



OMNIBUS III

Reformation to the Present

Third Edition

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For Nathan, Ben, and Luke, who have been
wonderful sons.

—DOUGLAS WILSON

To Madelyn, Layne, Karis and Elyse, my Muses:
Long may you sing; and
To Emily (again), my main Muse and our Eve.

—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

P R E F A C E

We are now moving into our study of the modern era. In this third volume of the *Omnibus* series, we are standing on the threshold of our own times.

In one sense, we are getting much closer to home. It is certainly easier for us to understand Victorian England than Ithaca at the time of Odysseus. We have less trouble comprehending the English (in which most of the works in this volume were written) than we had with translations from Homeric Greek or Augustan Latin. We have visited alien worlds, and we are now homeward bound. We are all looking forward to the comforts of home, to the ease with which we can get around. When you read *The Tale of Two Cities* or *Pride and Prejudice*, you won't have to struggle with footnotes about what the original language might have meant. When an author refers to "a desk" you won't have to look it up in a dictionary of archeology. This is home.

But in another important sense, as believing Christians, we are moving farther away from our home. This is because this modern period has been a time in which a great Christian civilization has gone through a great apostasy, falling away from the faith that was once

delivered to us, and which delivered our fathers from barbarism. As Christians, we have not personally participated in that apostasy, and we do not assent to it, but it still surrounds us on every hand. The great project of modernity, the great modernity experiment, has been an attempt to order our lives, and our laws, and our culture, and our arts, without reference to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. We believe that the experiment has been a great disaster, but it is a disaster that we as Christians are required and called to understand. Knowing how we got here will be invaluable as we make our plans for getting out.

In *Omnibus I*, we studied the great works of pagan civilization. In the second *Omnibus*, we moved on to learn and appreciate the works of the medieval and reformational period, a time when Christ was imperfectly but genuinely honored. We are now setting ourselves to read the works of a post-Christian culture.

Not surprisingly, this is a period of great cultural disintegration.

But at the same time, it is a time when faithful



Christians continued to write, but with the context of the older order in mind. As a result, this is a period of history where we can profit from good and bad examples both. We are happy to commend to you Jane Austen, Edmund Burke and the American founders, and to warn you away from Karl Marx and Adolf Hitler. But in warning you away from such men, we are not just “shooing” you away from them. It is important for us to understand why such sinful men had such a following, and so we want to spend some time learning real worldview discernment as we examine what they tried to sell to the world.

Scripture teaches us that there is significant moral power for good in bad example. “Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer” (1 Cor. 10:6–10). If the Israelites in the wilderness provided an object lesson for those who read about them in the Bible, shouldn’t we, in a similar way, be able to draw some benefits from observing our disasters in the wilderness of modernity?

I mentioned just a moment ago that we are engaged in making some plans to get out of the cultural chaos we are in. In a very real sense, that is what the classical Christian school movement is all about. We want to acquaint students with the permanent things. We want to educate in such a way that we reacquire

the perspective that history provides—so that we don’t get caught up in the intellectual fads and follies of just one generation. This is not being done with a glib assumption that “older must be better.” As Christians we have the touchstone of God’s Word—the Scriptures enable us to understand the tragedy of Greek tragedy, the hopelessness of ancient paganism, the forgiveness and nobility that comes when Christ is honored in all things, and the destruction that comes when in our pride we wander away from His blessings. In these pages you will see modern works praised, and ancient works critiqued . . . and *vice versa*. Our loyalty is always to Jesus Christ, and to His people, and not to one particular language or nation or literary tradition.

As diligent students work through the *Omnibus* project (and, with this volume, we are halfway there!), the result will be that they are oriented. They will be acquainted with what men have thought and practiced throughout history. They will know what the intellectual options are. They will have direct acquaintance with what the world was like before Jesus Christ came into it. They will know the transforming cultural power of the gospel, and they will be able to testify to what happened when the gospel took root in societies far more pagan than ours currently is. They will understand what happens to humanistic regimes that refuse to honor Jesus Christ. And they will have a great deal of experience in working through many books of the Bible, applying what is in them to the world around. As a result, our hope and prayer is that they will continue to grow up into mature Christian men and women, who will be equipped to decipher and understand what is happening in the culture around 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 *A Short History of Art* 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



From a distance, the modern world appears to be on a quest for truth on many different levels. In the recent past, white-coated scientists ruled over truth and brought it out to us when it was fit for us or we for it. They told us that something came out of nothing and that order arose from chaos. “Matter and energy—that’s it. Nothing else,” they said. Or perhaps more popularly, “*The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.*” They told us that truth is whatever we can prove scientifically. That’s it. Nothing more. While this seemed a little shortsighted, as a culture we bought this for a while. Not because it made sense, but because those folks seemed so authoritative with their white jackets, and they made a lot of neat gadgets. It seemed, however, that something was missing. More recently, however, a revolt has risen against white jackets. *What is true for me is not true for you.* These folks look for truth in the relationships that exist between people. Truth is subjective rather than rational. These folks are *indie* and cool and a little scruffy around the collar, but they seem so sincere. Still, neither group—indie or white jackets—is willing to submit themselves to Christ, who *is* the truth. The grand quest for truth is really just a charade. It is a myth of the modern world.

As people have started using Omnibus, there have

been a couple of misconceptions that I have noticed cropping up among Omnibus users. Strikingly, the chief misconceptions involve failing to strip away some of the deeply ingrained modern assumptions that have infected us.

The first and greatest fallacy concerning Omnibus is thinking that Omnibus works *ex opere operato*. While this Latin phrase is often connected to medieval views of the sacraments, its substance fits neatly into the modern world. Basically, it means, *if you do it right, it works*, or one could say *the what matters much more than the how*. Reading the Great Books does not work like this. You can read every word in the *Omnibus I, II* and *III* texts, all of the assigned books and any of the “For Further Reading”¹ choices and still miss the mark completely. The Omnibus curriculum only works right if you do it right, or maybe more rightly stated, the Omnibus only works correctly if you read these books with the extremely *unmodern* virtues of faith, hope and love.

Reading with faith is the first test. Any further success hinges on this. As the writer to the Hebrews says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (11:6). Recognizing this, however, we must mourn the fact that most of the reading of the Great Books today is

done without a scrap of faith. You might remember the advice given by the demon Screwtape in Letter 27 when he speaks of gaining wisdom from Old Books:

But in the intellectual climate which we have at last succeeded in producing throughout Western Europe, you needn't bother about [people learning the wisdom of Old Books]. Only the learned read old books and we have now so dealt with the learned that they are of all men the least likely to acquire wisdom by doing so.²

Of course, this raises the obvious question of why these “learned people” gain nothing from reading books packed tight with great wisdom. The root of the problem is that they lack faith. Without faith the coherence of the world falls apart. We have witnessed this in the modern world. Everything becomes simply a method to wield power over others or to keep others from wielding power over us. We must admit that most of the reading of the Great Books today is done to this unsavory end. The professor becomes an expert in Dante but never learns the lesson that the Poet is trying to teach him when Dante undergoes the tests of faith, hope and love in Paradise. The professor reads in order to publish in order to retain his position in order to keep his status or to avoid manual labor.

Thankfully, many of us are poised to avoid this temptation—mainly through knowledge of our own ignorance. We come to the Great Books to learn the wisdom of our fathers and can do that effectively, particularly now, when we—as teachers, students, parents, children and editors—admittedly know so little. We are not the “learned,” and in this case that is good.

But how do you know if you are reading in faith? There are a couple of things that you should watch for. First, are you both accepting and rejecting what you should? Few things irk me more than when I am reading with my students, and they are only interested to find some sort of flaw in the author that we are reading. *Augustine's view of creation is weird. Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper is too mystical.* It is not so much that students are wrong when they say these things. It is that they are *so wrong*. Not on the point before them, but in the manner in which they are reading the book. When we read Augustine or Dante or Calvin or Bunyan, we need to remember where we belong—at their feet, listening and learning. They are our fathers, and we should treat them with the respect that they deserve.

Thinking that we have something to say worth listening to is, in fact, a great modern fallacy, and it is a fallacy which, if practiced enough, will keep the person from ever having anything to say that is actually worth listening to. Faith trusts the right people.

Faith, however, also rejects the wrong people. Christ claims that His sheep obey His voice. The implication is clear—the sheep do not obey other voices. In *Omnibus III*, there are a number of other voices shouting for our attention. We should listen to them but not trust them. We will be reading books like the *Communist Manifesto* and *Mein Kampf* this year. These voices are ones that we should hear in order to more firmly and intelligently reject. This practice of rejecting and despising is hopelessly *unmodern*. The modern world tends to reject only one thing—sane standards whereby things can be rejected. Christ, the ultimate standard, has been ejected from the modern courtroom, the modern school, the modern marriage and all things are adversely affected in a very real and significant way because of this lack of faith.

We must also take pains to read with hope. Keeping hope alive as we consider the modern world can be a real challenge. If we consider what has happened to the Christian faith in Western culture over the four-hundred year span considered in *Omnibus III*, it is easy to be downcast. The West, it seems, is running headlong in the wrong direction. It is no wonder that Christian eschatology has gone from the hopeful vision of the future in 1647 when most of the Westminster Divines believed that Protestantism would roll back all forms of unbelief and hasten the kingdom. By the end of the *Omnibus III*, Orwell's disastrous dystopia presented in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* seems more realistic than the Pilgrim's Hope for a City on a Hill. Our fathers dreamt of a world where Christ's name would be praised by every lip; today most people long to be taken out of this world. The modern world is crumbling all around us, and everyone is scrambling for shelter.

The fact that the modern world is full of hopelessness should shock us. Many of the diseases and disasters that caused horrible suffering in the past have been eradicated. Other concerns have been lessened. More people than ever live with easy access to food, water and heat. Still, the modern world is filled with misery, and it seems that many of the most blessed end up the most miserable.

This does give us one unique opportunity, however. If

we can have hope, we will stand out. Today, many wander through a desert (T.S. Eliot would say a Waste Land). If they see real hope in us, they will be open to experiencing it—if and only if, they see real hope in us, not some sort of cheap veneer which hides a corrupt life.

God has given us great reason to hope. He has filled the world with pleasure—and the best of it is available to us with his blessing. Sometimes, especially when you are in the midst of some problem, this is hard to see. Recently, I was talking with a young man who was going through some trouble. We were sitting on my back patio after enjoying a wonderful meal. The evening was cool but not too cool, and stars were twinkling. He said, staring into his own soul, “My world is so dark.” I asked him to look outside of himself and consider the real and actually external world. He had been blessed with a wonderful meal, interesting conversation and a cool summer breeze. The heavens were smiling down on us. “The world out here is not so bad,” I replied.

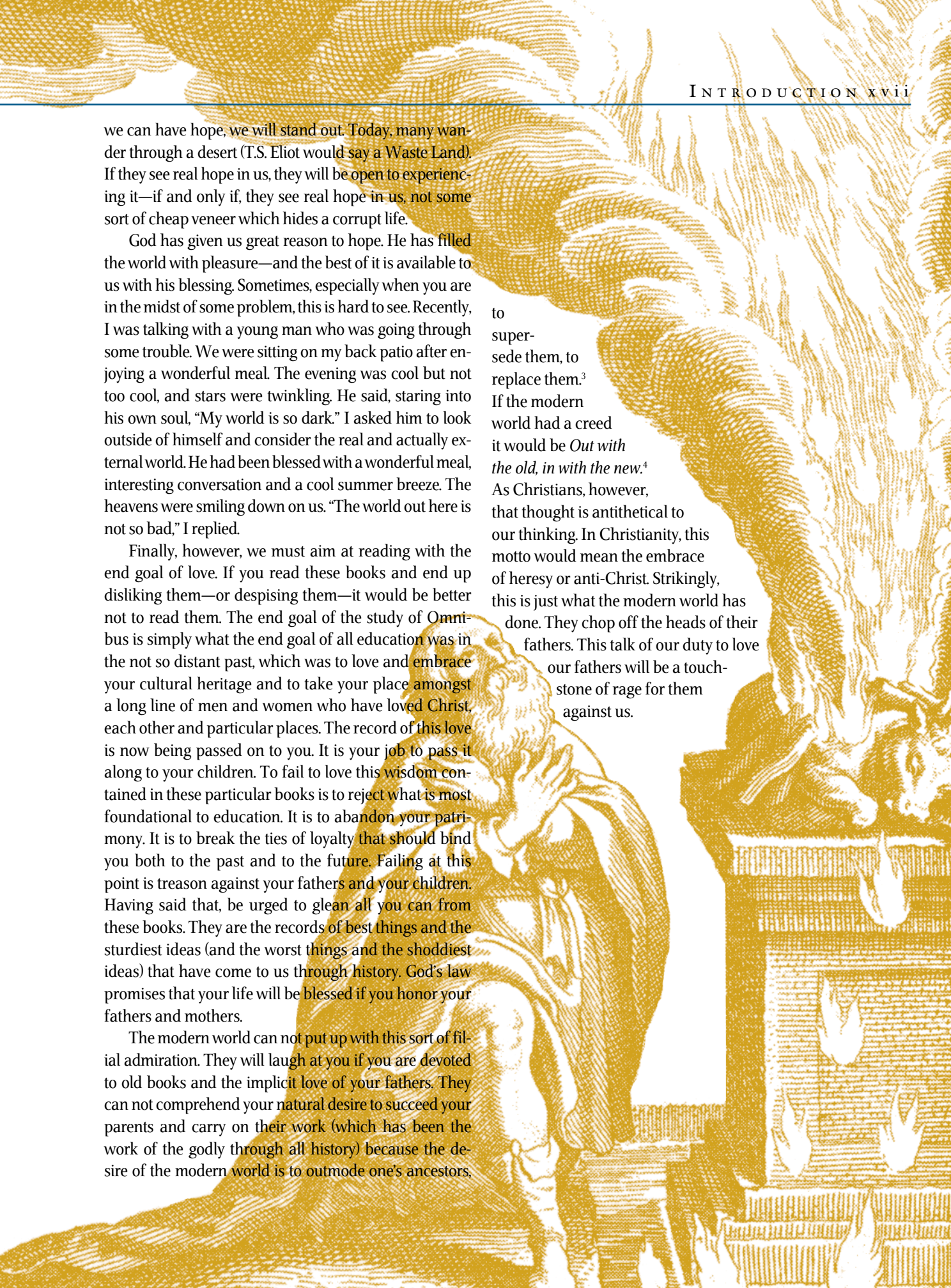
Finally, however, we must aim at reading with the end goal of love. If you read these books and end up disliking them—or despising them—it would be better not to read them. The end goal of the study of *Omni-bus* is simply what the end goal of all education was in the not so distant past, which was to love and embrace your cultural heritage and to take your place amongst a long line of men and women who have loved Christ, each other and particular places. The record of this love is now being passed on to you. It is your job to pass it along to your children. To fail to love this wisdom contained in these particular books is to reject what is most foundational to education. It is to abandon your patrimony. It is to break the ties of loyalty that should bind you both to the past and to the future. Failing at this point is treason against your fathers and your children. Having said that, be urged to glean all you can from these books. They are the records of best things and the sturdiest ideas (and the worst things and the shoddiest ideas) that have come to us through history. God’s law promises that your life will be blessed if you honor your fathers and mothers.

The modern world can not put up with this sort of filial admiration. They will laugh at you if you are devoted to old books and the implicit love of your fathers. They can not comprehend your natural desire to succeed your parents and carry on their work (which has been the work of the godly through all history) because the desire of the modern world is to outmode one’s ancestors,

to supersede them, to replace them.³

If the modern world had a creed it would be *Out with the old, in with the new.*⁴

As Christians, however, that thought is antithetical to our thinking. In Christianity, this motto would mean the embrace of heresy or anti-Christ. Strikingly, this is just what the modern world has done. They chop off the heads of their fathers. This talk of our duty to love our fathers will be a touchstone of rage for them against us.



There is one other fallacy to debunk. This one is particularly relevant to those of you cloistered in some far off corner of the Empire wondering—and I am sure you have—if you are alone. Considering that perhaps you are the only one on your block or in your city, county or state reading these books, you may feel like Elijah at Mount Horeb. He thought that he was all alone—the Last of the True Israelites. Most theologians pile on poor Elijah at this point. “He has a bad attitude,” say the commentators, “What a lack of faith! Just after the victory at Mount Carmel!” Note, however, that the text does not condemn Elijah.⁵ God sustains, encourages and meets with Elijah. So, if you feel like you are alone, you might, like Elijah, have good reasons for feeling this way. You might go to church and have to suffer through Sunday School material that could inoculate people against Christianity. You might get together with your family or friends and feel like a bit of an odd duck. Today, we are, but two things should encourage you. First, historically, we must recognize that we are (and will be for all eternity) the majority. G.K. Chesterton, in his classic *Orthodoxy*, claims, “Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead.” Have no doubt. If the dead could vote for what is most important, to read the books that you are reading would win in a landslide. There is more good news! The dead are going to rise. The work that you are doing now and the loves that you are feeding now

might well enable you to have something interesting to talk

about with your great-great-great-grandfather when you meet him. The second reason to be encouraged that you are not alone is that the number of people reading these books and using this book is increasing. Recently, I was at a church service in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in which we had a couple of visitors. I got to meet both of them after the service. One was the minister filling in for our pastor. He was from Allentown, Pennsylvania. The other was from Australia. Both of them were using Omnibus with their children. You are not alone.

So take courage, and take up your fathers’ sword.

—G. Tyler Fischer
Trinity Season, 2006

ENDNOTES

- 1 For some of you this might be the most staggering and audacious part of each chapter. The “For Further Reading” list—as if you could possibly be sitting around looking for more reading—could add a lot.
- 2 C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996) 150.
- 3 If, as I am guessing, in our day when the first generation to escape the womb—made deadly by their parents’ acquiescence to abortion—enacts euthanasia laws that effectively turn the table on their elderly parents, it will be the fulfillment of some vast cultural parable.
- 4 While mentioning filial admiration, note that if you desire a much more cogent presentation of some of these thoughts you can find them in Wendell Berry’s essay “The Work of Local Culture,” which can be found, among other works, in his fine books of essays called *What are People For?*
- 5 I was blessed to have Dr. Dale Ralph Davis point this out to me.



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.

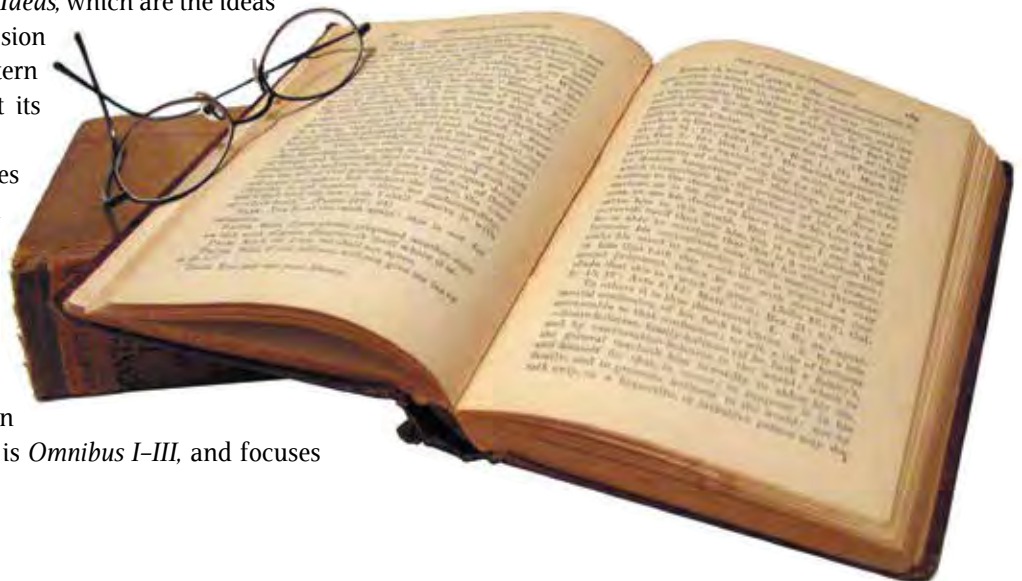
The *Great Books* are those books that have guided and informed thinking people in Western Civilization. They are the books that have stood the test of time. They come from many sources, starting with the Hebrews and Greeks and extending to their Roman, European and Colonial heirs. These books represent 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. 180	Rhetoric
Omnibus V	Medieval	180–1563	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

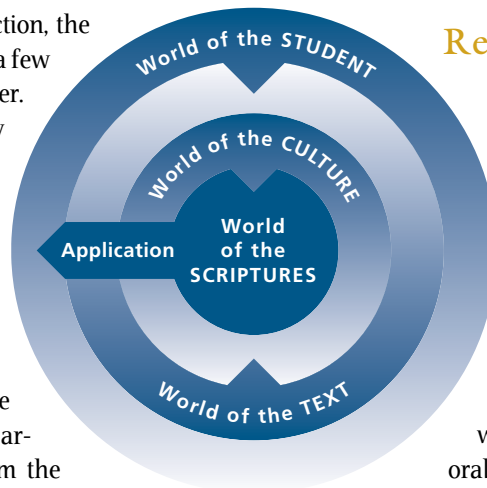
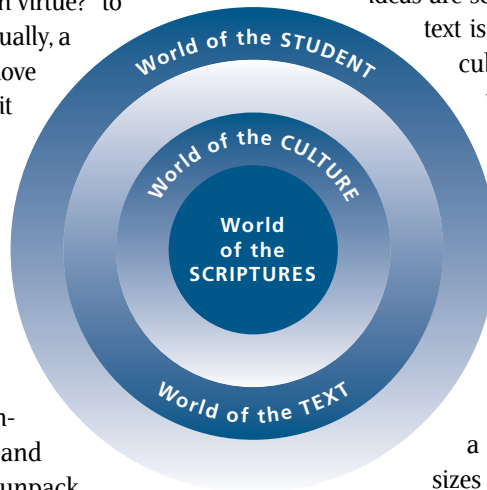
Each chapter is introduced with a session called a Prelude. In each Prelude we seek to stir up the interest of the students by examining a provoking question that is or could be raised from the book. This is done in the section called A Question to Consider. When the teacher introduces this question 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 additional 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 WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

Imagine someone throwing a basketball at your head, suddenly, without any warning. And with that throw, all he says is, “Think fast!” And so you do think fast, and manage to catch the ball—thanking the Lord for quick reflexes.

But suppose it was not a basketball he threw, but something much harder. What if what he threw at your head was a question, a hard question? The question was, “What do you think . . . about *everything*?” How would you go about summarizing your view of the world—about God, about Jesus, about the creation, about men and women, and about the end of the world? You are not given any time to research the matter because your

questioner wants to know now.

How could you respond? Just as reflexes can be trained by going out for the basketball team and working hard in practice, so these questions should be worked through during the course of your education. You should deal with them in the classroom, and if the practice is enjoyable (as good classroom work is), then you will be prepared for any emergency and not have to worry about that hard question bouncing away from you across the gym.

This is how you should think of the chapters of the Westminster Confession. They are series of basketballs being thrown at your head during



practice, and the man throwing them is a particularly disciplined coach. He doesn't want to hurt you—he wants you to *avoid* getting hurt when one day on a bus, years from now, the person next to you turns and asks, “So what do you think about how predestination and free will should be harmonized?”

GENERAL INFORMATION

Author and Context

The Westminster Confession was not written by one individual man or woman. Rather, it was written in the middle of the seventeenth century (1643–1649) by thirty laymen and 151 clergymen. The ministers represented different theological views regarding what the relationship between church and state should be like—and these differences were very important because the ministers' task was to develop a confession of faith that could be used in the three kingdoms of Ireland, Scotland, and England, as well as a Directory of Worship that would standardize the worship in the various kingdoms. The four basic groups assigned to the assembly were the Episcopalians (Anglicans), the Presbyterians, the independents and the Erastians. Of these, the Presbyterians were the largest group. The Episcopalians did not come because they were loyal to the king, and the king had not granted his permission to come. This was significant because the Assembly was called by the Long Parliament during the English Civil War, and the Long Parliament was on the opposite side of the king in that war. It is important to note that the resultant Confession was in many

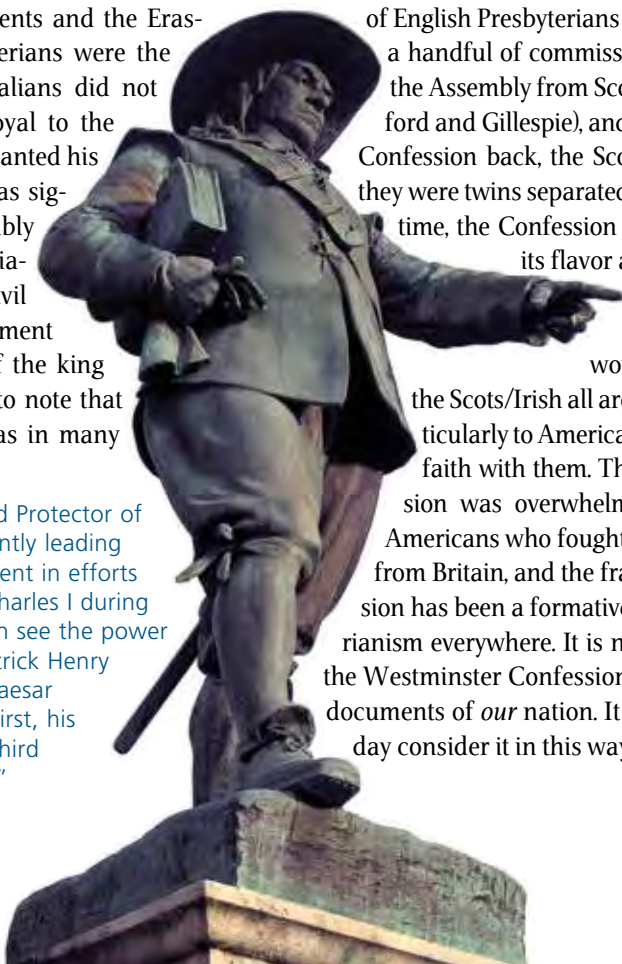
Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector of England in 1653, after brilliantly leading the military forces of Parliament in efforts to curb the power of King Charles I during the English Civil War. We can see the power he wielded by something Patrick Henry said in a speech in 1765: “Caesar had his Brutus; Charles the First, his Cromwell; and George the Third may profit by their example.”

respects a consensus document between the parties that did come.

In some ways, we cannot say that 181 men wrote this document, because, as we have noted, some didn't come. But that is the nature of committee assignments. And as mentioned, the Presbyterians were the biggest and most influential group, and they wanted to have a representative system of government in both church and state, although they were not against the monarchy. The Erastians wanted the church to be under the control of the state, a view that many members of Parliament shared. And the independents, although a small group, had the support of Oliver Cromwell, who came to power as Lord Protector¹ during this time.

Significance

Although the Westminster Confession has to be considered a failure in terms of the objective intended for it (the unification of the three kingdoms of England, Ireland, and Scotland), in another sense it has to be considered one of the most influential confessions of faith in the history of the world. This is because in the place where it was drafted (England), it never really caught on, and after the return of the monarchy, the influence of English Presbyterians went to almost zero. But a handful of commissioners had been sent to the Assembly from Scotland (men like Rutherford and Gillespie), and when they brought the Confession back, the Scots greeted it as though they were twins separated at birth. And since that time, the Confession has been as Scottish in its flavor as haggis. This is important because the events of the next century would send the Scots and the Scots/Irish all around the world, but particularly to America. And they brought their faith with them. The Westminster Confession was overwhelmingly the faith of the Americans who fought for their independence from Britain, and the framework of the Confession has been a formative influence on Presbyterianism everywhere. It is not too much to say that the Westminster Confession is one of the founding documents of *our* nation. It is a shame that few today consider it in this way.



Setting

The seventeenth century was a time of monumental upheaval. During this time, the great migration to America began in earnest. London was afflicted with the great plague and then a great fire. The nation erupted into civil war, and Charles I was first deposed from the throne and then executed. Oliver Cromwell refused to become king, but he did reign as “Lord Protector.” After he died, his son Richard was not able to hold things together, and Charles II was called back to the throne in what is called the *Restoration*. After the Restoration, many Puritan ministers were persecuted for their role (or what was assumed to have been their role) in England’s troubles. The rule of Cromwell was called the *Interregnum* (meaning “between the kings”). In the midst of all this chaos, the theologians and ministers of the Westminster Assembly were summoned and commanded to “do theology!” This is a difficult task in the best of times, and this was most certainly not the best of times. C.S. Lewis described the historical setting of the development of Protestant theology very well: “In fact, however, these questions were raised at a moment when they immediately became embittered and entangled with a whole complex of matters theologically irrelevant, and therefore attracted the fatal attention both of government and the mob . . . It was as if men were set to conduct a metaphysical argument at a fair, in competition or (worse still) forced collaboration with the cheapjacks and the round-about, under the eyes of an armed and vigilant police force who frequently changed sides.”² The Westminster Confession is an outstanding example of this, and it is astounding that theology of this caliber was the result.

It is too often assumed that the English Civil War simply had two sides—the Crown and Parliament—where, depending on your prejudices, you can put white hats and black hats on one side or the other. But to describe Parliament as being in the hands of “the Puritans” is woefully inadequate. We have to remember that there were multiple Protestant factions involved, as well as varying national interests. The Presbyterians were dominant in the Westminster Assembly, while the independents were a vocal minority. But this vocal minority had clout because the military genius and success of Oliver Cromwell dominated Parliament. Cromwell was a conscientious Christian man, but one of the Presbyterian nicknames for him was Cromwell the Destroyer.

The best way to get an overview of the English Civil War is this: Charles I was defeated in battle by the army of Parliament, with Cromwell as its general. King Charles was a treacherous man, and at the last it was decided that he had to be executed, and so he was beheaded. After this, Cromwell ruled as the Lord Protector on the basis of his military prowess. When he died, his son Richard did not have the gifts to continue the *ad hoc* political set-up that had been created. Charles II was then brought back and the monarchy was restored.

In this conflict, the Anglicans—who believe that the church should be governed by bishops (episcopacy)—generally supported the king. The Presbyterians supported the monarchy as an institution, but not the policies of Charles I. When Charles was executed, many of the Presbyterians were appalled. The independents were more radical and republican in their politics, and many of them were opposed not only to the policies of Charles, but also to the monarchy as an institution as well. The other term used earlier (Erastian) is a term that simply means that the state should control the church. The Erastians in Parliament were independents who wanted the church to be subordinate to the state. But of course, Anglicans were Erastian also (in another sense).

Worldview

The Westminster Confession of Faith addresses many topics, and so, in a short essay like this one, it is necessary to be selective. The principle of selection we will use here is to follow the broad outlines of John Calvin’s great book, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The Westminster theologians were Calvinistic theologians, living a century later, and they formalized and refined many of the doctrinal issues first articulated by the great Genevan reformer. We will therefore look at what the Westminster Confession says on the topics of God the Creator, Christ the Redeemer, the question of personal salvation and the doctrine of the Church.

Remember that a systematic understanding of any given text is really synonymous with a formal understanding of the text. Understanding of a work is impossible unless there is an ability to summarize it, and summary is nothing but a systematic distillation. The real enemy is systematic *misunderstanding*.

of the text. The other danger is a correct systematic understanding of the text which is divorced from any living knowledge of the text itself. Imagine a student who had read the Cliff's Notes and Barnes Notes for a work of literature multiple times but had never read the work itself. His knowledge would perhaps be accurate, but *barren*.

God the Creator

So let us begin with God the Creator. Not that this should be necessary to say, but Christianity is monotheistic. The living and true God is the One Who made heaven and earth, to Whom the Christian faith points, and within Whom the Christian faith operates. "There is but one only (Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6), living, and true God (1 Thess. 1:9; Jer. 10:10)" (WCF 2.1).

This triune God
is "a most pure

spirit (John 4:24), invisible (1 Tim. 1:17), without body, parts (Deut. 4:15–16; John 4:24; Luke 24:39), or passions (Acts 14:11, 15)" (WCF 2.1). This means that God's being is spiritual, not material, and He cannot be seen with our eyes. When it is said that He is without body, parts or passions, this refers to the fact of God's simplicity. He is not a complicated, tangled knot of attributes. But we have to be careful with the truth that He is without "passions." If this is handled wrongly, it can make the orthodox position vulnerable to the charge of making God into an impersonal force, like electricity. His anger, of course, is not like a man's temper tantrum—a man's passion. But neither is it like a calm summer day. His anger is far more terrible than a man's anger.

God is "immutable (James 1:17; Mal. 3:6), immense (1 Kings 8:27; Jer. 23:23–24), eternal (Ps. 90:2; 1 Tim. 1:17), incomprehensible (Ps. 145:3), almighty (Gen. 17:1; Rev. 4:8), most wise (Rom. 16:27), most holy (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8), most free (Ps. 115:3), most abso-

During the English Civil War, those who supported the king were the Royalists (nicknamed the Cavaliers). They were opposed by the Parliamentarians (who were nicknamed the Roundheads). Although the Roundhead soldiers may have worn rounded helmets, the term actually referred to the typical short hairstyle of the Puritans, who tended to be supporters of the Parliamentary cause. The word was meant to be derogatory, and in the New Model Army it was even a punishable offense to call a fellow soldier a Roundhead.



lute (Exod. 3:14).” From this we know that God cannot change or be changed. He is boundless, immense. He is eternal, which is not the same as everlasting. Eternity refers to an existence independent of time. A finite head (like ours!) cannot contain the full truth about God; He is incomprehensible. He has all power, but the power is not disconnected from wisdom. His holiness is the confluence of all His attributes, just as white is the combination of all colors. He is free, not constrained by anything other than His own nature and attributes. He is the standard by which anything else is to be judged.

God is “most loving . . . and withal, most just, and terrible in His judgments (Neh. 9:32–33) (WCF 2.1). The world is a display case for many of God’s attributes. In a world without sin, God’s mercy and justice would have gone unrevealed. As this is intolerable, God determined to create a world in which sinners would rebel against Him, some of them receiving mercy and others justice. Those who receive mercy understand that He is most loving and gracious. They see His patience and the abundance of His kindness, including His willingness to put away sin and iniquity. Further, His goodness is shown in how He rewards those who seek Him. At the same time, with others, His justice is plainly in evidence. He is terrible, and He hates sin. Apart from atonement, in no way can God be brought to clear the guilty.

In order for God to be this way—loving, just, compassionate, and so forth—it is necessary for Him to be *triune*. “In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost (1 John 5:7; Matt. 3:16–17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14)” (WCF 2.3). When we confess the Trinity, we are confessing the tri-unity of the one God. One and three are not describing the same thing. *One* refers to the substance, power, and eternity of God, while *three* refers to the Persons within the Godhead, who each have all the attributes of the one God. Each Person of the Trinity is eternal, meaning that the Trinity did not begin at a certain point, being mere Unity before that. The three Persons involved are given to us in Scripture: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

This triune God is the sovereign God over all. “God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass (Eph. 1:11; Rom. 11:33; Heb. 6:17; Rom. 9:15, 18): yet so, as thereby neither

is God the author of sin (James 1:13, 17; 1 John 1:5), nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established (Acts 2:23; Matt. 17:12; Acts 4:27–28; John 19:11; Prov. 16:33)” (WCF 3.1). This part of the Confession describes what is usually called predestination but should more properly be called foreordination. The word *predestination* is usually applied in Scripture to the surety that the elect will come to the resurrection of the body. But the truth represented by the common use of this word is sure; before the world was made, from all eternity, God decreed the number of hairs on that yellow dog’s back. This is something He did in all wisdom. What was so decreed is settled, both freely and alterably.

This was done in such a way that God cannot be charged with sin. This is, of course, true by definition, but it is important to emphasize the point. God is the Creator of a world which is now full of sin, and yet He cannot be charged with the guilt of it. This Confession says that God ordains that a sinful action, let us call it Theft A, or Treachery B, will take place, and yet God is not the author of it. Another position holds that God *foreknows* Theft A and yet is not the author of it. Still another position says that God does not know the future, and He created the world anyway. But if men can charge God with being implicated in evil, then they may with justice continue to charge Him as long as the doctrine of creation is affirmed. There is no escape; if God is the Creator, then He is responsible for the presence of that evil Theft A in the world He made. We might as well face it.

At the same time, this does not make God the master puppeteer. What He foreordained was a world full of free choices. He not only ordained that a man would be in the ice cream store choosing one of 31 flavors, He also decreed which flavor would be chosen. But this is not all; He ordained that the cookie dough ice cream would be chosen by this man *freely*. God ordains non-coercively. This makes no sense to some people, but how many basic doctrines do make sense? We do not understand how God made Jupiter from nothing any more than how He determined my actions today without annihilating me. But He does. Remember, the point being made here is not that divine sovereignty is merely *consistent* with secondary freedom, but rather, that it is that which *establishes* it.

Christ the Redeemer

What we know about God, we know because God has revealed Himself to us in Jesus. And this is why it is very important for us to focus on Jesus.

“It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose

and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man (Isa. 42:1; 1 Pet. 1:19–20; John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:5), the Prophet (Acts 3:22), Priest (Heb. 5:5–6), and King (Ps. 2:6. Luke 1:33), the Head and Savior of His Church (Eph. 5:23), the Heir of all things (Heb. 1:2), and Judge of the world (Acts 17:31): unto whom He did from all eternity give a people, to be His seed (John 17:6; Ps. 22:30; Isa. 53:10), and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified (1 Tim. 2:6; Isa. 55:4–5; 1 Cor. 1:30)” (WCF 8.1).

Jesus Christ is the Elect One of God. The only-begotten Son of God was chosen to fill many offices. The first was that of Mediator, bridging the divide between men and God. He was ordained to teach His people, filling the office of Prophet. He was chosen to be our Priest, presenting a sacrifice on our behalf to God. He was chosen to be King, so that we might have someone to rule over us. His position of authority is organic; He is the Head and Savior of the Church. He will inherit everything and be the sovereign Judge over all things. From all eternity, a particular people were given to the Son to be His seed, and what we call history is the process in which we see the outworking of that gift. In history, we were redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

In order to reveal God to man, it was the pleasure of God to become a man. Now when the Second Person of the Trinity, the eternal Word of God, became a man, this led not only to our salvation, but also to lots of interesting questions.



In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding: the Son is eternally begotten of the Father: the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son. This painting, Trinity (1635–1636), is by Jusepe de Ribera.

The Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature (John 1:1, 14; 1 John 5:20; Phil. 2:6; Gal. 4:4), with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin (Heb. 2:14, 16–17; Heb. 4:15); being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance (Luke 1:27, 31, 35. Gal. 4:4). So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion (Luke 1:35; Col. 2:9; Rom. 9:5; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 Tim. 3:16). Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man (Rom. 1:3–4; 1 Tim. 2:5). (WCF 8.2)

The second person of the Trinity, being infinite, *added* the finitude of human nature to His attributes. The finitude of the human nature of Christ is not to be understood as a subtraction from the divine nature. In taking on human nature, He took on all its essential properties and limitations, the only exception to this being sin. The fact that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost did not make Mary a “surrogate mother.” He was conceived without a human father but was conceived “of her substance.” In other words, she was truly His mother in every sense of the word.

In this mystery of the Incarnation, two natures (divine and human) were joined. The two natures were inseparably joined, which is to say, the Incarnation was *permanent*. Neither of the natures was altered by this union, meaning that the one person involved, the Lord Jesus Christ, is rightly said to be truly God and truly man.

The Lord Jesus, in His human nature thus united to the divine, was sanctified, and anointed with the Holy Spirit, above measure (Ps. 45:7; John 3:34), having in Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3); in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell (Col. 1:19); to the end that, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth (Heb. 7:26; John 1:14), He might be thoroughly furnished to execute the

office of a Mediator and Surety (Acts 10:38; Heb. 12:28; 7:22). (WCF 8.3)

The human nature of Christ did not “tag along” as He fulfilled the ministry appointed to Him. The Spirit of God was upon Him, sanctifying and anointing Him as man above all measure. Because of the work of the Spirit, Christ was filled with all wisdom and knowledge, and in Him all fullness came to dwell. The human nature of Christ was not a hindrance in the work of mediation but was rather an essential aspect of His qualification to execute that office.

“This office the Lord Jesus did most willingly undertake (Ps. 40:7–8; Heb. 10:5–10; John 10:18; Phil. 2:8) . . . was crucified, and died (Phil 2:8), was buried, and remained under the power of death, yet saw no corruption (Acts 2:23–24, 27; 13:37; Rom. 6:9). On the third day He arose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:3–5)” (WCF 8.4).

Christ willingly submitted to this requirement of the Father. In order to enable Him to perform His ministry, He was born of a woman, under the law. He lived in obedience to the law perfectly. Despite His obedience (and in some senses, because of it), He suffered grievously. He was crucified, He died, and was buried briefly but was not in the grave long enough to see corruption. When He rose from the dead, it was with and in the same body He had had during His passion. He has that same body now that He ascended into heaven, where He has a position of ultimate authority at the Father's right hand. In heaven, He prays for His saints and will return from heaven to judge all men and angels, which He will do at the end of the world.

Personal Salvation

“Those whom God effectually calls, He also freely justifieth (Rom. 8:30; 3:24); not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone . . .” (WCF 11.1). God justifies those He calls, but this justification must not be understood as an infusion of righteousness. Rather, justification is the pardon for sins and the legal reckoning of our persons as righteous. It is important that we do not stumble through a misunderstanding of the basis of this. We are justified for Christ's sake only. God does not justify

us for anything done by us, and, far more important, for anything done in us (even by Him). Nor does God justify us “because of” our faith—rather He justifies us because of Christ’s obedience and work, and this is appropriated by us through faith. Understanding these prepositions (in the gut and in the heart) is a matter of life and death, heaven and hell.

We are saved through faith alone but never through a faith that is alone. Saving faith is never lonely. We can separate faith from other graces and virtues logically and conceptually, but not practically. We may distinguish but never separate (WCF 11.2).

This justification is permanent, and God never ceases to see a justified person as perfect. This has reference to the person’s legal status; he is secure in his position within the family of God. And yet, because he is in the family of God, God does exhibit a fatherly displeasure for sin. It is the difference between having justification and having the joy of justification. A child awaiting a spanking in the basement is just as much a member of the family as he ever was. However, it can be said that he is not happy about being a member of the family (WCF 11.5).

The faith that receives the gift of this justification is itself a gift from God. “The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls (Heb. 10:39), is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts (2 Cor. 4:13; Eph. 1:17–19; 2:8), and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word (Rom. 10:14, 17), by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened (1 Pet. 2:2; Acts 20:32; Rom. 4:11; Luke 17:5; Rom. 1:16–17)” (WCF 14.1).

The ordinary course of events is this: the Word is preached, and God uses that Word to transform a sinner’s heart by the agency of the Holy Spirit. As a result of this transformed heart, the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls. If they could have repented and believed with their old heart, they would not have needed a new one. But once this transformation is complete, the Word and resultant faith do not disappear. The Word, along with baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and prayer, works to increase and strengthen the faith of the believer. The work following conversion has much in common with the work of conversion.

“By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority

of God Himself speaking therein (John 4:42; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 John 5:10; Acts 24:14)” (WCF 14.2). The faith which is worked in us by the Spirit causes us to believe anything revealed in the Bible as true. This is done because the quickened individual sees the authority of God Himself in the Scriptures. However, although God is always the one speaking, He does not always say the same thing. In some passages, He threatens, causing the faithful to tremble. He commands, causing the faithful to seek the way of obedience. In other places, He promises, causing the faithful to trust in the promises for eternal life, as well as for the present life. But the center place is occupied with the Word, which brings us to accept, receive, and rest upon Christ alone for our justification, sanctification, and eternal life. All this is done under the terms of the covenant of grace, set forth in the Scriptures.

“This faith is different in degrees, weak or strong (Heb. 5:13–14; Rom. 4:19–20; Matt. 6:30; 8:10); may be often and many ways assailed, and weakened, but gets the victory (Luke 22:31–32; Eph. 6:16; 1 John 5:4–5); growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance, through Christ (Heb. 6:11–12; 10:22; Col. 2:2), who is both the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2)” (WCF 14.3). This saving faith is not to be understood as a standard unit of divine manufacture. Rather, it is like an organic plant. If it is alive, it will grow up into full assurance of faith at some point, whether in this life or in the life to come. But while in this life, the faith in one man may look quite different from the faith in another man. Faith admits of degrees and may be weak or strong, great or small, triumphant or cautious. But regardless, genuine faith gets the victory.

And of course, true faith is not possible apart from repentance. “Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace” (WCF 15.1). Ministers of Christ are not just to preach faith in Christ; they must also preach repentance unto life. But they are not only to preach repentance; they are to do so as an evangelical grace, that is, repentance as a gift from God. Repentance is not something we do to earn anything from God, and yet “it is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30–31)” (WCF 15.3). Repentance is necessary to salvation but must never be thought of as the cause of it. Apples are necessary to apple trees, but apples never cause anything to become an apple tree. No

man was ever saved apart from repentance, but repentance is not the reason God saves him—it is one of the instruments of salvation.

The Importance of the Church

Modern evangelicals sometimes do not understand the importance of the Church. This was not the case for the Westminster theologians. “Unto this catholic visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world: and doth, by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11–13; Matt. 28:19–20; Isa. 59:21)” (WCF 25.3). Within the visible Church, Christ ministers by various means of His appointment. He has granted the ministry of God to the Church, the oracles of God to the Church, and the ordinances of God to the Church. The reason He has done so is so that the saints could be gathered and perfected in the context of His household throughout the course of their lives. This Church will remain unto the end of the world, doing this essential work. Christ, through His covenantal presence and through His Spirit, makes all these gifts effectual to their appointed end. The Lord’s Supper is effectual because Christ makes it so. The preaching of the Word is effectual because Christ makes it so.

A perfectionistic approach to the visible or historical Church is not biblical (WCF 25.4). The catholic, or universal, visible Church does not always present the same degree of visibility. And particular churches, members of the catholic Church, exhibit this same tendency. They are more or less pure, depending on how the gospel is taught and embraced there, depending on how the ordinances are practiced, and depending on the purity of worship in their service of God.

No perfect church exists in this fallen world. All churches are fallible and prone to error and compromise. This does not necessarily alter their status as churches of Christ. Left unchecked, however, the mixture and error does threaten their status as churches of Christ, because it is possible for a particular church to degenerate to the point where apostasy occurs (WCF 25.5). In Romans 11, the apostle Paul warns the Gentile churches that they may fall through covenantal presumption in just the same way that the Jews fell. Particular churches can be removed from the olive

tree. However, the olive tree itself will always stand. This is why we can say that there will always be a Church on earth to worship God according to His will. The olive tree will never be chopped down, and one day she will fill the earth with her fruit. But this does



In response to Pope Leo X selling indulgences to fund the building of St. Peter’s Basilica, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door at Wittenburg. This eventually led to his excommunication and to the Protestant Reformation. Strife between Roman Catholic and Protestant continued a hundred years later, even as the Westminster Confession of Faith was being written.

not mean that particular branches cannot be pruned from the tree. This is why we insist that the catholic Church was given a promise that she would never fall.

The sacraments were given to the visible catholic Church as signs and seals of God's kindness to us. Baptism is the first of the two sacraments.

"Baptism is a sacrament of the [N]ew [T]estament, ordained by Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19), not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church (1 Cor. 12:13); but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace (Rom. 4:11; Col. 2:11–12), of his ingrafting into Christ (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:5), of regeneration (Tit. 3:5), of remission of sins (Mark 1:4), and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in the newness of life (Rom. 6:3–4). Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in His Church until the end of the world (Matt. 28:19–20)" (WCF 28.1).

Baptism was ordained by Jesus Christ as a sacrament in the words of the Great Commission. He told His disciples that the mark of His disciples was to be baptism. Disciple the nations, He said, baptizing them. The signification of baptism is twofold, that is, it points in two directions. The first is the solemn recognition that the one baptized has been admitted into the visible Church of Christ. At the same time, the baptism also points away from the person to the objective meanings of baptism. And what does baptism mean? The one baptized has a sign and seal of the covenant of grace; the one baptized has been grafted into Christ, regeneration, forgiveness of sins, and the obligation to walk in newness of life.

Modern evangelicals differ on the propriety of infant baptism, but to the Westminster theologians, this doctrine was very important (WCF 28.4). In fact, the whole question of baptism was very important. "Although it be a great sin to condemn or neglect this ordinance (Luke 7:30; Exod. 4:24–26), yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated, or saved, without it (Rom. 4:11; Acts 10:2, 4, 22, 31, 45, 47): or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated (Acts 8:13, 23)" (WCF 28.5). Neglect of baptism is a great sin, but it is not an unforgivable sin. We are to consider baptism and regeneration together, but we are not to treat this as an absolute. In other words, some who are not baptized will be saved, and not all who are baptized are saved.

The Westminster divines had a similarly high view of the Lord's Supper. "Our Lord Jesus, in the night wherein He was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of

His body and blood, called the Lord's Supper, to be observed in His Church, unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of Himself in His death; the sealing all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto Him; and, to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him, and with each other, as members of His mystical body (1 Cor. 11:23–26; 10:16–17, 21; 12:13)" (WCF 29.1).

The Lord Jesus established this sacrament the night He was betrayed. It is very rich in meaning and is to be commemorated in the Church until the end of the world. For most contemporary evangelicals, the meaning of the Supper is limited to the first aspect mentioned here—and the understanding is accurate as far as it goes, but the import of the Supper goes far beyond a mere memorial. It means:

1. A memorial of Christ's self-sacrifice;
2. A sealing of all the benefits of Christ's death unto true believers;
3. A spiritual nourishment of all true believers who partake;
4. A covenant renewal on the part of those who partake;
5. A bond from Him of the fact that He is our God and we are His people;
6. A communion with our fellow believers, fellow members of the body of Christ.

Grace, however, does not run into us through the Supper the way water runs through a garden hose. The Westminster theologians emphasized receiving the elements of the Supper in a worthy manner. As we do, God blesses us with Christ Himself. "Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements, in this sacrament (1 Cor. 11:28), do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of His death: the body and blood of Christ being then, not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet, as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses (1 Cor. 10:16)" (WCF 29.7).

Those who partake of the sacrament really feed upon Christ. But in order to truly feed upon Christ, it is not necessary for the bread and wine to be changed

into the physical body and blood of Christ. (The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the bread and wine are transformed into the physical body and blood of Jesus. This doctrine is called Transubstantiation.) We feed upon Christ by faith (which is not the same as saying we pretend to feed upon Him). We feed spiritually through the bread and wine presented to our outward senses. Christ is presented to us in the sacrament. We see Him there by faith and not by sight. Christ presents Himself to the faith of believers in the same manner that the physical elements present themselves to our hands and mouths.

—Douglas Wilson

For Further Reading

Hodge, A.A. *The Confession of Faith*. Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958.

Wilson, Douglas. *Easy Chairs, Hard Words*. Moscow, Idaho: Canon Press, 1991.

SESSION I: PRELUDE

A Question to Consider

What does it mean to really know what the Bible says?

From the General Information above answer the following questions:

1. What was happening in England when the Westminster Confession was being drafted?
2. What were the parties or factions represented in the Westminster Assembly?
3. Why is the triune nature of God so important?
4. When Jesus became a man, who was becoming man?
5. What is the relationship of repentance and faith to salvation?
6. What are the two sacraments of the Church?
7. What does it mean to receive the sacraments worthily?
8. What is meant by the “visible catholic church”?

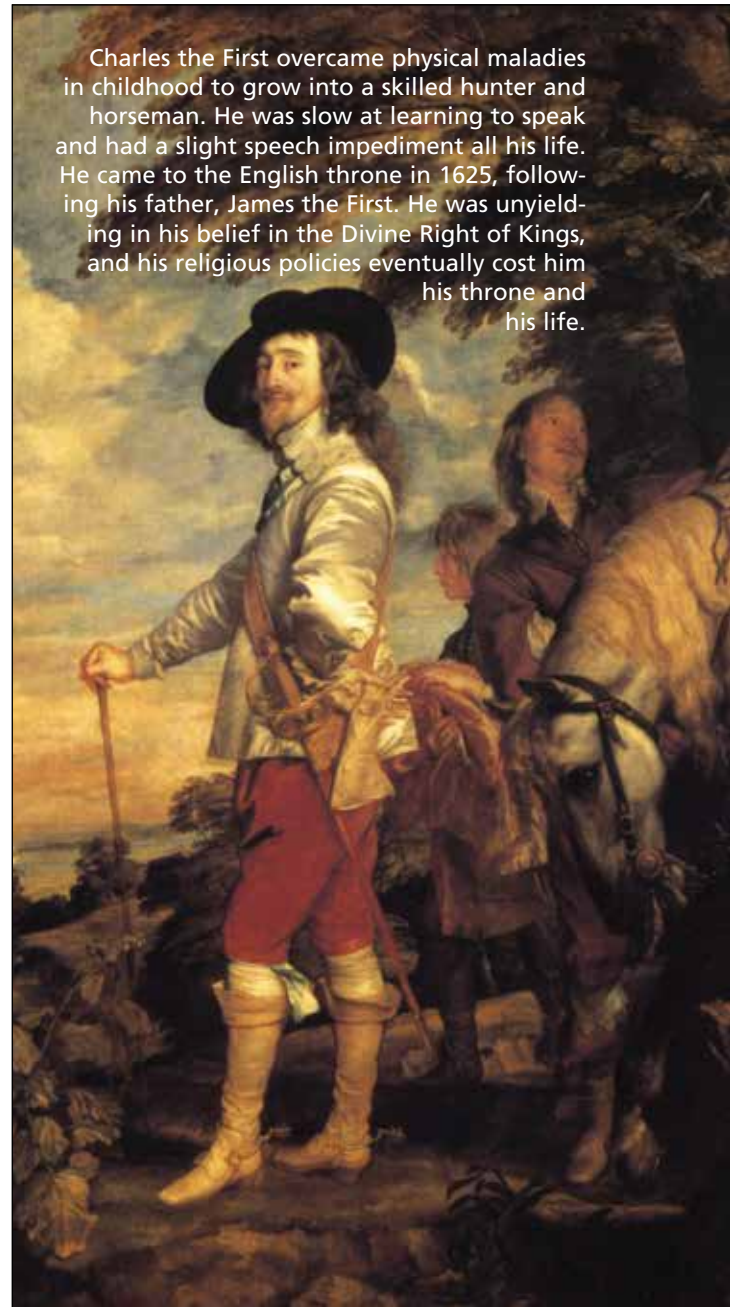
Optional Activity

Pick three paragraphs from the Westminster Confession of Faith. Copy the title of the paragraphs (what

they are about) and then copy all the proof texts. Put your copy of the Confession away (but not your Bible) and try to write your own confessional statement on those topics. Use your Bible and the references from the Confession. When you are done, compare what you have written to what they have written. Are they similar? Very different? Why?



READING ASSIGNMENT:
Chapters 1–5



Charles the First overcame physical maladies in childhood to grow into a skilled hunter and horseman. He was slow at learning to speak and had a slight speech impediment all his life. He came to the English throne in 1625, following his father, James the First. He was unyielding in his belief in the Divine Right of Kings, and his religious policies eventually cost him his throne and his life.

SESSION II: DISCUSSION

A Question to Consider

Who is God, and how do we know who He is?

Discuss or list short answers to the following questions:

Text Analysis

1. How does God reveal Himself? Compare/contrast the different ways.
2. How do we know that our Bible is the word of God?
3. Is there any issue or question that Scripture does not address? If so, how do we confront those issues?
4. Is the Bible's message clear? How do we interpret it? Do we need years of advanced education to understand it?
5. Look at the Confession's description of God (chap. 2). Why is it necessary that the true God have each attribute, and what consequences does each attribute have for our daily lives and actions?
6. Does the Confession seem to emphasize the oneness or three-ness of God more?

Cultural Analysis

1. Where do secularists and people of other religions

- look for ultimate truth? Compare them to Scripture.
2. How does secular culture attack the Bible?
3. What main god or gods does our modern culture worship? What are their attributes?

Biblical Analysis

Consider these examples of "Scripture interpreting Scripture:" Genesis 16, 21 and Galatians 4:21–31; Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15; and Isaiah 13:1–10, Ezekiel 32:1–8 and Matthew 24:29. What might they teach us about Scripture and about interpretation?

SUMMA



Write an essay or discuss this question, integrating what you have learned from the material above.

If an unbeliever claims that you only believe that the Bible is true because your parents have told you that it is, how would you answer him? What if he claims that you only believe that the Bible is true because the Bible itself says that it is true—and this, your Spock-like, logical, atheist friend would say, is circular reasoning?



READING ASSIGNMENT:
Chapters 6–8



"When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so as that, by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly, nor only, will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil." —WCF 9.4

SESSION III: DISCUSSION

Chapters 6–8

A Question to Consider

How does God create and sustain His relationships with individuals and with humankind?

Discuss or list short answers to the following questions:

Text Analysis

1. Why did God allow the human race to fall into sin?
2. What were the effects of the Fall?
3. According to the Confession, what are the two major covenants God has made?
4. What is the role of Christ in God's relationship with man?
5. Why must Christ be both God and man? How is His double nature not a contradiction?
6. What did Christ accomplish with His earthly life, death, and resurrection?
7. Who is saved by Christ's death and resurrection?

Cultural Analysis

1. How do other religions and our secular culture describe and explain sin and guilt? Do they teach that people are basically good or basically evil? That people, on their own, can be good?
2. How do other religions, such as Islam and Buddhism, try to relate their gods to man? How do secular gods (such as the secular democratic state) relate to their worshippers? Are the relationships based on works or grace?
3. Many liberal Christians believe that Christ's life and death "save" us because He gave us an example of how to live rightly. What is wrong with this view?

Biblical Analysis

1. Examine the following passages: Jeremiah 31:33–34; Romans 4; 1 Corinthians 10:1–4; Ephesians 2:15–16; Galatians 3:8–12; Colossians 2:17; and Hebrews 11:13. How does the Old Covenant differ from the New regarding law, grace, revelation and salvation? Explain how they can be different "administrations" of the same Covenant of Grace.

SUMMA



Write an essay or discuss this question, integrating what you have learned from the material above.

Many in our culture have the idea that they can find their own path to God, and that there are "many paths to God" from which to choose. If someone claims this, how could you respond to him?



READING ASSIGNMENT:
Chapters 9–10

SESSION IV: WRITING

Chapters 9–10

A Question to Consider

Do people have free will?

Free Will and Sovereignty of God

Using Scripture and all the things you have learned from the Confession so far, answer the following questions in an essay of 750–1000 words: How do we relate and reconcile our free will with the sovereignty and determination of God? Define *free will* and *predestination*, and be sure to talk about free will in the context of pre-Fall, unregenerate, regenerate and glorified man. If you have time, review the Arminian position on free will and God's sovereignty, write a short essay (500 words) from that perspective and then write your main essay as a response to it. If you need a jump-start, examine these key proof texts from the Confession: Eph. 1:11; Acts 2:23; Acts 4:27–28; Prov. 16:33; 1 Kings 22:28–34; Gen. 50:20; Is. 10:7; Rom. 9:11–18, Matt. 17:12, James 1:14, Eccles. 7:29, Gen. 1:26, Deut. 30:19, Rom. 8:7, Eph. 2:1, John 6:44, John 8:36, Gal. 5:17, Rom. 6:18, and Rom. 7:15.



READING ASSIGNMENT:
Chapters 11–13

SESSION V: RECITATION

Chapters 11–13

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions for factual recall:

1. Review Chapter 10. What makes sinners change their lives and begin to put faith in Christ? On what basis does God choose the elect?
2. Are we justified by our faith alone? Does our faith justify us?
3. How does salvation display both grace and justice?
4. Can someone be “un-justified”?
5. How did faith and justification change from the Old to the New Testament?
6. What does it mean to be “adopted” by God? How is it different from justification? Use your own words.
7. What is sanctification? Are Christians *sanctified* by good works? Explain. (See not only chapter 13, but also 14.2 and 16.)
8. When are we fully sanctified?



READING ASSIGNMENT:
Chapters 14–18

SESSION VI: DISCUSSION

Chapters 14–18

A Question to Consider

What are repentance and faith, and what are their roles in salvation and in the Christian life?

Discuss or list short answers to the following questions:

Text Analysis

1. From where does faith come?
2. What exactly is involved in “having faith?”
3. How are people moved to repentance?
4. Does salvation depend on true repentance?
5. To whom must we confess our sin?

Cultural Analysis

1. The cynical unbeliever Ambrose Bierce defined *faith* as “Belief without evidence in what is told by one who speaks without knowledge, of things without parallel,” and many secularists today

would agree with him. How does that differ from Christian faith?

2. Is the world divided between those who depend on faith and those who do not? Explain.

Biblical Analysis

1. Read the following passages: Romans 1:17, 9:11; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:4–5, 14; Ephesians 2:4–9; Revelation 20:12; Matthew 16:27; Hebrews 6:1, 10:24; and James 2:14–26. Using only the Bible for references (not the Confession), answer this accusation: “The Bible contradicts itself. It says we are justified by faith, and it also says we are justified by works.”
2. Read the following passages: Luke 8:13; John 10:28–29; 1 John 2:19, 3:9; Romans 8:34–39, 11:22; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 2:18–19; Hebrews 6:4–6, 10:14. Using these and possibly other passages, answer the following question: “Can Christians lose their salvation?”

SUMMA



Write an essay or discuss this question, integrating what you have learned from the material above.

Since the rise of Christianity, one of the great tensions in Western culture has been framed as “faith versus reason.” How do faith and reason fit together?



READING ASSIGNMENT:
Chapters 19–24

SESSION VII: DISCUSSION

Chapters 19–24

A Question to Consider

How does our obedience to God’s word in daily life relate to our eternal salvation? How should we apply God’s Word to practical aspects of our lives as individuals, church members, and citizens?

Discuss or list short answers to the following questions:

Text Analysis

1. What are the types of law, and which apply to us? What is the purpose of this law in the Covenant of Grace?

2. What are Christians liberated *from*? What are they liberated *to*?
3. When and why are we obligated to follow human commands and traditions?
4. According to the Confession, must every aspect of worship be explicitly commanded in Scripture? (This is called “the regulative principle” of worship.) Do you agree with the Confession? What does it mean for something to be “explicitly commanded?”
5. Suppose you have a friend who says, “I love Sundays—after church I can just relax and have the whole afternoon to myself.” According to the Confession, is he keeping the Sabbath? Why or why not?
6. When, if ever, are we obligated to take an oath? A vow?

Cultural Analysis

1. Suppose you knew someone who said, “I’m a free Christian, so I can watch whatever movies, listen to whatever music, and wear whatever clothes I want. I don’t have to follow speed limits or pay taxes. I don’t have to tithe ten percent either or follow the church’s parking guidelines.” Using the Confession (and Scripture, as necessary), explain to this person why he’s wrong about Christian liberty.
2. Describe Americans’ attitudes toward work and rest, and compare them to the biblical idea of the Christian Sabbath.

MARRIAGE

Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the Church with an holy seed; and for preventing of uncleanness.

It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry, who are able with judgment to give their consent. Yet it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord. And therefore such as profess the true reformed religion should not marry with infidels, papists, or other idolaters: neither should such as are godly be unequally yoked, by marrying with such as are notoriously wicked in their life, or maintain damnable heresies. —WCF 24.2–3



Biblical Analysis

1. From Scripture, answer the question, "Should worship be founded only on explicit commandments in Scripture?" Consider the following passages: Deuteronomy 12:32; Leviticus 10:1-3; Ecclesiastes 5:1-2; Matthew 15:9; Colossians 2:20-23; Hebrews 12:28. Consider also the fact that David used music and song in worship, which was not specified in the Law (see 1 Chronicles 16:4-6, 25:1), and in Esther a new religious festival was instituted (Esther 9:16-32).

2. Some Christians say we ought not promise, swear or take any kind of oath, even in a courtroom or for a church or government office. Make your own argument on this question, referring to Deuteronomy 10:20, Matthew 5:34-37, 2 Corinthians 1:23 and James 5:12.

SUMMA



Write an essay or discuss this question, integrating what you have learned from the material above.

Some Christians have used Paul's statement that "we are not under law, but under grace" to say that in the New Covenant, Christians should follow only their own inner light from God and that the individual Christian may not be bound by any obligations to the authority of governments or churches. Refute this idea and explain the biblical view.



READING ASSIGNMENT:

Chapters 27-29 (25 and 26 will be discussed in Session IX)

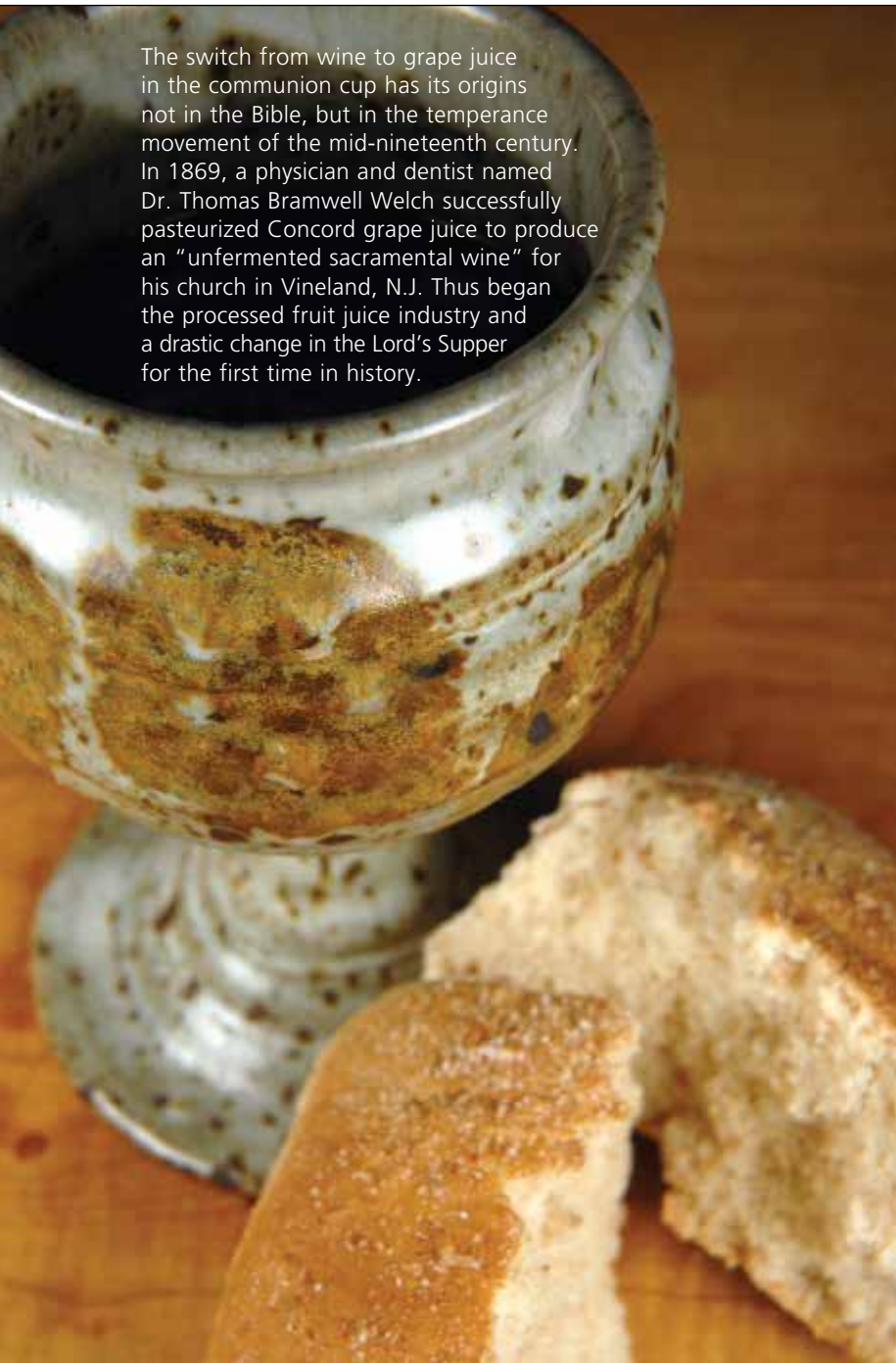
SESSION VIII: WRITING

A Question to Consider

What are the sacraments?

Sacraments

One of the most important and controversial issues of the Reformation was the proper definition of the sacraments. On one extreme the sacraments become mere decorations to the gospel, and on the other extreme they become almost automatic, magical sources of spiritual blessing. Those on the *decorative* sacraments extreme think of



The switch from wine to grape juice in the communion cup has its origins not in the Bible, but in the temperance movement of the mid-nineteenth century. In 1869, a physician and dentist named Dr. Thomas Bramwell Welch successfully pasteurized Concord grape juice to produce an "unfermented sacramental wine" for his church in Vineland, N.J. Thus began the processed fruit juice industry and a drastic change in the Lord's Supper for the first time in history.

the bread and wine as a simple memorial where they use the bread and wine, or the elements, to think about Christ's work. They use the elements in the same way you might use a trinket that has special sentimental meaning for you—i.e., when you see it you think of the friend that gave it to you. On the other end of the spectrum, those who believe transubstantiation practically worship the bread and wine, because they were believed to have become the actual body and blood of Christ.

In an essay of 600–800 words, explain the sacraments in a biblical way, steering between these two extremes. If you need a starting point, consider the following questions:

- How would you define *sacrament* in your own words?
- What is a *sign* in the context of sacraments?
- What is a *seal*?
- Are the sacraments instruments of grace and spiritual blessing?
- What do the sacraments *do*?
- Does baptism make a person a Christian?
- Is the Lord's Supper essentially a memorial of His death?
- Are the bread and wine the body and blood of Christ? If not, what are they?
- What do these passages mean: Matthew 26:27–28; John 3:5; Romans 4:11, 6:3; Colossians 2:12; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 11:24–26, 12:13; Galatians 3:27; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21?



READING ASSIGNMENT: Chapters 25–26, 30–33

SESSION IX: RECITATION

Chapters 25–26, 30–33

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions for factual recall:

1. How do the following categories intersect: church member (baptized), non-church member, Christian, elect, non-elect?
 2. Explain why you cannot be a good Christian if you neglect the Church, using both chapters 25 and 26.
 3. Why is church discipline (or *censure*) necessary?
- Use your own words.
4. What are the responsibilities of church councils? Why do you think it is important to have church governments above local churches?
 5. From where does the authority of synods and councils come? When may they be disregarded?
 6. Is it enough for Christians to believe in the immortality of the soul?
 7. Who will be resurrected on the last day?
 8. How is the nature of God revealed in the last judgment?
 9. Can (or should) we predict when Christ will return?

SESSION X: ACTIVITY

A Twenty-First Century Westminster Assembly

Role-play a modern assembly of Christians attempting to draft an outline for a new confession of faith. If you are in a classroom setting, divide up into groups of six to eight students. If you are in a home-school setting, involve parents or siblings. Working with others teaches an important lesson that the writers of the Confession had to learn, viz., any confession made by a group is based on the art of compromise. Your assignment is *not* to write a full confession, which could take many weeks or months, but simply to deal with the basic questions involved in writing such a document. Each group will need to wrestle with the following issues and questions in order to produce a well-thought-out document:

1. Are confessions and creeds permitted and/or needed? Write three or four paragraphs articulating the role of Scripture and of confessions, defending the use of confessions, explaining the source of their authority and describing the proper process by which they should be drafted.
2. For what purpose and situation are you drafting your confession? Establish this and put it in writing before you begin. Possible examples of purposes and situations are (choose one):
 - An attempt to establish basic orthodoxy or find agreement among all Trinitarian Christians (the main groups being Roman Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Orthodox)



- An attempt to find agreement among all Protestants, or all the Reformed
- A confession to provide standards of faith and practice for a denomination or local church
- A confession to unite and provide direction and guidelines for a Christian nonprofit group or an interdenominational Christian school
- If you want to choose a situation/purpose other than one of the above, ask your teacher to approve it before continuing.

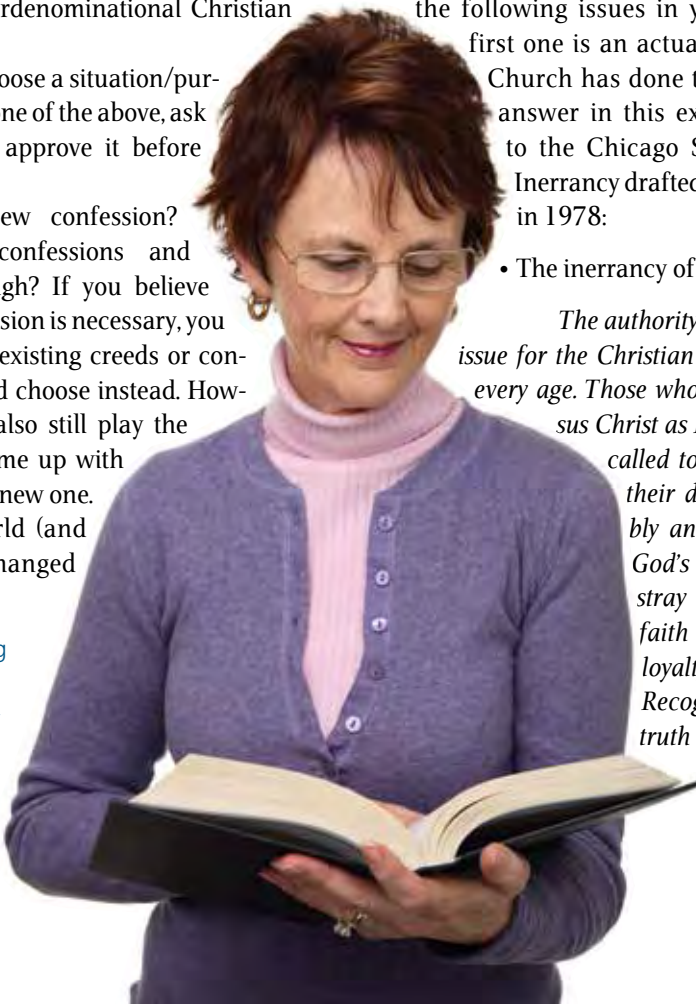
3. Why make a new confession? Aren't existing confessions and creeds good enough? If you believe that no new confession is necessary, you may select which existing creeds or confessions you would choose instead. However, you should also still play the role and try to come up with reasons to make a new one.
4. How has the world (and the Church) changed

The current debates in the church, concerning abortion, homosexuality and women's roles, would not have even reached the floor to be debated by the Westminster divines.

since the seventeenth century, and how should this be reflected in a new confession? Which of these changes and new issues are relevant to your purpose and the type of confession you are drafting? For example, you will probably want to include short sections on some or all of the following issues in your confessions. The first one is an actual example of how the Church has done this task recently. The answer in this example is the Preface to the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy drafted by evangelical leaders in 1978:

- The inerrancy of the Bible.

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full



grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following Statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word that marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

This Statement consists of three parts: a Summary Statement, Articles of Affirmation and Denial, and an accompanying Exposition. It has been prepared in the course of a three-day consultation in Chicago.

Those who have signed the Summary Statement and the Articles wish to affirm their own conviction as to the inerrancy of Scripture and to encourage and challenge one another and all Christians to growing appreciation and understanding of this doctrine. We acknowledge the limitations of a document prepared in a brief, intensive conference and do not propose that this Statement be given creedal weight. Yet we rejoice in the deepening of our own convictions through our discussions together, and we pray that the Statement we have signed may be used to the glory of our God toward a new reformation of the Church in its faith, life, and mission.

We offer this Statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we propose by God's grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said. We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word.

We invite response to this Statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we

speak. We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help that enables us to strengthen this testimony to God's Word we shall be grateful.³

- The definition of basic orthodoxy and the evaluation of various sects and denominations, ranging from Pentecostalism and Catholicism to Christian liberalism, Mormonism, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christian Science.

- A statement on abortion

- A statement on homosexuality

- A statement on the roles of women in the church

5. How will you organize your confession? Why does organization matter?

Each group should appoint a scribe and turn in a log of its answers to these questions and the reasoning behind them. Do not merely turn in an imitation of the Westminster Confession or other single existing confession. The point of the activity is to encourage original and creative thought about the content, organization, and rhetoric of confessions.

OPTIONAL SESSION A: ACTIVITY

Drafting a Confession

As a supplement to Session X, your group may go further and actually draft a short confession or an outline of a longer confession which reveals which topics you will deal with and how they are organized. For example, the Westminster Confession could be outlined in this way (the major topic headings are not specified in the Confession, and some of the lower headings are modified to be more informative and detailed):

Revelation

Nature vs. Scripture

The contents of the Bible

The authority of the Bible

Interpretation and application of the Bible

The Nature of God

Attributes, character and triune nature

Eternal decree

Personal Salvation . . .

For a written confession, aim for about 1500 words. For an outline to a longer confession, aim for about two pages, single-spaced. Again, the point here is not to produce a miniature or imitation of the Westminster Confession (or other Reformed confession), but to be creatively orthodox.

OPTIONAL SESSION B: WRITING

Comparing Confessions

In an essay of about 1500 words, compare and contrast (with special regard to organization, choice of topics, content, and purpose) the Westminster Confession with one or several of the following confessions or creeds:

1. The Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Definition of Chalcedon, Canons of the Council of Orange and

Athanasian Creed (as a group they can be called "the early creeds")

2. The Augsburg Confession
3. The Belgic Confession
4. The Second Helvetic Confession
5. The Thirty-Nine Articles
6. The Canons of Dordt
7. The Confession of 1967
(United Presbyterian Church)
8. The Lausanne Covenant

ENDNOTES

- 1 The Lord Protector was a title used by those who held the position of Regent while an English Monarch was too young to rule. After the beheading of Charles I, Oliver Cromwell took this title and led England during the Interregnum, or the English Republic. This time occurred between the beheading of Charles I and the Restoration of Charles II, December 1653 through May 1659. Oliver Cromwell and his son Richard both held the title.
- 2 Lewis, C.S. *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954. 37.
- 3 A complete copy of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy may be found by clicking Link 1 for this chapter at www.VeritasPress.com/OmniLinks.

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 ma-

terial 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 efficiently move through the material and interact with your students effectively.

WHAT'S ON THE TEACHER CD?

Teacher's Edition of the Text

The teacher text includes additional pages of material, with 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, and requires Acrobat Reader. The 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 "Omnibus-III-TE".

MACINTOSH OS

Double-click the appropriate PDF file in the Teacher's Manual Files folder to open the desired chapter.

“We must aim at reading with the end goal of love. If you read these books and end up disliking them—or despising them—it would be better not to read them. The end goal of the study of the Omnibus is simply what the end goal of all education was in the not-so-distant past, which was to love and embrace your cultural heritage and take your place amongst a long line of men and women who have loved Christ, each other and particular places throughout the history of the West. The record of this love is now being passed on to you. It is your job to pass it along to your children.”

—G. Tyler Fischer
MANAGING EDITOR



“Wow! What a semester it has been! We have had a great time. Most of our little Friday school group has risen to the rigorous academic challenge. . . . Our youngest son, who is a freshman [in college], was amazed that his little sister was reading some of the same stuff he was studying. We are looking forward to finishing out the course. Well done, thou good and faithful servants.”

—The Bradleys

“I was initially so afraid of teaching the great books and therefore afraid of the Omnibus as well. After a phone consult with one of your teachers . . . my mind was put at ease. We are now using the Omnibus with much delight!! I love this curriculum!! It is so user friendly for the homeschooler. Thank you, thank you, thank you!!”

—Vicki