papistry. Some of the clergy of the Church of Ireland managed to accommodate themselves to the new state church, among them Henry's brother Ambrose, but Henry himself pursued his secular way. He served on the special court which had been set up as a result of his submission to try the authors of atrocities, and it was his collection of depositions that formed the prosecution's main evidence; he helped to administer the transplantation of catholic proprietors to Connacht, and once again it was his collection of depositions, lodged in Athlone under the new guise of the books of discrimination [or, alternatively, the Black Books], that helped to distinguish the degrees of catholic guilt and to determine how much land each claimant was entitled to receive; and he acquired substantial forfeited properties at Summerhill in County Meath. He also fell into qualified disfavour in 1657, when he was required to exchange his scoutmaster generalship for a more lowly position as official historian of recent events, at a reduced salary. He professed himself mystified by the demotion, but it is clear from his surviving reports that while his concern with papist plotting was undiminished, he had recently extended his brief to include the Anabaptists among the public enemies who needed to be spied upon, and the Anabaptists, who were certainly subversive, were also influential enough to have him removed.

The episode reflects his ambivalence: he rejoiced in the regime's anticatholicism; he could not accept its version of protestantism, and he remained ultimately unreconciled to it. When Oliver Cromwell died and the protectorate regime began to disintegrate in acrimonious disagreement, the possibility that the monarchy could be restored became increasingly real. In Ireland, the established protestant colonists plotted to secure control over the process. Among their leaders was Theophilus Jones and, contemporaries did not doubt, 'his brother, the bishop'. In December 1659, a coup d'etat overthrew the government and a strange consortium of established settlers and opportunist Cromwellian newcomers assumed control of the government and command of the army. / The bond that brought them together was their joint interest in ensuring that the overthrow of the commonwealth and the restoration of the king should not involve the restoration of Irish property rights and the overthrow of the Cromwellian land settlement. Ireland's watching brief on the negotiations which brought Charles II back to the throne in May 1660 was held by a General Convention, a surrogate parliament of former collaborators and 1650s settlers which departed from parliamentary tradition in its inclusion of one clerical member, Dr Henry Jones. Expectant royalists, excited by the possibilities but confused by the Fabian strategy of this Convention, as it formulated the terms on which it would cooperate with the king, drew consolation from the belief that the army, which might be expected to have the final word, was under the control of three men, one of whom was Theophilus Jones and another 'his brother, the bishop'.

The Convention tactic failed, of course. English events dictated a restoration that was unconditional, and on May 24 Henry Jones resumed his clerical persona and, as Bishop of Clogher, conducted a Thanksgiving service in Christ's Church cathedral. By contrast, the strategy of protestants in Ireland succeeded. Charles II

repudiated all of the works of the usurping governments of the 1640s and 1650s except the Irish land settlement.

Jone's place in the new order was equivocal at first. Outwardly, he was the arch collaborator and betrayer of his church and his sovereign. He was removed from the Vice-Chancellorship in favour of Jeremy Taylor, and when the Irish hierarchy was reconstituted in a mass consecration of two archbishops and ten bishops in 1661, he was not permitted to join with his fellow surviving bishops in consecrating them. Within a few months of that local rebuff, however, came royal favour, as King Charles signalled his recognition of Jones's contribution to the restoration by appointing him to the diocese of Meath.

The tone of the new regime worried Jones, not least because the sin of tolerating idolatry was committed once again. But he was compromised by his conduct in the 1650s, and his public pronouncements were few. He took the opportunity of his brother's installation as Bishop of Kildare to remove suspicions of his own orthodoxy by arguing the scriptural and historical cases against presbyterianism and making a categorical affirmation of his belief in the apostolic nature of episcopacy. In a funeral sermon for a fellow bishop, he took the opportunity to extol William Bedell as a model for the church, most particularly because he had had the wisdom to seek to convert the Irish through their own language, and he became involved in promoting the preparation of Bedell's Gaelic translation of the Old Testament for publication.

The direction and, in a sense, the unity of his thought was made explicit in 1676, when he delivered and published a sermon on Antichrist. Historians have noticed it only as a curiosity. It has the distinction of having been the last of its kind, and Jones, we are told, had nothing new to say. That is, in fact, precisely the significance of what he said. In the frenzy of the 1640s and 50s the concept of Antichrist had been radicalised and adapted to new

purposes. In its simplest form, the new dissenting spirit turned the church's claim to apostolic succession upside down, to prove that episcopacy was in origin an antichristian institution. At its most extreme, the Fifth Monarchist sect held that Christ alone was King and all earthly monarchs were Antichristian usurpers. In between, the targets succeeded one another as the circumstances changed: Charles I was the 'little horn' of the Book of Revelation in the late 40s, Oliver Cromwell himself was the Antichrist in the mid-50s. By 1660, the concept was so discredited by indiscriminate use that the word itself was pronounced 'unfit to pass the lips of any civil person'. The trendsetters of the 1670s took the reaction further, presenting catholicism as no worse than schismatic and speaking of reconciliation, but Jones remained implacable. His sermon was an attempt to recover the lost tradition and to show that the excesses of the civil war period had obscured the truth, not disproved it. He wrote to proclaim that Antichrist was still at work in Rome, but also to insist that the way to defeat him was, as St John had foretold, 'by the breath of the Lord's mouth': in short, to lead catholics out of Babylon into the true church by placing the bible in their hands, in their own language.

His book proved unexpectedly topical, even prophetic, not because of its evangelical thrust, but because of its invocation of ever present danger. Within two years of its publication, Titus Oates and Israel Tongue had persuaded much of England of the existence of a popish plot to murder the king, massacre 100,000 protestants and burn London. Anti-Popery returned. Innocent catholics went to the gallows, the pope was burned in effigy throughout England, and politicians seized the opportunity to try to secure the exclusion of the king's catholic brother from the succession to the throne. What they needed was to be able to display a more convincingly impressive agent of Antichrist than any of those they had to hand. To find one, they turned to Ireland and Henry Jones. And a victim was providentially available. In Ulster, a group of secular priests and members of

the Franciscan Order had decided to avail of the prevailing anxieties to get rid of their detested Archbishop, Oliver Plunkett, by accusing him of having being involved in a plot to bring a French invasion force to Ireland (and had taken care to bring the proceedings to the attention of the Earl of Shaftsbury who led the English opposition. The Lord Lieutenant, who suspected that the scheme was partly intended to discredit him, ordered the trial to be held in Dundalk where an acquittal was likely. At that point, at Shaftsbury's request, Jones took over the local management of the affair. He befriended the accusers and arranged for them to absent themselves from the trial in order to force an adjournment. As soon as that was done, the English parliamentary opposition intervened to have the proceedings moved to London, where Plunkett's show-trial became the centrepiece of a last ditch effort to preserve the momentum of their campaign. Evidence that had seemed inconsistent, insubstantial and malicious when it had been outlined by the prosecution in Dundalk proved to be wholly credible in the court of King's Bench in London, and Plunkett was hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn in July 1681. Six months later, Henry Jones died, having fought the good fight to the bitter end, but he died without any sense of victory. He relied on Ecclesiastes - 'The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be' - to support his pessimistic view that 1641 would be repeated - 'the same effects likely following when the same causes are in being'.

You may feel that I have not paid much attention to Jones's injunction to cast away the bad and gather the good into vessels, and that I have not found anything nice to say about him. I could certainly have softened the picture. It is the case, for instance, that by the standards of the time, Jones was not at the extremes of anti-catholic thought in Ireland: many of his contemporaries held that the Irish were a reprobate nation, incapable of salvation. Jones maintained only that there was no salvation in the Church of Rome. I could have placed his apparent paranoia in a rather more sympathetic light by reminding you that the catholic church

was indeed working to overthrow protestantism in seventeenth century Europe and that there were influential forces in the courts of both Charles I and Charles II that were seeking to promote the catholic interest, and enjoying a measure of royal favour. And I could have observed that no reputable historian would now deny that protestants died in significant numbers in the first year of the rebellion or dismiss Jones's collection of depositions as 'fables founded upon lies', as one of his critics did at the beginning of this century. But it would be anachronistic to engage in extenuation and to invite you to make allowances for this disconcerting desciple of William Bedell. What needs to be understood, across the barrier of three centuries of gradually changing attitudes, is that Jones was not ashamed of anything he did. If I judge him correctly, he had only two regrets. One was, of course, that he had not been successful. The other was that he never received credit for the fact that his collaboration with the Cromwellian regime was exclusively secular. I think that he would feel that the greatest service that I could perform for him is to place on record at last that in the 1650s he would not and did not compromise his faith by ministering in a church which he did not believe to be the true church. He would have been ashamed of that.