

Discussion Guide for Reading Groups

An
APOLOGY
of The Church of England

John Jewel

Resurrection Publishing

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APOLOGY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

JOHN JEWEL

One Protestant voice on Scripture and unity

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An Apology of the Church of England — Discussion Guide
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This voice among four

How does Scripture hold the Church in one faith against division and heresy? Christians have answered that question with shared seriousness and with real differences in emphasis. This guide begins with Jewel because it is made to help a group read the *Apology of the Church of England* carefully, together, and all the way through.

John Jewel · one Protestant voice on that question.

Jewel is one of four voices gathered around this question. Tertullian's *Prescription Against Heretics*, Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, and Cyril's *Catechetical Lectures* belong in conversation: they share a concern for receiving the one faith, yet they do not flatten their traditions into one answer. Let their kinship be a help, and their honest difference an occasion for patient attention.

This guide is for Jewel's *Apology*. For a reading group, the Jewel hardcover is available in a facilitator pack of 8, so each reader may have the work in hand.

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Facilitator norms

This is a conversation that may touch sensitive ground, but it need not become a place where anyone is pressed to disclose what they have not chosen to share. Invite candor; do not require it. A participant may speak from the text, from prayer, or from a question still taking shape. Silence is not failure, and no one is asked to prove seriousness by telling more than is wise.

Read the author with care before judging him quickly. Let people finish a thought. Ask what a passage says before asking how it applies. Where the group disagrees, name the disagreement plainly and return to the words on the page. The aim is neither to win an argument nor to make a display of self-knowledge, but to hear a Christian teacher faithfully and to seek the Lord together.

Keep Christ at the center. The counsel in these pages is not a set of religious techniques by which we repair ourselves. Faith looks to Christ, depends upon his Spirit, and receives the ordinary means of grace with humility. Pray at the beginning and end; make room for repentance and hope; leave one another with encouragement that is truthful, particular, and free of pressure.

Jewel — argument map

Jewel answers the charge that the English Reformation was a novelty. The map below traces the argument as a whole; the eight sessions read the *Apology* straight through, part by part, in the order Jewel wrote it. (The edition keeps Part II as one unit; the sessions treat its themes topically across Sessions 2–4, so a reading may span more than one part.)

1. The charge of novelty (Part I). Truth has always been slandered; the Reformers are accused of novelty, heresy, and disorder. Jewel answers by declaring what the Reformed actually believe.

2. The faith declared (Part II). Jewel sets out the doctrine of the Church of England — the Trinity, Christ, the church, the ministry, the sacraments, justification — as the ancient faith, not a new one.

3. The charge of heresy answered (Part III). The doctrines the Reformers are accused of are the doctrines of Christ, the apostles, and the fathers. The Reformers condemn the old heresies and the new sects alike.

4. The charge of schism answered (Part IV). The Reformers have not departed from the Church of Christ; they have departed from the corruptions that had overlaid it. The church can err, and the fathers themselves complained.

5. The claim of antiquity (Part V). The Reformed doctrine is ancient; the novelties belong to Rome. Jewel challenges his opponents to prove their antiquity from Scripture and the fathers.

6. The authority of councils and princes (Part VI). Reform needs no council that will not hear Scripture; the pope's supremacy is unscriptural; Christian princes rightly govern religion in their realms.

7. The Recapitulation. Jewel gathers the whole case: the Reformed hold the faith of the apostles and the primitive church, and it is their accusers who have departed.

8. The test that remains. Scripture and antiquity are the rule by which every teaching is tried — reform is return, not invention.

Session 1

Reading: Part I

Where we are: Jewel opens by observing that truth has always been slandered — the patriarchs, the prophets, Christ, and the apostles were all accused — and that the Reformers now face the same charges of novelty, heresy, and disorder.

Understand: Why does Jewel say the truth has always been slandered, and what does he hope to accomplish by declaring plainly what the Reformed actually believe?

Discern: How does Jewel's appeal to Scripture as the arbiter differ from a bare appeal to private judgment? What does he mean that the question is not who is loudest but who speaks the truth?

Trust: Where does this opening part direct a person who has heard the Reformers accused of novelty and does not know whom to believe?

Tip: Let the group notice Jewel's opening move: he does not begin by attacking Rome but by naming the pattern of truth being slandered. The accusation of novelty is the thing he will spend the whole book answering.

Session 2

Reading: Part II (the faith declared — God, Christ, the Holy Spirit)

Where we are: Jewel declares the doctrine of the Church of England: one God in three Persons, the incarnation and work of Christ, and the Holy Spirit who gives light and leads into truth.

Understand: How does Jewel's confession of the Trinity and of Christ's person and work show that the Reformed hold the ancient faith rather than a new one?

Discern: Why does Jewel ground the believer's knowledge of God in the Holy Spirit's work of giving light and guiding into truth, rather than in human reasoning alone?

Trust: Where does this part direct a person who wants to know the truth but fears that doctrine is only a human construction?

Tip: Let the group hear this as a confession to pray as well as to analyze. Jewel is not arguing a novelty; he is declaring what the church has always believed.

Session 3

Reading: Part II (the faith declared — the church, ministry, and sacraments)

Where we are: Jewel declares the church catholic, its ministry, the keys, and the two sacraments — and grounds them all in Scripture as the sure and infallible rule by which the church is tried.

Understand: Why does Jewel say Christ alone is the head of the church, and what does he mean that the Scriptures are the “sure and infallible rule” whereby the church is tried?

Discern: How does Jewel’s account of the ministry and the keys differ from a claim that any one man holds the whole authority of the church? What does it mean that the word of the gospel is the key?

Trust: Where does this part direct a person who wants to know where the true church is, when so many bodies claim the name?

Tip: Let the group sit with Jewel’s test: the church is tried by Scripture, and the keys are the word of the gospel. The question is not who claims authority but who holds and speaks the word.

Session 4

Reading: Part II (the faith declared — justification, good works, and the life to come)

Where we are: Jewel declares that we are justified by faith in Christ, that good works follow as the fruit of faith, and that the resurrection and eternal life are the believer's hope.

Understand: Why does Jewel say we are justified by faith, and how does he keep good works from becoming the ground of our acceptance before God?

Discern: How does Jewel's account of justification and good works guard against both despair and presumption — neither trusting our own works nor despising the works that faith produces?

Trust: Where does this part direct a person who is unsure whether their standing with God rests on what they have done or on what Christ has done?

Tip: Let the group hear the whole confession together: faith justifies, works follow, and the resurrection is the hope that gives both their meaning.

Session 5

Reading: Part III

Where we are: Jewel answers the charge of heresy: the doctrines the Reformers are accused of are the doctrines of Christ, the apostles, and the fathers, and the Reformers condemn the old heresies and the new sects alike.

Understand: Why does Jewel say the doctrines he is accused of are the doctrines of Christ and the apostles, and how does he answer the charge that the Reformers bred the Anabaptist sects?

Discern: How does Jewel distinguish the Reformers' disagreement among themselves from the divisions that mark false teaching? What does he mean that unity is not the mark of the church?

Trust: Where does this part direct a person who has been told that the Reformers are heretics who broke the unity of the church?

Tip: Let the group weigh Jewel's claim carefully: he does not deny that Christians disagree, but he refuses to make disagreement itself the test of truth. The test is Scripture and antiquity.

Session 6

Reading: Part IV

Where we are: Jewel answers the charge of schism: the Reformers have not departed from the Church of Christ but from the corruptions that had overlaid it, and the church itself can err.

Understand: Why does Jewel say the Reformers have not departed from the church, and what does he mean that the church can err and has erred?

Discern: How does Jewel's appeal to the fathers' own complaints — Hilary, Gregory, Bernard — show that the Reformers stand with the ancient church against its later corruptions?

Trust: Where does this part direct a person who fears that leaving a corrupt body is itself a sin against the unity of the church?

Tip: Let the group sit with Jewel's distinction: departure from the church of Christ is schism, but departure from the corruptions that have overlaid it is return. The question is which church one is leaving.

Session 7

Reading: Part V

Where we are: Jewel turns the charge of novelty back on his accusers: the Reformed doctrine is ancient, and the novelties belong to Rome. He challenges his opponents to prove their antiquity from Scripture and the fathers.

Understand: Why does Jewel say the Reformed doctrine is ancient and Rome's is new, and what does he challenge his opponents to prove?

Discern: How does Jewel's contrast between the ancient fathers and the later practices of Rome — images, vows, ceremonies, the service language — show what he means by return rather than invention?

Trust: Where does this part direct a person who has been told that the Reformed are the innovators and Rome is the ancient church?

Tip: Let the group weigh Jewel's challenge: he does not ask his opponents to assert antiquity but to prove it from Scripture and the fathers. The test is evidence, not claim.

Session 8

Reading: Part VI and the Recapitulation

Where we are: Jewel closes by answering the charge that reform needed a council, by denying the pope's supremacy over the church, and by gathering the whole case: the Reformed hold the faith of the apostles and the primitive church.

Understand: Why does Jewel say reform needs no council that will not hear Scripture, and what does he mean that Christian princes rightly govern religion in their realms?

Discern: How does the Recapitulation gather the whole argument — that the Reformed hold the faith of the apostles, and that it is their accusers who have departed?

Trust: Where does this whole apology direct a person who wants to know the truth — not by novelty, but by the faith tested by Scripture and antiquity?

Tip: Let the group end where Jewel ends: with the claim that reform is return, not invention. The test that remains is Scripture and antiquity — the rule by which every teaching is tried.

Also on this question

If another voice would serve the group's next conversation, these editions take up the same question from different places in the tradition.

The Prescription Against Heretics — Tertullian

Patristic (West)

Tertullian sets the gate: heretics may not appeal to Scripture at all, because the question of who rightly possesses Scripture must be settled first. Discussion guide · Hardcover and facilitator pack on the title page.

An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine — John Henry Newman

Catholic

Newman asks how doctrine can be the same and yet develop across time, and he offers the seven notes by which true development is told from corruption. Discussion guide · Hardcover and facilitator pack on the title page.

The Catechetical Lectures — Cyril of Jerusalem

Orthodox

Cyril hands on the one faith in catechesis — the creed received, learned, and sealed in baptism, chrismation, and the Eucharist. Discussion guide · Hardcover and facilitator pack on the title page.

Letters from Resurrection Publishing

If this question is yours, Resurrection Publishing sends personal notes from Harvey, our founder — on reading these voices for real groups.

Sign up for the letters: <https://resurrectionpublishing.com/l/g>

Close

Thank you for giving this apology the time it asks of you. Keep Jewel near enough to return to: not as a substitute for Scripture, prayer, or the Church's ordinary life, but as a serious companion in learning that the true faith is tested by Scripture and antiquity — and that reform is return, not invention.

If this question remains with your group, the other voices on it are in the Resurrection Publishing catalog as hardcovers and ebooks, each with its own free discussion guide. They are invitations for another season of reading, not requirements for completing this one.

This edition is for readers who want the work itself, not a summary.