Omnibus II

Church Fathers through the Reformation

Edited by Douglas Wilson and G. Tyler Fischer

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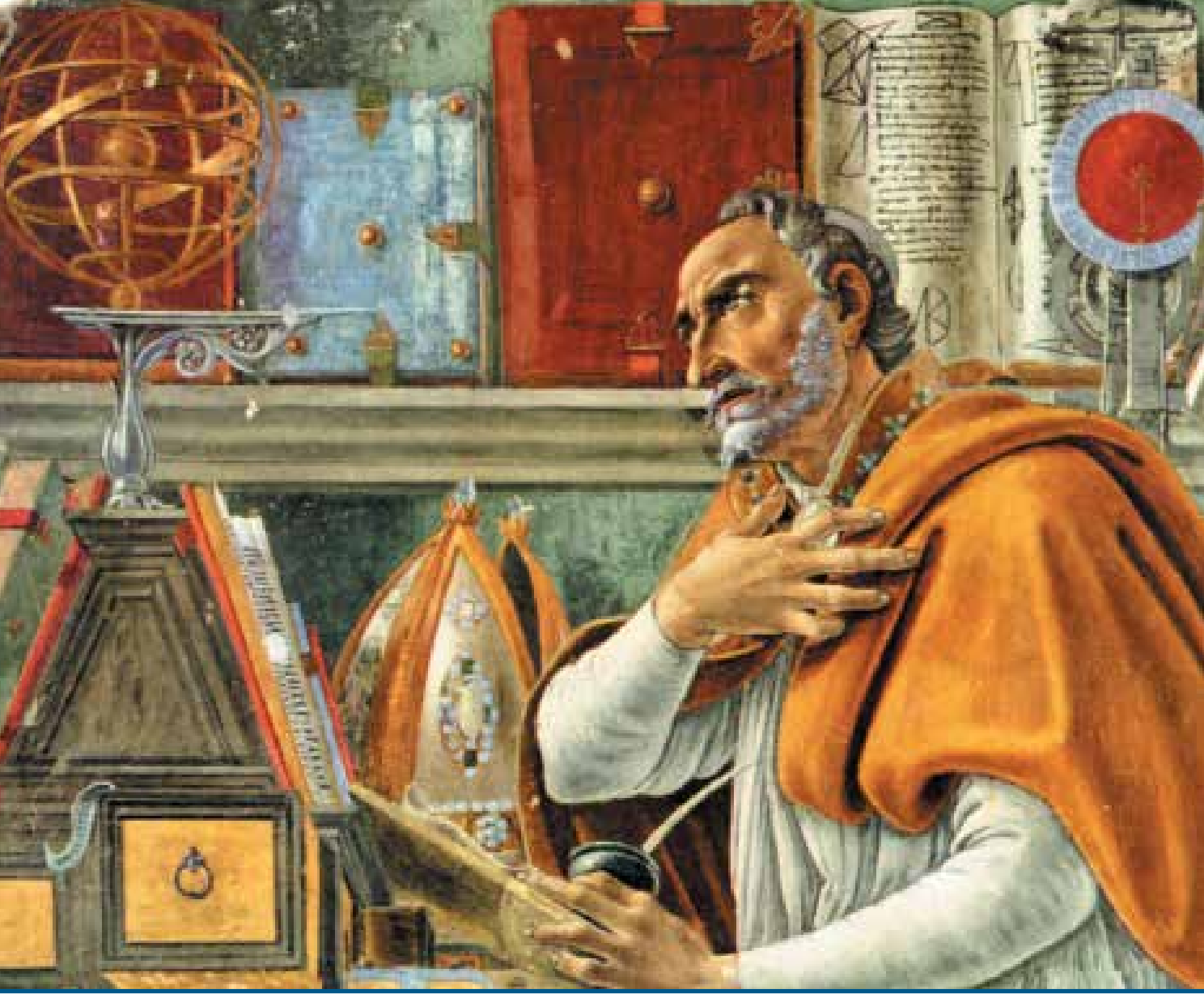


For my grandchildren, in the hope that they will read many of these books to their grandchildren.

—Douglas Wilson

For Emily, whose love, support and longsuffering made this work possible. May your children rise up and call you blessed, adding their voices of praise to mine. *Amore fidelis.*

—G. Tyler Fischer

Foreword

One of the most obvious questions that Christians might ask about a curriculum like this one is, "Why study this stuff?" The question can be asked for different reasons. Perhaps a concerned parent is attracted to the rigor of a "classical and Christian approach," and yet has thumbed through a couple of the texts and is taken aback by some of the material. "It was this kind of gunk," he thinks, "that chased us out of the government school." Or perhaps the question is asked by the student himself when he "hits the wall." The rigor that is built into this course of study is significant, and about a third of the way through the year, a student might be asking all sorts of pointed questions. "Why are you making me do this?" is likely to be one of them. The student may be asking because of his workload, but if he points to the nature of the material, the question still needs a good answer. It is a good question, and everyone who is involved in teaching this course needs to have the answer mastered.

G.K. Chesterton said somewhere that if a book does not have a wicked character in it, then it is a wicked book. One of the most pernicious errors that has gotten abroad in the Christian community is the error of *sentimentalism*—the view that evil is to be evaded, rather than the more robust Christian view that evil is to be conquered. The Christian believes that evil is there to be fought, the dragon is there to be slain. The sentimentalist believes that evil is to be resented.

My wife and I did not enroll our children in a classical Christian school so that they would never come into contact with sin. Rather, we wanted them there because we wanted to unite with like-minded Christian parents who had covenanted together to deal with the (inevitable) sin in a consistent, biblical manner. We fully expected our children to encounter sin in the classroom, on the playground and in the curriculum. We also expected that when they encountered it, they would see it dealt with in the way the Bible says sin should be dealt with.

A classical Christian school or a home school following the classical Christian curriculum must never be thought of as an asylum. Rather, this is a time of basic training; it is boot camp. Students are being taught to handle their weapons, and they are being taught this under godly, patient supervision. But in order to learn this sort of response, it is important that students learn it well. That is, setting up a "straw man" paganism that is easily demolished equips no one. All that would do is impart a false sense of security to the students—until they get to a secular college campus to encounter the real thing. Or, worse yet, if they continue the path into a soft, asylum-style Christian college and then find themselves addressing the marketplace completely unprepared.

If this basic training is our goal, and it is, then we should make clear what one potential abuse of the Omnibus curriculum might be. This curriculum was written and edited with the assumption that godly oversight and protection would accompany the student through his course of work. It was written with the conviction that children need teachers, flesh and blood teachers, who will work together with them. It was also written with the assumption that many of these teachers need the help and the resources that a program like this can supply. But we also believe that, if a seventh-grader is simply given this material and told to work through it himself, the chances are good that the student will miss the benefit that is available for those who are taught.

The Scriptures do not allow us to believe that a record of sinful behavior, or of sinful corruption, is inherently corrupting. If it were, then there are many stories and accounts in the Bible itself that would have

to be excluded. But if we ever begin to think our children need to be protected "from the Bible," this should bring us up short. Perhaps we have picked up false notions of holiness somewhere. In short, there is no subject that this curriculum will raise in the minds of seventh-grade students that would not *also* be raised when that student reads through his Bible, cover to cover. It is true that this curriculum has accounts of various murders, or examples of prostitution, or of tyranny from powerful and cruel kings. But we can find all the same things in the book of Judges.

So the issue is not the *presence* of sin, but of the *response* to that sin. What we have sought to do throughout—in the introductory worldview essays, the questions and exercises, and in the teachers' materials—is provide a guideline for responding to all the various worldviews that men outside of Christ come up with. This program, we believe, will equip the student to see through pretences and lies that other Christian children, who have perhaps been too sheltered, are not able to deal with.

Of course, there is a limit to this, as we have sought to recognize. There *are* certain forms of worldliness and corruption that would overwhelm a student's ability to handle it, no matter how carefully a parent or teacher was instructing them. And while children differ in what they can handle, in our experience with many students of this age, we believe that the content of this curriculum is well within the capacity of Christian children of this age group. But again, this assumes godly oversight and instruction. The challenge here is two-fold. The rigor of the curriculum can seem daunting, but we have sought to provide direction and balance with regard to the demands of the material. The second concern is the question of false worldviews, paganism and just plain old-fashioned sin, which we have addressed above.

As our students work their way through this material, and in the years of the Omnibus program that will follow, we want them to walk away with a profound sense of the *antithesis*. What we mean by this is that right after Adam and Eve fell in the Garden, God gave His first messianic promise (Gen. 3:15). But along with this promise, He also said that there would be constant antipathy between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. This is what we mean by the antithesis, and we want our students to come to share in that godly antipathy. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil (Ps. 97:10; Prov. 8:13). In every generation, in all movements (whether of armies or philosophies), in all schools of literature, the men and women involved are either obeying God or disobeying Him. They are either trusting Him or they are not trusting Him. All students are learning to love God, or they are not learning to love God.

But when they love and trust Him, they must do so in the face of conflict. Jesus was the ultimate Seed of the woman, and yet when He came down and lived among us, He faced constant opposition from "broods of vipers." It is not possible to live in this world faithfully without coming into conflict with those who have no desire to live faithfully. The task of every Christian parent bringing children up to maturity in such a world is to do it in *a way that equips*. False protection, precisely because it does not equip, leaves a child defenseless when the inevitable day comes when that artificial shelter is removed. True protection equips. We do not want to build a fortress for our students to hide in; we want to give them a shield to carry—along with a sword.

Students who have faithfully worked through this course of study will not be suckers for a romanticized view of ancient paganism offered up by Hollywood. They have read Suetonius, and they have worked through a Christian response to true paganism. They are grateful that Christ came into this dark world, and they know *why* they are grateful.

—Douglas Wilson

Preface

In the grip of unbelief, some cultures are truly blind. The Bible describes what it is like to live without God and without hope in the world. Before the gospel came to them, the Gentiles of the first century were caught in the grip of "vanity of mind" and "blindness of heart." This was their way of life, their culture of futility. When a people do not know Christ, they are dead in their trespasses and sin, and God gives them over to the logical consequences of their unbelief. The twisted results of this can be seen clearly in St. Paul's description in Romans 1.

This does not mean that the depravity of unbelievers is absolute, or that they are as wicked as they could possibly be. We know that by God's common grace, He restrains cultures from getting to the end of the road, and such cultures can still produce poems, stories, engravings and statues that are quite beautiful. Christians can study such things, and profit by them, but they have to be very careful in this. This was the kind of task we had before us in the first *Omnibus* text—we were dealing with many texts from the ancient classical world, and this meant that we had to take their cultural blindness into account and learn to bring the revelation of Jesus Christ to bear.

This second *Omnibus* text is covering the medieval period, and as a result we must adjust what we are doing. We are *not* adjusting our commitment to Jesus Christ and His Word, but rather recognizing that we are working with quite a different period. It is possible to move from one task to another while retaining the same work ethic. The reason our task in this year of readings is so different is that we must take account of the conversion of Europe to the Christian faith. And in the history of our people during the medieval period, one of the most striking things about us at that time is that we were unashamed of Jesus Christ. This entire and complete confidence in Him

is largely missing today, even in many churches.

However, after the gospel comes to a people, this does not mean that they automatically have the cultural equivalent of perfect 20/20 vision. This side of the resurrection, all believing cultures, even the best of them, will still have their blind spots. This certainly includes our medieval fathers, and it means that we will perhaps see some things more clearly than they did. But it is very tempting for us to simply assume this as a given across the board, and part of the reason for having our students study this period with deep appreciation is so that we might come to learn the dangers in this self-serving approach.

The reason for this is that the reverse is also true; *they* saw certain things far more clearly than we do. We may be permitted to see their blind spots, and, being alive, we can talk about them. But they can see our blind spots also, and if we want to hear their critique, we will have to read some books from another era. In a famous essay on the reading of old books, C.S. Lewis makes the very important point that reading such old books prevents us from falling into what might be described as a chronological provincialism. The people in one village, who don't get out much, can easily believe that the people in that *other* village fifty miles down the road don't pronounce some of their words right. And the more we are limited to just our own village, the more likely it is that we will believe this kind of thing. But someone who has traveled extensively around the world is unlikely to get caught up in such a mistake. Travel broadens the mind, and reading old books is a form of travel.

Most students today are living in the chronological equivalent of a village. They don't read all that much, and, of what they read, over ninety percent of it was written within a small fraction of their lifetime. When it comes to history, literature, poetry, art and architecture, this robs such students and makes them the temporal equivalent of rubes and cornpones.

The students working through the *Omnibus* program this year will be reading many glorious texts. And these texts will of course have blind spots and errors, like all human productions—but they won't be the errors that are characteristic of *our* age. That being the case, we are likely to be able to identify them. By the same token, we will also be able to see some of their statements of the *truth* that are not characteristic of our age either. And those statements of the truth will bring us up short and make us reflect on the practices of our "small village." The period in which we live is also a "period," and five hundred years from now students will be struggling over it, trying to make sense of some of our practices. Nothing is better for clearing our minds of the vanity that afflicts us than to begin seeing ourselves as others will see us. And since we are currently living in the future's "past," a good way of coming to an understanding of ourselves is by studying and appreciating and *understanding* that which is past to us now.

And so this is why we are inviting the student reader to exult in *The Song of Roland,* to learn the shrewd insights of *The Canterbury Tales,* to see the connections between Anglo/Saxon culture and the world of Middle-earth in *The Lord of the Rings,* to rejoice with Arthur in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* to grasp the similarities between David the future king and Robin Hood, to learn to alliterate with joy in *Beowulf,* and to enjoy history in the same way that Geoffrey of Monmouth did. The writers of this textbook have enjoyed the process thoroughly, and we invite you to now join us.

—Douglas Wilson

Publisher's Preface

Have you ever stopped to think what the President of the United States in the year 2040 is doing right now? What about the next Martin Luther or John Calvin? I'll tell you what I hope they are doing. I hope they just finished reading this sentence!

There is no doubt in my mind that classical Christian education and the rigorous study of the greatest works of Western Civilization is a tool to create leaders like no other—godly leaders who understand that this is God's world, Christ inherited it, and we are to take dominion of it to His glory.

Many have begun down the path of studying this material and have not persevered—in their minds it was too hard, too salacious for Christian ears, too unrealistic, too much to grasp, the books were too old or some other "too." Be assured, like the Scriptures say in the Parable of the Sower, the work you do will *bear fruit a hundredfold* if you stick with it. In the lives of our own children we have already seen tremendous benefit and really have just barely scratched the surface.

Our goal with this text is to make the work easier for you. This text should make approaching *Omnibus,* and other material not previously encountered, come alive in a way that instills confidence, and it should convey a sense that young students (and teachers) can handle it.

We have done all we could to make this text a stand-alone guide for reading, studying and understanding these great books. A couple reference books will prove beneficial as resources for this year as well as the following years. *Western Civilization* by Jackson Spielvogel and *History of Art for Young People* by H.W. Janson and Anthony F. Janson are the two main ones. If you have previously used our *Veritas Press History and Bible Curriculum,* you will want to keep the flashcards from them handy, too.

May you be blessed as you dig in and study the hand of God at work in the past and prepare for His use of you in the future.

—Marlin Detweiler

ADVISORY TO TEACHERS AND PARENTS

In the course of history there has been much fluctuation on what has been deemed age appropriate for young students. And for those of us alive today, there remains great variation as to what is considered age appropriate. The material we have created and the books we have assigned address numerous subjects and ideas that deal with topics (including sex, violence, religious persuasion and a whole host of other ideas) that have been the subject of much discussion of whether they are age appropriate. The judgment we applied in this text has been the same as we apply to our own children.

In the creation of this program we have assumed that it will be used by students in seventh grade and above. Furthermore, we have assumed that there is no part of the Bible deemed inappropriate to discuss with a seventh-grade student. Therefore, the material assumes that the student knows what sex is, that he understands the existence of violence, that he understands there are theological and doctrinal differences to be addressed and that he has the maturity to discern right and wrong.

The worldview we hold and from which we write is distinctly protestant and best summarized in the *Westminster Confession of Faith.* The Bible is our only ultimate and infallible rule of faith and practice.

We encourage you to become familiar with the material that your students will be covering in this program in order to avoid problems where you might differ with us on these matters.

Introduction

Knock, knock, knock.

Who could that be?

Knock, knock, knock!

Unfortunately, my wife is away at choir practice, and so I have to go and find out. Hadn't I turned the lights off outside?

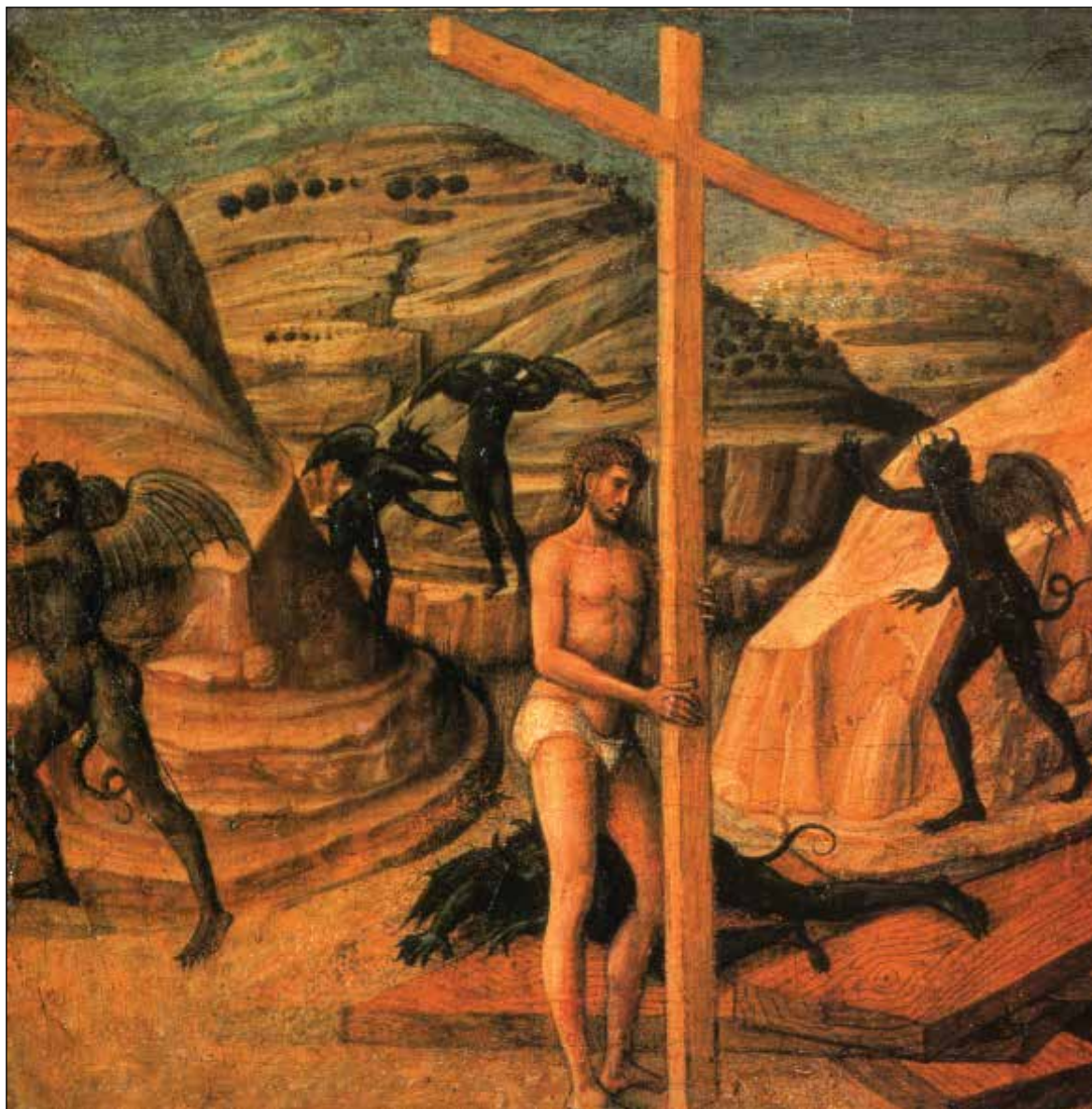
KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK!

I swing the door open to find Frankenstein, Spiderman, some sort of zombie-looking creature and someone with a knife sticking out of his head. He is carrying a chain saw. (*I hope that it is not real.*) Out from among them steps the prince of darkness himself—not looking too fearsome.

"Trick or Treat!" they scream (which might be translated in some neighborhoods as "bribe us with candy or we will show you what this chain saw is for," but in the quiet, rolling fields of Lancaster County it still means something like "please"). I reach for the candy.

They thank me and scurry down the driveway. I switch off the lights. I have got to get some work done—no more distractions.

As I settle into my chair, I think back to the devil (or facsimile of a devil) that I just bribed with candy and wonder how our culture got so messed up—so comfortable with the Devil.



Today, we seem to have two competing cultural attitudes toward Satan: fear or adoration. Part of our culture seems to almost admire the Devil as the leader of all rebels. We see the fringe of this in the hard core Rock and Rollers, but as the first generation of Dark Lord-worshiping metal heads mumbles incoherently into a permanent stupor, who can argue that this is a good life? Still, our modern culture will not be persuaded by the evidence and still follows in the spirit of rebellion, even when it seems increasingly clear that we are running out of things to rebel against.

Often the Christian attitude is one of fear. In some circles of Christians where divine worship has become increasingly light and airy, I have even seen the odd paradox of Christians who seem to fear and respect the Devil more than they do God. *Jesus is my pal, but the Devil, yikes!*

Thankfully, as in most things, the medieval world both explodes and informs our sad, modern outlook. They did neither fear Satan nor admire him. They mocked him. In fact, it is quite possible that the original celebrations on the Eve of All Saints Day—or All Hallow's Eve, a.k.a., Halloween—were done for this purpose.[1] Some have pointed to celebrations that centered on Christian children chasing a few men dressed as demons and devils out of town—usually with sticks. The children were learning to chase the Devil out because he is a vanquished foe. Whether these stories are true or apocryphal, this sort of celebration certainly fits with the medieval mentality concerning the Devil. They treated him like a vanquished foe because that is what they knew him to be.

I will supply two examples of this attitude. The first comes from no less eminent a source than Martin Luther himself—who claimed to have often seen the Devil. When Luther thought that he saw Satan, he did not cower in fear, but instead threw ink bottles and other things at him. He is also said to have claimed that the Devil could be chased away by, among other things, prayer and laughter.[2] St. Boniface, the great missionary to the Germans, supplies the other example. He faced down the pagans who were in spiritual slavery to the demonic forces. They lived dark lives eating each other and worshiping a grove of gigantic, sacred oaks. These pagans feared the devil. St. Boniface did not. One night, with the fearful pagans still clinging to their tree-gods, a sound echoed through the forest. CHOP, CHOP, CHOP! The pagans rushed out, and, as the story goes, they warned Boniface that the pagan gods would surely destroy him if he continued this folly. Boniface's answers can be paraphrased: "Bring it on." CHOP, CHOP, CHOP! They say that the pulpit of Boniface's first church among the Christian Germans was made of oak. The power of the pagan gods had been shattered. There was a new *Man* in town, *the Man Christ Jesus.* Before the gospel came Satan and his forces looked invincible. The light of the gospel revealed them for what they really were: petty, defeated tyrants whose time was over. He was a foe whose head had been crushed, and for the medieval world this meant that it was time to celebrate.

Perhaps this will be the most shocking aspect of the Middle Ages for those who are studying it anew this year. The medieval world was one of great beauty, joy and celebration. They rejoiced because they knew the horror of what they had been freed from and the joy of serving a new, glorious master. In light of the great wisdom and joy that we will explore in the Middle Ages, I thought it was appropriate to address in this Introduction how to use the Omnibus wisely and joyfully.

One of the chief ideas to remember is that Omnibus is a path of renewal and remembrance. In it, we are attempting to rediscover the wisdom of our forefathers that we have, as a culture, cast aside in derision—to our own destruction. What we are seeking to recover is a pearl of great value and complexity. We should not hope to recover everything overnight—in fact, if we could "get up to speed" overnight, we should recognize that what is being recovered is cheap.

At Veritas Academy, we do a better and more comprehensive job of teaching Omnibus every year. When we started doing this, we did not read as much or as deeply as we do now. We could not for a number of reasons, the main one being that our teachers were learning material with which they were unfamiliar. We are getting to know our fathers through the books they have left to us. We know them better now, so we can teach our students to know them better. In those days we read less and not as deeply.

As you work through *Omnibus II,* there are three variables to consider: the teacher, the student and the material. Go as close to the recommended rate as these three allow, keeping in mind the ultimate purpose of

this material and of all Christian education: that our training should end with our students taking joyful dominion of our culture for the glory of Christ.

Just as our teachers went more slowly at the beginning, so will you. Do not be afraid to omit a book or books or to take more time on a session (maybe spending an extra day or two on something that is recommended to be one day), particularly if you are just starting out.

Failing to "ramp up" to doing all or most of the books, or doing the program for the first time in a home school situation, can lead to a couple of catastrophic problems. The first problem is burnout—which feels something like living death. I have made acquaintances with some who have done this with Omnibus and with other material. A few have even claimed—usually tearfully—that I, or others at Veritas Press, are trying to destroy their lives! Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. The fact of the matter is, however, that this material—like any other curriculum—can become a cruel taskmaster if mishandled or followed woodenly instead of wisely.

As a general rule of thumb, the teacher can only take the student as far as he, the teacher, can inspire him. This means that teachers might need to limit the amount of material that can be effectively pursued in a year. Perhaps this fact will make you downcast, but recognize that this is the way it has always been. Unwise teachers push ahead when no learning is occurring. This is usually an issue of pride, but there can be other motives that lead a teacher to burn out or to exasperate their students. Perhaps the temptation to burn out is even greater with this approach than with others because of the glory of the content. I have met few who claimed that the reading proposed in this book is not worth doing. For most classical Christian school teachers and home educators, I do not even have to argue the point. We all know that we should do it. We must, however, learn to pace ourselves wisely. The end goal of reading the Great Books and entering into the Great Conversation is that we would get to know our fathers, learn from their wisdom and mistakes and thereby be enabled to take dominion presently for Christ and to do this joyfully. If you are not headed toward this end, stop and realign. If you are not headed there joyfully, you are really not headed there at all. The love of learning is, in fact, a love. Instructors should seek to wisely gauge their own ability to lead students through the books, recognizing that their ability should grow each year.

The ability of the student or students will limit what you can accomplish. If you are in a school setting, you might recognize that from year to year the classes might not move forward at the same rate. I have met those who are befuddled by this—the medieval educator would not be, however. He would recognize that we are training children and that children—like most humans—are unique individuals. When you join them together in a class of ten or twelve, this tendency seems to me to be multiplied rather than diluted. (Of course, if you increase your class size greatly—as many schools in our culture do—you can round the edges and create a system that works mechanically. The only drawback to this is that anything that works like this should hardly be called an education.) So the ability of the students must also be accounted for when a teacher is considering what he can accomplish with them in a year, and this is certainly the case in a home school setting as well.

This advice must be balanced with a goad. Learning is hard work, however joyful it may be. You should get to the end of the year of Omnibus and feel like you need to take a week or two off. In fact, teachers *and* students should probably take a week or two off after your school year is complete. The more we pour into the education of our children the more we should expect to see them and their descendents gaining ground in our culture. If you are a teacher, you should usually expect to move more quickly and effectively through the material as you become more familiar with it. But do not expect Dante to deliver up all his glories immediately. At first, he might seem extraordinarily complicated—almost opaque—to both you and the student. By no means give up! Have patience, simmer on the material, ponder it as you drive to the store where you encounter a child or adult racing from one popular brand name to another. Does this remind you of the Vestibule of Hell? It should.

So, this is how you can use *Omnibus II* wisely—or should we say *medievally?* Using it in this manner will prepare your sons and daughters to take dominion joyfully—as many did in the Middle Ages. For unlike what we read about the Middle Ages in stale and unreadable volumes of "enlightened" history, the Middle Ages were not dark ones. Medieval people

were staggeringly wise at some points, and to them we owe much of the good that exists in the world—and some of the bad as well. Something in them calls us back. We yearn like Dante to see Beatrice. We long for leaders like Aragorn or Beowulf. We desire to be noble like Arthur or Gawain and courageous like Boniface. We long to worship in cathedrals and dance as we celebrate Epiphany. To see women dressed as if they meant to be feminine and to meet men who do not remind us of our modern rootless, chestless species. We can not go back and would not want to in many ways—only the most desperate fools want to experience the word *medieval* as it is attached to words like *medicine* or *transportation.* We must, however, be driven forward to a future that learns from much that is presently ignored or forgotten. We must create a culture that remembers and builds on the beauty and glory of this most Christian age.

Knock, knock, knock.

Maybe we just want the ghouls to stop knocking at the front door. *I know the lights are off now.*

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK!

Wait! Was that a *KNOCK* or a *Chop?*

Perhaps if I just close my eyes I can imagine that the rapping at my chamber door is the swing of St. Boniface's ax.

CHOP, CHOP, CHOP!

There, that's better.

—G. Tyler Fischer

All Hallow's Eve, A.D. 2005

NOTES

1 I do not intend to settle all of the debates that go on among Christians concerning the roots of and propriety of celebrating Halloween. I would only note that both sides of the debate, the *This-Is-the-Devil's-Holiday* crowd and the *Halloween-is-Essentially-Christian* group, tend to base their opinions on conjecture about the origin of traditions, and neither side is immune from the charge of pseudo-scholarship.

2 He mentioned one other method, but I can not and will not mention it here. If you go and do the historical research, however, you will be either fascinated or scandalized.

Using Omnibus

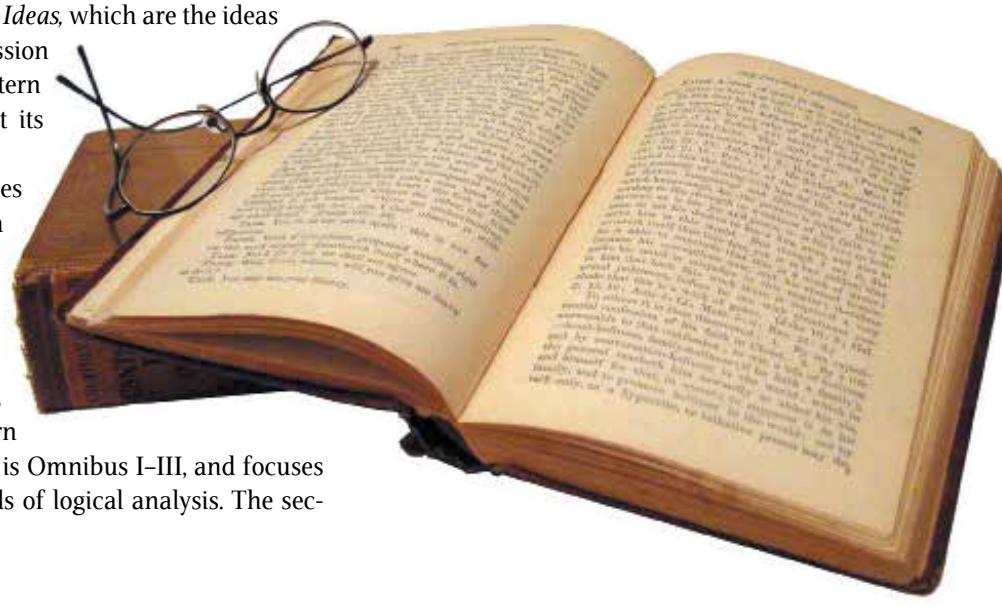
Students throughout the ages have read the books that you are about to read. These books have been their teachers and have done a lot to make them the great men and women that they became. Now, you are being welcomed to come along and join with them and to learn from them. It is important to realize that some of these books are not to be learned from uncritically—some of them we learn from by the problems they caused. Before you get started, however, there are a few terms you need to understand. First among them is the word *omnibus.* This Latin word means "all encompassing" or "everything." So, in a very loose sense, the Omnibus curriculum is where we talk about everything. All of the important ideas are set on the table to explore and understand. In a more technical sense, however, this Omnibus focuses our attention on the ideas, arguments and expressions of the Western Canon, which have also become known as the Great Books of Western Civilization.

The Great Books are those books that have guided and informed thinking people in Western Civilization. They are the books that have stood the test of time. They come from many sources, starting with the Hebrews and Greeks and extending to their Roman, European and Colonial heirs. These books represent the highest theological and philosophical contemplations, the most accurate historical record and the most brilliant literary tradition that have come down to us from our forefathers. The Great Books lead us into a discussion of the *Great Ideas,* which are the ideas that have driven discussion and argument in Western Civilization throughout its illustrious history.

The Omnibus takes students on a path through the Great Books and the Great Ideas in two cycles. It follows the chronological pattern of Ancient, Medieval and Modern periods. The first cycle is Omnibus I–III, and focuses on sharpening the skills of logical analysis. The second is *Omnibus IV–VI,* focusing on increasing the rhetorical skills of the student.

TITLE	PERIOD	YEARS	EMPHASIS
Omnibus I	Ancient	Beginning–A.D. 70	Logic
Omnibus II	Medieval	70–1563	Logic
Omnibus III	Modern	1563–Present	Logic
Omnibus IV	Ancient	Beginning–A.D. 70	Rhetoric
Omnibus V	Medieval	70–1563	Rhetoric
Omnibus VI	Modern	1563–Present	Rhetoric

Two kinds of books are read concurrently in the Omnibus, *Primary* and Secondary. The list of Primary Books for each year is what might be termed the traditional "Great Books." On this list are authors like Homer, Dante and Calvin. The Secondary Books are ones that give balance to our reading (balance in the general areas of Theology, History and Literature). The secondary list contains works such as *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Lord of the Rings.* These books are usually easier, and less class time is devoted to them. Each year is similarly organized. There are thirty-seven weeks' worth of material. Each week is divided into eight sessions of roughly seventy minutes each, optimally. The time estimate is approximate. Home schooling situations might vary greatly from student to student. Five of these sessions are committed to the study of the Primary Books. The other three are dedicated to the Secondary Books.



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DOUGLAS WILSON
General Editor

This is how you can use *Omnibus II* wisely—or should we say *medievally*? Using it in this manner will prepare your sons and daughters to take dominion joyfully—as many did in the Middle Ages. For unlike what we read about the Middle Ages in stale and unreadable volumes of "*enlightened*" history, the Middle Ages were not dark ones. Medieval people were staggeringly wise at some points, and to them we owe much of the good that exists in the world—and some of the bad as well.

G. TYLER FISCHER
Managing Editor

"[When] the book arrived, I eagerly read many of the opening essays for the many books on the list; the more I read the more I became excited. This was exactly what I wanted. The book is beautiful. Thank you so much. You have done what I was not able to do. And now you are sharing the wealth of knowledge of several writers, and not only the knowledge, but also the passion. I then showed the book to the other families in the [homeschool study] group, and they too had the same response. We had a visitor over one afternoon, and she saw the book, read it for a while and signed up her son for the class." —Lois

"[We] received our copies of the Omnibus today, and they are beautiful. The students immersed themselves as soon as they received them—which was good, since all the teachers were doing the same. We've been receiving the benefit of your hard work and godly insights into these books all year long . . ." —Sarah

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Omnibus II

Church Fathers through the Reformation

Edited by Douglas Wilson and G. Tyler Fischer

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Church Fathers through the Reformation

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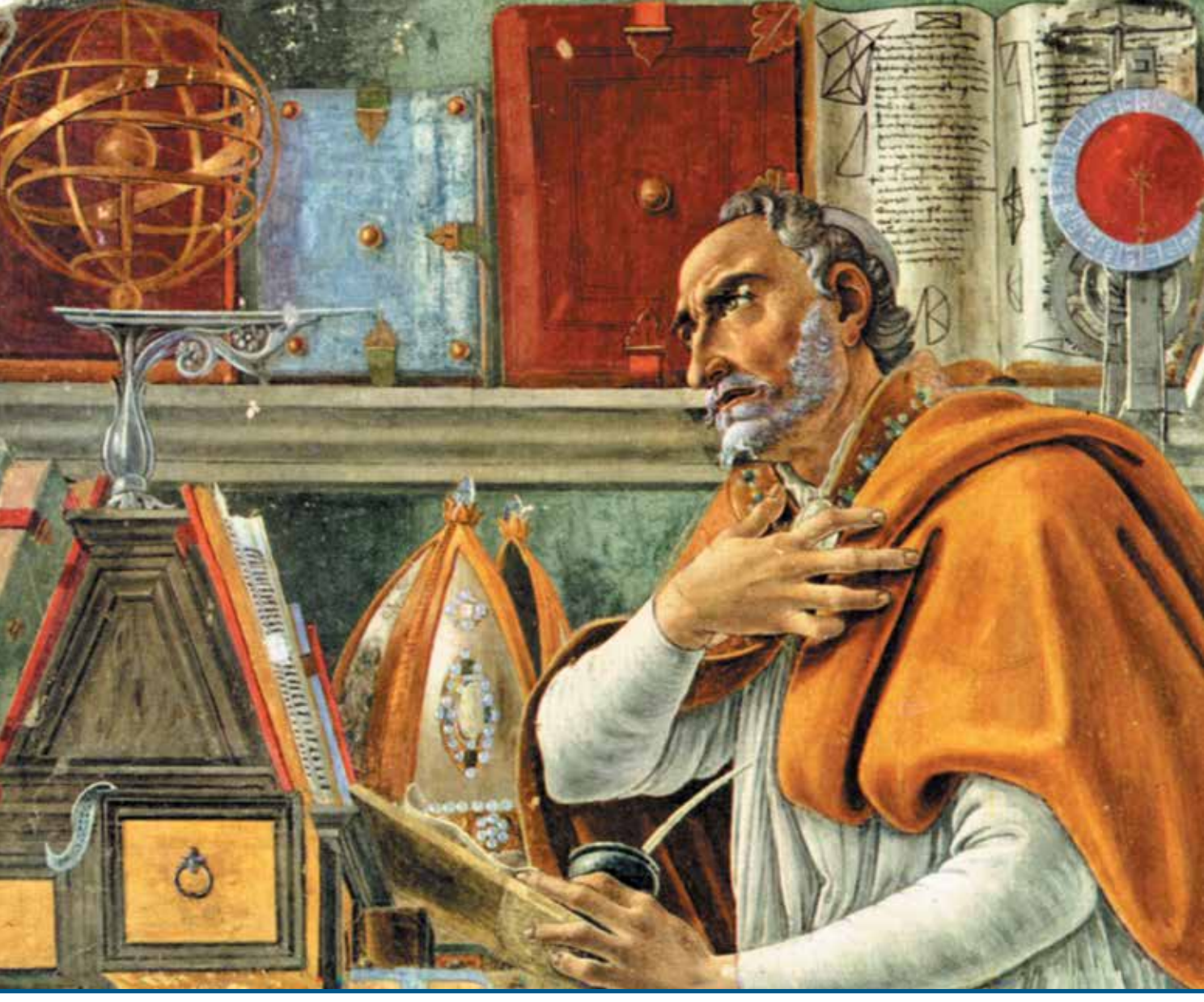

For my grandchildren, in the hope that they will read many of these books to their grandchildren.

—Douglas Wilson

For Emily, whose love, support and longsuffering made this work possible. May your children rise up and call you blessed, adding their voices of praise to mine. *Amore fidelis.*

—G. Tyler Fischer

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Foreword

One of the most obvious questions that Christians might ask about a curriculum like this one is, "Why study this stuff?" The question can be asked for different reasons. Perhaps a concerned parent is attracted to the rigor of a "classical and Christian approach," and yet has thumbed through a couple of the texts and is taken aback by some of the material. "It was this kind of gunk," he thinks, "that chased us out of the government school." Or perhaps the question is asked by the student himself when he "hits the wall." The rigor that is built into this course of study is significant, and about a third of the way through the year, a student might be asking all sorts of pointed questions. "Why are you making me do this?" is likely to be one of them. The student may be asking because of his workload, but if he points to the nature of the material, the question still needs a good answer. It is a good question, and everyone who is involved in teaching this course needs to have the answer mastered.

G.K. Chesterton said somewhere that if a book does not have a wicked character in it, then it is a wicked book. One of the most pernicious errors that has gotten abroad in the Christian community is the error of *sentimentalism*—the view that evil is to be evaded, rather than the more robust Christian view that evil is to be conquered. The Christian believes that evil is there to be fought, the dragon is there to be slain. The sentimentalist believes that evil is to be resented.

My wife and I did not enroll our children in a classical Christian school so that they would never come into contact with sin. Rather, we wanted them there because we wanted to unite with like-minded Christian parents who had covenanted together to deal with the (inevitable) sin in a consistent, biblical manner. We fully expected our children to encounter sin in the classroom, on the playground and in the curriculum. We also expected that when they encountered it, they would see it dealt with in the way the Bible says sin should be dealt with.

A classical Christian school or a home school following the classical Christian curriculum must never be thought of as an asylum. Rather, this is a time of basic training; it is boot camp. Students are being taught to handle their weapons, and they are being taught this under godly, patient supervision. But in order to learn this sort of response, it is important that students learn it well. That is, setting up a "straw man" paganism that is easily demolished equips no one. All that would do is impart a false sense of security to the students—until they get to a secular college campus to encounter the real thing. Or, worse yet, if they continue the path into a soft, asylum-style Christian college and then find themselves addressing the marketplace completely unprepared.

If this basic training is our goal, and it is, then we should make clear what one potential abuse of the Omnibus curriculum might be. This curriculum was written and edited with the assumption that godly oversight and protection would accompany the student through his course of work. It was written with the conviction that children need teachers, flesh and blood teachers, who will work together with them. It was also written with the assumption that many of these teachers need the help and the resources that a program like this can supply. But we also believe that, if a seventh-grader is simply given this material and told to work through it himself, the chances are good that the student will miss the benefit that is available for those who are taught.

The Scriptures do not allow us to believe that a record of sinful behavior, or of sinful corruption, is inherently corrupting. If it were, then there are many stories and accounts in the Bible itself that would have

to be excluded. But if we ever begin to think our children need to be protected "from the Bible," this should bring us up short. Perhaps we have picked up false notions of holiness somewhere. In short, there is no subject that this curriculum will raise in the minds of seventh-grade students that would not *also* be raised when that student reads through his Bible, cover to cover. It is true that this curriculum has accounts of various murders, or examples of prostitution, or of tyranny from powerful and cruel kings. But we can find all the same things in the book of Judges.

So the issue is not the *presence* of sin, but of the *response* to that sin. What we have sought to do throughout—in the introductory worldview essays, the questions and exercises, and in the teachers' materials—is provide a guideline for responding to all the various worldviews that men outside of Christ come up with. This program, we believe, will equip the student to see through pretences and lies that other Christian children, who have perhaps been too sheltered, are not able to deal with.

Of course, there is a limit to this, as we have sought to recognize. There *are* certain forms of worldliness and corruption that would overwhelm a student's ability to handle it, no matter how carefully a parent or teacher was instructing them. And while children differ in what they can handle, in our experience with many students of this age, we believe that the content of this curriculum is well within the capacity of Christian children of this age group. But again, this assumes godly oversight and instruction. The challenge here is two-fold. The rigor of the curriculum can seem daunting, but we have sought to provide direction and balance with regard to the demands of the material. The second concern is the question of false worldviews, paganism and just plain old-fashioned sin, which we have addressed above.

As our students work their way through this material, and in the years of the Omnibus program that will follow, we want them to walk away with a profound sense of the *antithesis*. What we mean by this is that right after Adam and Eve fell in the Garden, God gave His first messianic promise (Gen. 3:15). But along with this promise, He also said that there would be constant antipathy between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. This is what we mean by the antithesis, and we want our students to come to share in that godly antipathy. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil (Ps. 97:10; Prov. 8:13). In every generation, in all movements (whether of armies or philosophies), in all schools of literature, the men and women involved are either obeying God or disobeying Him. They are either trusting Him or they are not trusting Him. All students are learning to love God, or they are not learning to love God.

But when they love and trust Him, they must do so in the face of conflict. Jesus was the ultimate Seed of the woman, and yet when He came down and lived among us, He faced constant opposition from "broods of vipers." It is not possible to live in this world faithfully without coming into conflict with those who have no desire to live faithfully. The task of every Christian parent bringing children up to maturity in such a world is to do it in *a way that equips*. False protection, precisely because it does not equip, leaves a child defenseless when the inevitable day comes when that artificial shelter is removed. True protection equips. We do not want to build a fortress for our students to hide in; we want to give them a shield to carry—along with a sword.

Students who have faithfully worked through this course of study will not be suckers for a romanticized view of ancient paganism offered up by Hollywood. They have read Suetonius, and they have worked through a Christian response to true paganism. They are grateful that Christ came into this dark world, and they know *why* they are grateful.

—Douglas Wilson

Preface

In the grip of unbelief, some cultures are truly blind. The Bible describes what it is like to live without God and without hope in the world. Before the gospel came to them, the Gentiles of the first century were caught in the grip of "vanity of mind" and "blindness of heart." This was their way of life, their culture of futility. When a people do not know Christ, they are dead in their trespasses and sin, and God gives them over to the logical consequences of their unbelief. The twisted results of this can be seen clearly in St. Paul's description in Romans 1.

This does not mean that the depravity of unbelievers is absolute, or that they are as wicked as they could possibly be. We know that by God's common grace, He restrains cultures from getting to the end of the road, and such cultures can still produce poems, stories, engravings and statues that are quite beautiful. Christians can study such things, and profit by them, but they have to be very careful in this. This was the kind of task we had before us in the first *Omnibus* text—we were dealing with many texts from the ancient classical world, and this meant that we had to take their cultural blindness into account and learn to bring the revelation of Jesus Christ to bear.

This second *Omnibus* text is covering the medieval period, and as a result we must adjust what we are doing. We are *not* adjusting our commitment to Jesus Christ and His Word, but rather recognizing that we are working with quite a different period. It is possible to move from one task to another while retaining the same work ethic. The reason our task in this year of readings is so different is that we must take account of the conversion of Europe to the Christian faith. And in the history of our people during the medieval period, one of the most striking things about us at that time is that we were unashamed of Jesus Christ. This entire and complete confidence in Him

is largely missing today, even in many churches.

However, after the gospel comes to a people, this does not mean that they automatically have the cultural equivalent of perfect 20/20 vision. This side of the resurrection, all believing cultures, even the best of them, will still have their blind spots. This certainly includes our medieval fathers, and it means that we will perhaps see some things more clearly than they did. But it is very tempting for us to simply assume this as a given across the board, and part of the reason for having our students study this period with deep appreciation is so that we might come to learn the dangers in this self-serving approach.

The reason for this is that the reverse is also true; *they* saw certain things far more clearly than we do. We may be permitted to see their blind spots, and, being alive, we can talk about them. But they can see our blind spots also, and if we want to hear their critique, we will have to read some books from another era. In a famous essay on the reading of old books, C.S. Lewis makes the very important point that reading such old books prevents us from falling into what might be described as a chronological provincialism. The people in one village, who don't get out much, can easily believe that the people in that *other* village fifty miles down the road don't pronounce some of their words right. And the more we are limited to just our own village, the more likely it is that we will believe this kind of thing. But someone who has traveled extensively around the world is unlikely to get caught up in such a mistake. Travel broadens the mind, and reading old books is a form of travel.

Most students today are living in the chronological equivalent of a village. They don't read all that much, and, of what they read, over ninety percent of it was written within a small fraction of their lifetime. When it comes to history, literature, poetry, art and architecture, this robs such students and makes them the temporal equivalent of rubes and cornpones.

The students working through the *Omnibus* program this year will be reading many glorious texts. And these texts will of course have blind spots and errors, like all human productions—but they won't be the errors that are characteristic of *our* age. That being the case, we are likely to be able to identify them. By the same token, we will also be able to see some of their statements of the *truth* that are not characteristic of our age either. And those statements of the truth will bring us up short and make us reflect on the practices of our "small village." The period in which we live is also a "period," and five hundred years from now students will be struggling over it, trying to make sense of some of our practices. Nothing is better for clearing our minds of the vanity that afflicts us than to begin seeing ourselves as others will see us. And since we are currently living in the future's "past," a good way of coming to an understanding of ourselves is by studying and appreciating and *understanding* that which is past to us now.

And so this is why we are inviting the student reader to exult in *The Song of Roland,* to learn the shrewd insights of *The Canterbury Tales,* to see the connections between Anglo/Saxon culture and the world of Middle-earth in *The Lord of the Rings,* to rejoice with Arthur in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* to grasp the similarities between David the future king and Robin Hood, to learn to alliterate with joy in *Beowulf,* and to enjoy history in the same way that Geoffrey of Monmouth did. The writers of this textbook have enjoyed the process thoroughly, and we invite you to now join us.

—Douglas Wilson

Publisher's Preface

Have you ever stopped to think what the President of the United States in the year 2040 is doing right now? What about the next Martin Luther or John Calvin? I'll tell you what I hope they are doing. I hope they just finished reading this sentence!

There is no doubt in my mind that classical Christian education and the rigorous study of the greatest works of Western Civilization is a tool to create leaders like no other—godly leaders who understand that this is God's world, Christ inherited it, and we are to take dominion of it to His glory.

Many have begun down the path of studying this material and have not persevered—in their minds it was too hard, too salacious for Christian ears, too unrealistic, too much to grasp, the books were too old or some other "too." Be assured, like the Scriptures say in the Parable of the Sower, the work you do will *bear fruit a hundredfold* if you stick with it. In the lives of our own children we have already seen tremendous benefit and really have just barely scratched the surface.

Our goal with this text is to make the work easier for you. This text should make approaching *Omnibus,* and other material not previously encountered, come alive in a way that instills confidence, and it should convey a sense that young students (and teachers) can handle it.

We have done all we could to make this text a stand-alone guide for reading, studying and understanding these great books. A couple reference books will prove beneficial as resources for this year as well as the following years. *Western Civilization* by Jackson Spielvogel and *History of Art for Young People* by H.W. Janson and Anthony F. Janson are the two main ones. If you have previously used our *Veritas Press History and Bible Curriculum,* you will want to keep the flashcards from them handy, too.

May you be blessed as you dig in and study the hand of God at work in the past and prepare for His use of you in the future.

—Marlin Detweiler

ADVISORY TO TEACHERS AND PARENTS

In the course of history there has been much fluctuation on what has been deemed age appropriate for young students. And for those of us alive today, there remains great variation as to what is considered age appropriate. The material we have created and the books we have assigned address numerous subjects and ideas that deal with topics (including sex, violence, religious persuasion and a whole host of other ideas) that have been the subject of much discussion of whether they are age appropriate. The judgment we applied in this text has been the same as we apply to our own children.

In the creation of this program we have assumed that it will be used by students in seventh grade and above. Furthermore, we have assumed that there is no part of the Bible deemed inappropriate to discuss with a seventh-grade student. Therefore, the material assumes that the student knows what sex is, that he understands the existence of violence, that he understands there are theological and doctrinal differences to be addressed and that he has the maturity to discern right and wrong.

The worldview we hold and from which we write is distinctly protestant and best summarized in the *Westminster Confession of Faith.* The Bible is our only ultimate and infallible rule of faith and practice.

We encourage you to become familiar with the material that your students will be covering in this program in order to avoid problems where you might differ with us on these matters.

Introduction

Knock, knock, knock.

Who could that be?

Knock, knock, knock!

Unfortunately, my wife is away at choir practice, and so I have to go and find out. Hadn't I turned the lights off outside?

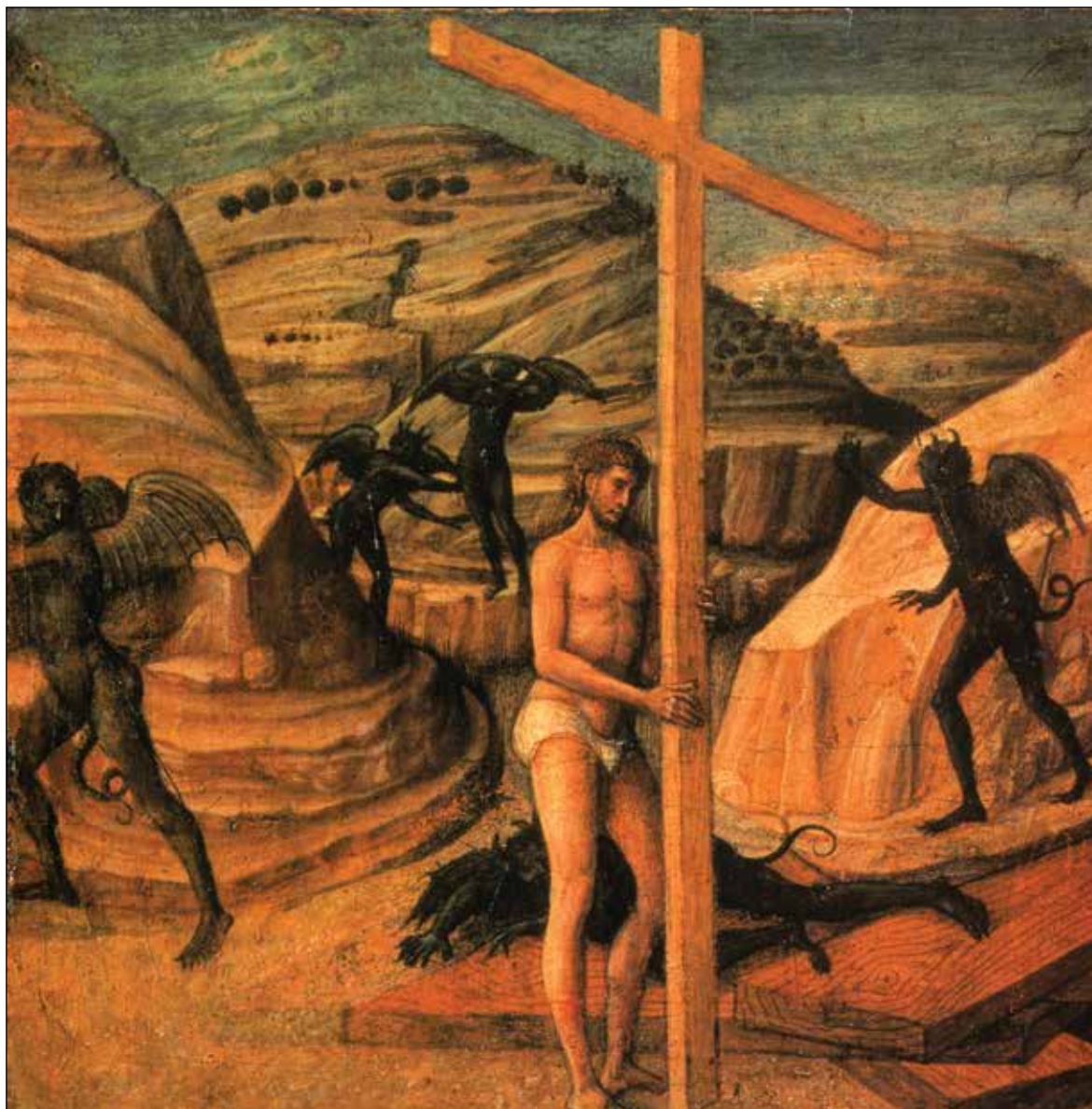
KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK!

I swing the door open to find Frankenstein, Spiderman, some sort of zombie-looking creature and someone with a knife sticking out of his head. He is carrying a chain saw. (*I hope that it is not real.*) Out from among them steps the prince of darkness himself—not looking too fearsome.

"Trick or Treat!" they scream (which might be translated in some neighborhoods as "bribe us with candy or we will show you what this chain saw is for," but in the quiet, rolling fields of Lancaster County it still means something like "please"). I reach for the candy.

They thank me and scurry down the driveway. I switch off the lights. I have got to get some work done—no more distractions.

As I settle into my chair, I think back to the devil (or facsimile of a devil) that I just bribed with candy and wonder how our culture got so messed up—so comfortable with the Devil.



Today, we seem to have two competing cultural attitudes toward Satan: fear or adoration. Part of our culture seems to almost admire the Devil as the leader of all rebels. We see the fringe of this in the hard core Rock and Rollers, but as the first generation of Dark Lord-worshiping metal heads mumbles incoherently into a permanent stupor, who can argue that this is a good life? Still, our modern culture will not be persuaded by the evidence and still follows in the spirit of rebellion, even when it seems increasingly clear that we are running out of things to rebel against.

Often the Christian attitude is one of fear. In some circles of Christians where divine worship has become increasingly light and airy, I have even seen the odd paradox of Christians who seem to fear and respect the Devil more than they do God. *Jesus is my pal, but the Devil, yikes!*

Thankfully, as in most things, the medieval world both explodes and informs our sad, modern outlook. They did neither fear Satan nor admire him. They mocked him. In fact, it is quite possible that the original celebrations on the Eve of All Saints Day—or All Hallow's Eve, a.k.a., Halloween—were done for this purpose.[1] Some have pointed to celebrations that centered on Christian children chasing a few men dressed as demons and devils out of town—usually with sticks. The children were learning to chase the Devil out because he is a vanquished foe. Whether these stories are true or apocryphal, this sort of celebration certainly fits with the medieval mentality concerning the Devil. They treated him like a vanquished foe because that is what they knew him to be.

I will supply two examples of this attitude. The first comes from no less eminent a source than Martin Luther himself—who claimed to have often seen the Devil. When Luther thought that he saw Satan, he did not cower in fear, but instead threw ink bottles and other things at him. He is also said to have claimed that the Devil could be chased away by, among other things, prayer and laughter.[2] St. Boniface, the great missionary to the Germans, supplies the other example. He faced down the pagans who were in spiritual slavery to the demonic forces. They lived dark lives eating each other and worshiping a grove of gigantic, sacred oaks. These pagans feared the devil. St. Boniface did not. One night, with the fearful pagans still clinging to their tree-gods, a sound echoed through the forest. CHOP, CHOP, CHOP! The pagans rushed out, and, as the story goes, they warned Boniface that the pagan gods would surely destroy him if he continued this folly. Boniface's answers can be paraphrased: "Bring it on." CHOP, CHOP, CHOP! They say that the pulpit of Boniface's first church among the Christian Germans was made of oak. The power of the pagan gods had been shattered. There was a new *Man* in town, *the Man Christ Jesus.* Before the gospel came Satan and his forces looked invincible. The light of the gospel revealed them for what they really were: petty, defeated tyrants whose time was over. He was a foe whose head had been crushed, and for the medieval world this meant that it was time to celebrate.

Perhaps this will be the most shocking aspect of the Middle Ages for those who are studying it anew this year. The medieval world was one of great beauty, joy and celebration. They rejoiced because they knew the horror of what they had been freed from and the joy of serving a new, glorious master. In light of the great wisdom and joy that we will explore in the Middle Ages, I thought it was appropriate to address in this Introduction how to use the Omnibus wisely and joyfully.

One of the chief ideas to remember is that Omnibus is a path of renewal and remembrance. In it, we are attempting to rediscover the wisdom of our forefathers that we have, as a culture, cast aside in derision—to our own destruction. What we are seeking to recover is a pearl of great value and complexity. We should not hope to recover everything overnight—in fact, if we could "get up to speed" overnight, we should recognize that what is being recovered is cheap.

At Veritas Academy, we do a better and more comprehensive job of teaching Omnibus every year. When we started doing this, we did not read as much or as deeply as we do now. We could not for a number of reasons, the main one being that our teachers were learning material with which they were unfamiliar. We are getting to know our fathers through the books they have left to us. We know them better now, so we can teach our students to know them better. In those days we read less and not as deeply.

As you work through *Omnibus II,* there are three variables to consider: the teacher, the student and the material. Go as close to the recommended rate as these three allow, keeping in mind the ultimate purpose of

this material and of all Christian education: that our training should end with our students taking joyful dominion of our culture for the glory of Christ.

Just as our teachers went more slowly at the beginning, so will you. Do not be afraid to omit a book or books or to take more time on a session (maybe spending an extra day or two on something that is recommended to be one day), particularly if you are just starting out.

Failing to "ramp up" to doing all or most of the books, or doing the program for the first time in a home school situation, can lead to a couple of catastrophic problems. The first problem is burnout—which feels something like living death. I have made acquaintances with some who have done this with Omnibus and with other material. A few have even claimed—usually tearfully—that I, or others at Veritas Press, are trying to destroy their lives! Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. The fact of the matter is, however, that this material—like any other curriculum—can become a cruel taskmaster if mishandled or followed woodenly instead of wisely.

As a general rule of thumb, the teacher can only take the student as far as he, the teacher, can inspire him. This means that teachers might need to limit the amount of material that can be effectively pursued in a year. Perhaps this fact will make you downcast, but recognize that this is the way it has always been. Unwise teachers push ahead when no learning is occurring. This is usually an issue of pride, but there can be other motives that lead a teacher to burn out or to exasperate their students. Perhaps the temptation to burn out is even greater with this approach than with others because of the glory of the content. I have met few who claimed that the reading proposed in this book is not worth doing. For most classical Christian school teachers and home educators, I do not even have to argue the point. We all know that we should do it. We must, however, learn to pace ourselves wisely. The end goal of reading the Great Books and entering into the Great Conversation is that we would get to know our fathers, learn from their wisdom and mistakes and thereby be enabled to take dominion presently for Christ and to do this joyfully. If you are not headed toward this end, stop and realign. If you are not headed there joyfully, you are really not headed there at all. The love of learning is, in fact, a love. Instructors should seek to wisely gauge their own ability to lead students through the books, recognizing that their ability should grow each year.

The ability of the student or students will limit what you can accomplish. If you are in a school setting, you might recognize that from year to year the classes might not move forward at the same rate. I have met those who are befuddled by this—the medieval educator would not be, however. He would recognize that we are training children and that children—like most humans—are unique individuals. When you join them together in a class of ten or twelve, this tendency seems to me to be multiplied rather than diluted. (Of course, if you increase your class size greatly—as many schools in our culture do—you can round the edges and create a system that works mechanically. The only drawback to this is that anything that works like this should hardly be called an education.) So the ability of the students must also be accounted for when a teacher is considering what he can accomplish with them in a year, and this is certainly the case in a home school setting as well.

This advice must be balanced with a goad. Learning is hard work, however joyful it may be. You should get to the end of the year of Omnibus and feel like you need to take a week or two off. In fact, teachers *and* students should probably take a week or two off after your school year is complete. The more we pour into the education of our children the more we should expect to see them and their descendents gaining ground in our culture. If you are a teacher, you should usually expect to move more quickly and effectively through the material as you become more familiar with it. But do not expect Dante to deliver up all his glories immediately. At first, he might seem extraordinarily complicated—almost opaque—to both you and the student. By no means give up! Have patience, simmer on the material, ponder it as you drive to the store where you encounter a child or adult racing from one popular brand name to another. Does this remind you of the Vestibule of Hell? It should.

So, this is how you can use *Omnibus II* wisely—or should we say *medievally?* Using it in this manner will prepare your sons and daughters to take dominion joyfully—as many did in the Middle Ages. For unlike what we read about the Middle Ages in stale and unreadable volumes of "enlightened" history, the Middle Ages were not dark ones. Medieval people

Using Omnibus

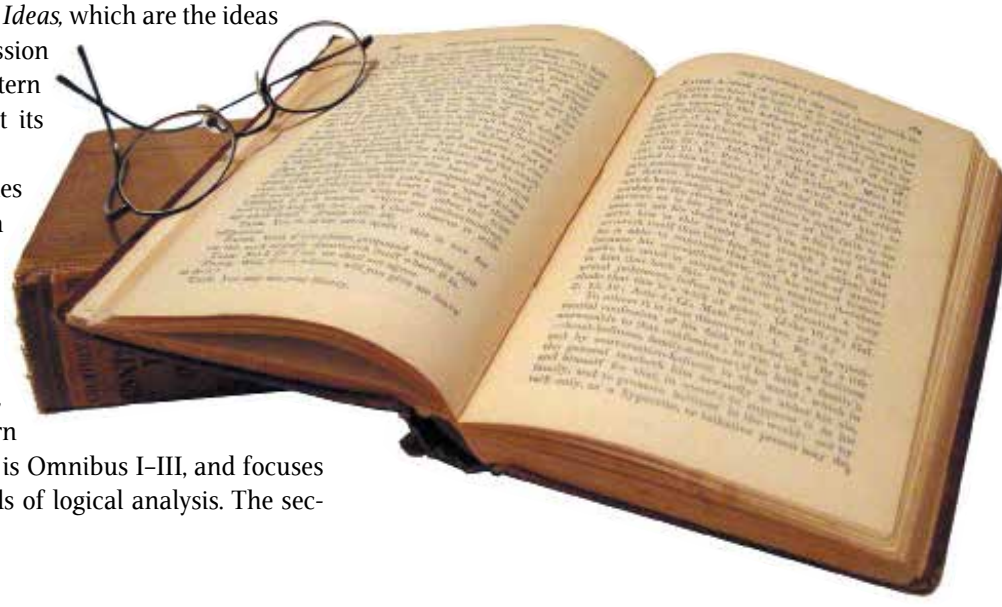
Students throughout the ages have read the books that you are about to read. These books have been their teachers and have done a lot to make them the great men and women that they became. Now, you are being welcomed to come along and join with them and to learn from them. It is important to realize that some of these books are not to be learned from uncritically—some of them we learn from by the problems they caused. Before you get started, however, there are a few terms you need to understand. First among them is the word *omnibus.* This Latin word means "all encompassing" or "everything." So, in a very loose sense, the Omnibus curriculum is where we talk about everything. All of the important ideas are set on the table to explore and understand. In a more technical sense, however, this Omnibus focuses our attention on the ideas, arguments and expressions of the Western Canon, which have also become known as the Great Books of Western Civilization.

The Great Books are those books that have guided and informed thinking people in Western Civilization. They are the books that have stood the test of time. They come from many sources, starting with the Hebrews and Greeks and extending to their Roman, European and Colonial heirs. These books represent the highest theological and philosophical contemplations, the most accurate historical record and the most brilliant literary tradition that have come down to us from our forefathers. The Great Books lead us into a discussion of the *Great Ideas,* which are the ideas that have driven discussion and argument in Western Civilization throughout its illustrious history.

The Omnibus takes students on a path through the Great Books and the Great Ideas in two cycles. It follows the chronological pattern of Ancient, Medieval and Modern periods. The first cycle is Omnibus I–III, and focuses on sharpening the skills of logical analysis. The second is *Omnibus IV–VI,* focusing on increasing the rhetorical skills of the student.

TITLE	PERIOD	YEARS	EMPHASIS
Omnibus I	Ancient	Beginning–A.D. 70	Logic
Omnibus II	Medieval	70–1563	Logic
Omnibus III	Modern	1563–Present	Logic
Omnibus IV	Ancient	Beginning–A.D. 70	Rhetoric
Omnibus V	Medieval	70–1563	Rhetoric
Omnibus VI	Modern	1563–Present	Rhetoric

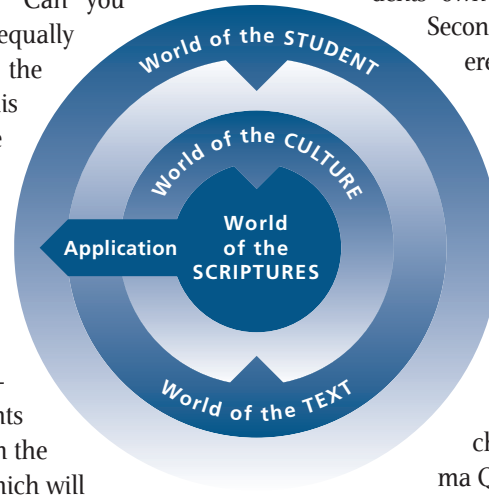
Two kinds of books are read concurrently in the Omnibus, *Primary* and Secondary. The list of Primary Books for each year is what might be termed the traditional "Great Books." On this list are authors like Homer, Dante and Calvin. The Secondary Books are ones that give balance to our reading (balance in the general areas of Theology, History and Literature). The secondary list contains works such as *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Lord of the Rings.* These books are usually easier, and less class time is devoted to them. Each year is similarly organized. There are thirty-seven weeks' worth of material. Each week is divided into eight sessions of roughly seventy minutes each, optimally. The time estimate is approximate. Home schooling situations might vary greatly from student to student. Five of these sessions are committed to the study of the Primary Books. The other three are dedicated to the Secondary Books.



KINDS OF SESSIONS

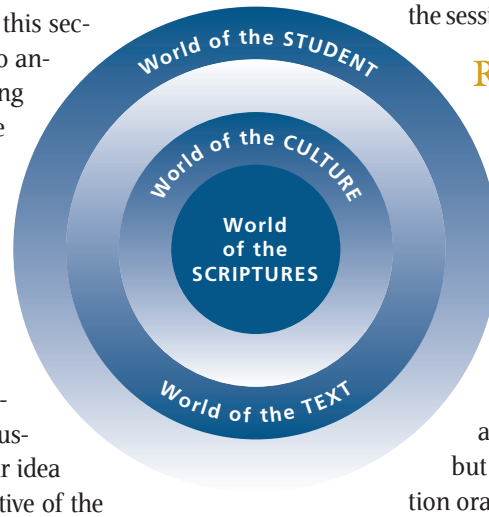
Prelude

Each chapter is introduced with a session called a Prelude. In each Prelude we seek to stir up the interest of the students by examining a provoking question that is or could be raised from the book. This is done in the section called A Question to Consider. When the teacher introduces this question he should seek to get the students' initial reaction to the question. These questions might range from "Can you teach virtue?" to "Are all sins equally wicked?" Usually, a student in the Logic years will love to argue his answers. Generally, it will prove helpful for a student to read the introductory essay in the student text ***before*** tackling A Question to Consider. Sometimes a teacher may want to introduce the question first to stir up interest. This "introductory material" will give the students both the general information on the work and a worldview essay which will unpack some of the issues that will be dealt with in the book. After reading this section, the student will be asked to answer a few questions concerning the chapter. These questions are based only on the introductory material they have just read, not on the reading of the book itself.



Discussion

The Discussion is the most frequently used class in the Omnibus. It has five parts. The Discussion seeks to explore a particular idea within a book from the perspective of the text itself, our culture and the Bible. It begins, like the Prelude, with A Question to Consider, which is the first of "four worlds" that will be explored, the *world of the student.* The *world of the text* is discovered through the Text Analysis questions. These questions unlock the answer that the book itself supplies for this question (e.g., when reading the *Aeneid,* we are trying to find out how the author, Virgil, would answer this question). After this, in the Cultural Analysis section, the student examines the world of the culture, how our culture would answer the same question. Many times this will be vastly different from the answer of the student or the author. The Biblical Analysis questions seek to unearth what God's Word teaches concerning this question. We can call this discovering the world of the Scriptures. So the progression of the questions is important. First, the students' own opinions and ideas are set forth. Second, the opinion of the text is considered. Next, the view of our culture is studied. Finally, the teaching of the Scriptures is brought to bear. All other opinions, beliefs and convictions must be informed and corrected by the standard of God's Word. Often, after hearing the Word of God, the material seeks to apply the discovered truth to the life of the students. Finally, the students are challenged to think through a Summa Question which synthesizes all they have learned about this "highest" idea from the session.



Recitation

The Recitation is a set of grammatical questions that helps to reveal the student's comprehension of the facts or ideas of the book. This can be done in a group setting or individually with or by students. The Recitation questions can also be answered in written form and checked against the answers, but we encourage doing the Recitation orally whenever possible. It provides great opportunity for wandering down rabbit trails of particular interest or launching into any number of discussions. Of course, we cannot predict what current events are occurring when your students study this material. Recitations can prove a great time to direct conversation that relates to the questions and material being covered in this type of class.

Analysis

This session of worldview analysis is focused on comparing a character, culture or author you are studying to some other character, culture or author. This might be done by comparing two or three characters' or authors' answers to the same questions. This type of session effectively helps students to understand the differences between cultures and characters, especially in the arena of worldview.

Writing

There are a variety of writing assignments all focusing on expanding a student's ability to write effectively and winsomely. In the earlier years the focus is on the basics. This includes exercises of the *progymnasmata,* beginning writing exercises used by Greek and Roman students in antiquity and by their medieval and colonial counterparts. Also, essay writing and argument is at the forefront. The assignments in these sessions will progress each year from teaching the basics to including composition in fiction and poetry.

Activity

These classes are focused on bringing creative ideas into the mix. Activities might include debates, trials, sword fights, board games and dramatic productions. Music and art appreciation are also included in this category. These classes are harder to prepare for, but are quite important. Often, the student will remember and understand (and love) the material only if our discussions and recitations are mixed with these unforgettable activities. There are also a number of field trips that are recommended. Often, these are recommended in two categories: ones that most people can do and ones that are "outside the box" experiences that only some will be able to do. The first category might send you to the local museum or planetarium. The latter will recommend ideas like chartering a boat at Nantucket to experience what Ishmael felt on the *Pequod.* Careful pre-planning is important to be able to take advantage of these opportunities.

Review and Evaluation

Weekly testing is not recommended. Students will weary of it and will spend all of their time preparing for tests instead of learning. Choose your tests carefully. Even if a chapter has an evaluation at the end, know that you can use it as a review. The test and the review both work toward the same goal of demonstrating the knowledge of the students and cementing the material into their minds.

Evaluations are divided into three sections. The first section tests the student's *grammatical* knowledge of the book. Answers to these questions should be short, consisting of a sentence or two. The second section is the *logic* section. In this section students are asked to answer questions concerning the ideas of the book and to show that they understand how ideas connect with each other within the book. The final section is called *lateral thinking.* This section asks students to relate ideas in one book with the ideas that they have studied in other books . For instance, the student might be asked to compare Homer's ideal heroes (Achilleus and Odysseus) with Virgil's character Aeneas to discover how the Roman conception of the hero was different from the Greek idea. Finally, students often will be asked to compare and contrast these pagan ideas with a biblical view. So, students might be asked to contrast Homer and Virgil's teaching on what is heroic with the ultimate heroic work of Christ. In this way students demonstrate that they can set ideas in their proper biblical context, showing the relationship between the writing of one author and another. Students should be allowed to have their books and Bibles available during testing. If they are having to do extensive reading during the tests, they are not going to be able to finish or do well anyway. Students should not be permitted to have notes of any kind during the test.

Optional Sessions and Activities

For each chapter there are also some optional classes included. These allow the teacher to be flexible and to add to, or omit classes as they think wise. Usually the number of optional classes is approximately one optional class for every week that the book is taught. There are also a number of optional activities included. These activities allow you to spend addition time on ideas that your students might find fascinating.

Midterms and finals have been provided on the *Omnibus* Teacher's Edition CD. These tests are optional, but can be a helpful gauge of how much the student is retaining. Usually midterms are given around the ninth

week of the semester, and finals are given during the last week of the semester. Midterm exams are designed to be completed in a class period. (You might want to give the students slightly more time if possible.) The finals, however, are made to be completed over two class periods (or roughly two and a half hours). Most students will finish more quickly, but some might need all of the time. If possible, give the finals when the student has no time limit. These tests, as well, are given with open books and Bibles, but no notes, and they feature the same sections as the review and evaluation (i.e., grammar, logic and lateral thinking).

For those getting ready to teach this curriculum, preparation should be carefully considered. The material has been designed so that it can be taught with little preparation, but this is not recommended. If you want your students to get the most out of this program, you should prepare carefully. First, make sure you are familiar with the book being studied. Also, consult the Teaching Tips on the Teacher's Edition CD before teaching. Knowing where you are going in the end will help you to effectively move through the material and interact with your students effectively.

What's on this CD?

Teacher's Edition of the Text

The teacher text includes 300 additional pages of material, with an expanded Introduction and suggested answers for all the questions, writing assignments and activities in the daily sessions.

Lesson Plans

Session-by-session lesson plans for each chapter.

Midterms and Exams

Tests with answer keys for both semesters. Three versions are provided for each test (labeled A, B and C).

Grading Tools

An explanation of our suggested grading routine, including sample and blank grading charts, as well as a grading calculator in a popular spreadsheet format.

Requirements and Use

The CD is Windows and Macintosh compatible. Requires free Acrobat Reader. Installer for the latest version is right on the CD or may be downloaded for free at http://get.adobe.com/reader.

Windows OS

If the main application does not appear automatically, double-click the file named "VP.exe".

Macintosh OS

Double-click the file named "Omnibus II (Double-click)" to launch the main application. *Macintosh OS 9 and earlier—double-click the individual files you wish to view.*

Nothing is better for clearing our minds of the vanity that afflicts us than to begin seeing ourselves as others will see us. And since we are currently living in the future's "past," a good way of coming to an understanding of ourselves is by studying and appreciating and *understanding* that which is past to us now.

DOUGLAS WILSON
General Editor

This is how you can use *Omnibus II* wisely—or should we say *medievally*? Using it in this manner will prepare your sons and daughters to take dominion joyfully—as many did in the Middle Ages. For unlike what we read about the Middle Ages in stale and unreadable volumes of "*enlightened*" history, the Middle Ages were not dark ones. Medieval people were staggeringly wise at some points, and to them we owe much of the good that exists in the world—and some of the bad as well.

G. TYLER FISCHER
Managing Editor

"[When] the book arrived, I eagerly read many of the opening essays for the many books on the list; the more I read the more I became excited. This was exactly what I wanted. The book is beautiful. Thank you so much. You have done what I was not able to do. And now you are sharing the wealth of knowledge of several writers, and not only the knowledge, but also the passion. I then showed the book to the other families in the [homeschool study] group, and they too had the same response. We had a visitor over one afternoon, and she saw the book, read it for a while and signed up her son for the class." —Lois

"[We] received our copies of the Omnibus today, and they are beautiful. The students immersed themselves as soon as they received them—which was good, since all the teachers were doing the same. We've been receiving the benefit of your hard work and godly insights into these books all year long . . ." —Sarah

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