

# Recommended Summer Reading

For Logic & Rhetoric Humanities (“Omnibus”) Students

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ACA strongly encourages Logic & Rhetoric students to read the relevant books below, each of which is well-synced to their upcoming humanities (Omnibus) course(s). Not only will these books fortify students against the pathological condition known as “summer brain,” when the mind finds a hammock and falls asleep for two months, but they will also prepare students’ imaginations for the world that they are soon to enter—ancient, medieval, or modern. For the sake of mutual edification and conversation, we encourage parents to read these books with their students, especially for 7th-9th grades, because the books are pitched at an adult level.

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## **7th grade: Ancient Literature, History, & Theology (“Omnibus 1”)**

*Biblical & Classical Civilization*

Gerald L. Sittser, [\*Resilient Faith: How the Early Christian “Third Way” Changed the World\*](#) (Brazos Press, 2019).

In our Western, post-Christendom society, much of Christianity's cultural power, privilege, and influence has eroded. But all is not lost, says bestselling author Gerald Sittser. Although the church is concerned and sobered by this cultural shift, it is also curious and teachable.

Sittser shows how the early church offers wisdom for responding creatively to the West's increasing secularization. The early Christian movement was surprisingly influential and successful in the Roman world, and so different from its two main rivals—traditional religion and Judaism—that Rome identified it as a “third way.” Early Christians immersed themselves in the empire without significant accommodation to or isolation from the culture. They confessed Jesus as Lord and formed disciples accordingly, which helped the church grow in numbers and influence.

Sittser explores how Christians today can learn from this third way and respond faithfully, creatively, and winsomely to a world that sees Christianity as largely obsolete. Each chapter introduces historical figures, ancient texts, practices, and institutions to explain and explore the third way of the Jesus movement, which, surprising everyone, changed the world.

**Gerald L. Sittser** is the bestselling author of *Water from a Deep Well*, *A Grace Disguised*, and *The Will of God as a Way of Life*. He is professor of theology at Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington, where he also serves as senior fellow and researcher in the Office of Church Engagement. He specializes in the history of Christianity, Christian spirituality, and religion in American public life.

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## **8th grade: Medieval Literature, History, & Theology (“Omnibus 2”)**

*Church Fathers Through the Reformation*

Christopher A. Hall, [\*Living Wisely with the Church Fathers\*](#) (IVP Academic, 2017).

The first centuries of Christianity are like a far country. But despite their foreignness, they hold a treasury of wisdom for living. Early Christians struggled and flourished in a culture that was in love with empire and military power, infatuated with sex and entertainment, tolerant of all gods but hostile to the One. And from this crucible of discipleship they extracted lessons of virtue, faithfulness, and joy in Christ. Christopher Hall takes us to the ancient Mediterranean world,

inquiring Christian leaders how to live a good life as a Christ follower. The menu of topics wends its way through wealth and poverty, war and violence, marriage and sexuality, theater and the arena, as well as the harsh realities of persecution and martyrdom. Gathering around Basil or Chrysostom or Augustine, we are instructed anew in the way of discipleship. And as they grapple with issues surprisingly resonant with our own, this cloud of ancient witnesses both surprises and challenges us in the life of faith.

**Christopher A. Hall** is the president of Renovaré. He is associate editor of the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, and his books include *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, and *Worshipping with the Church Fathers*. Hall previously served at Eastern University for over twenty years in several roles, including chancellor, provost, dean of Palmer Seminary, dean of the Templeton Honors College, distinguished professor of theology, and director of academic spiritual formation.

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## **9th grade: Modern Literature, History, & Theology (“Omnibus 3”)**

*Reformation to the Present*

Gerald Bray, [\*Doing Theology with the Reformers\*](#) (IVP Academic, 2019).

The Reformation was a time of tremendous upheaval, renewal, and vitality in the life of the church. The challenge to maintain and develop faithful Christian belief and practice in the midst of great disruption was reflected in the theology of the sixteenth century. In this volume, which serves as a companion to IVP Academic's Reformation Commentary on Scripture, theologian and church historian Gerald L. Bray immerses readers in the world of Reformation theology. He introduces the range of theological debates as Catholics and Protestants from a diversity of traditions—Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, and Anabaptist—disputed the essentials of the faith, from the authority of Scripture and the nature of salvation to the definition of the church, the efficacy of the sacraments, and the place of good works in the Christian life. Readers will find that understanding how the Reformers engaged in the theological discipline can aid us in doing theology today.

**Gerald L. Bray** is professor at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, and director of research for the Latimer Trust. A priest of the Church of England, Bray has written numerous books, including *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present*, *God Has Spoken: A History of Christian Theology*, and *Preaching the Word with John Chrysostom*.

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## **10th grade: Ancient Literature, History, & Theology (“Omnibus 4”)**

*The Ancient World*

John Mark Reynolds, [\*When Athens Met Jerusalem: An Introduction to Classical and Christian Thought\*](#) (IVP Academic, 2009).

Christian theology shaped and is shaping many places in the world, but it was the Greeks who originally gave a philosophic language to Christianity. John Mark Reynolds's book *When Athens Met Jerusalem* provides students a well-informed introduction to the intellectual underpinnings (Greek, Roman and Christian) of Western civilization and highlights how certain current intellectual trends are now eroding those very foundations. This work makes a powerful contribution to the ongoing faith versus reason debate, showing that these two dimensions of human knowing are not diametrically opposed, but work together under the direction of revelation.

**John Mark Reynolds** is the President of The Saint Constantine School, a Senior Fellow of Humanities at The King's College in New York City, and a Fellow of the Center For Science and Culture at The Discovery Institute. He is the former provost of Houston Baptist University and was the founder and director of the Torrey Honors Institute, the Socratic, great books-centered honors program at Biola University.

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## **11th grade: Medieval Literature, History, & Theology (“Omnibus 5”)**

### *The Medieval World*

Chris R. Armstrong, [\*Medieval Wisdom for Modern Christians: Finding Authentic Faith in a Forgotten Age with C. S. Lewis\*](#) (Brazos Press, 2016).

Many Christians today tend to view the story of medieval faith as a cautionary tale. Too often, they dismiss the Middle Ages as a period of corruption and decay in the church. They seem to assume that the church apostatized from true Christianity after it gained cultural influence in the time of Constantine, and the faith was only later recovered by the sixteenth-century Reformers or even the eighteenth-century revivalists. As a result, the riches and wisdom of the medieval period have remained largely inaccessible to modern Protestants.

Church historian Chris Armstrong helps readers see beyond modern caricatures of the medieval church to the animating Christian spirit of that age. He believes today's church could learn a number of lessons from medieval faith, such as how the gospel speaks to ordinary, embodied human life in this world. *Medieval Wisdom for Modern Christians* explores key ideas, figures, and movements from the Middle Ages in conversation with C. S. Lewis and other thinkers, helping contemporary Christians discover authentic faith and renewal in a forgotten age.

**Chris R. Armstrong** is a program fellow on the Faith, Work, and Economics team at the Kern Family Foundation in Waukesha, Wisconsin. He was the founding director of Opus: The Art of Work at Wheaton College, where he also served as a faculty member in biblical and theological studies.

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## **12th grade: Modern Literature, History, & Theology (“Omnibus 6”)**

### *The Modern World*

James K. A. Smith, [\*How \(Not\) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor\*](#) (Eerdmans, 2014).

*How (Not) to Be Secular* is what Jamie Smith calls "your hitchhiker's guide to the present" -- it is both a reading guide to Charles Taylor's monumental work *A Secular Age* and philosophical guidance on how we might learn to live in our times.

Taylor's landmark book *A Secular Age* (2007) provides a monumental, incisive analysis of what it means to live in the post-Christian present -- a pluralist world of competing beliefs and growing unbelief. Jamie Smith's book is a compact field guide to Taylor's insightful study of the secular, making that very significant but daunting work accessible to a wide array of readers.

Even more, though, Smith's *How (Not) to Be Secular* is a practical philosophical guidebook, a kind of how-to manual on how to live in our secular age. It ultimately offers us an adventure in self-understanding and maps out a way to get our bearings in today's secular culture, no matter who "we" are -- whether believers or skeptics, devout or doubting, self-assured or puzzled and confused. This is a book for any thinking person to chew on.

**James K. A. Smith** is professor of philosophy at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, former editor-in-chief of *Comment* magazine, and now editor-in-chief of *Image*. He is a popular speaker who has written many books, including *On the Road with Saint Augustine*, *You Are What You Love*, *Desiring the Kingdom*, and *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* -- all *Christianity Today* Book Award winners.

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## How to Read, and Questions to Ask

Following Mortimer Adler and Charles VanDoren's *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading*, the essence of active reading involves four basic questions:

1. *What is the book about as a whole?* You must try to discover the leading theme of the book, and how the author develops this theme in an orderly way by subdividing it into essential subordinate themes or topics.
2. *What is being said in detail, and how?* You must try to discover the main ideas, assertions, and arguments that constitute the author's particular message.
3. *Is the book true, in whole or part?* You cannot answer this question until you have answered the first two. You have to know what is being said before you can decide whether it is true or not. When you understand a book, however, you are obligated, if you are reading seriously, to make up your own mind. Knowing the author's mind is not enough.
4. *What of it?* If the book has given you information, you must ask about its significance. Why does the author think it is important to know these things? Is it important to you to know them? And if the book has not only informed you, but also enlightened you, it is necessary to seek further enlightenment by asking what else follows, what is further implied or suggestions.

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## Annotation

Remember that active reading *always* involves the practice of **annotation**, as Adler and VanDoren write:

Full ownership of a book only comes when you have made it a part of yourself, and the best way to make yourself a part of it—which comes to the same thing—is by writing in it. Why is marking a book indispensable to reading it? First, it keeps you awake—not merely conscious, but wide awake. Second, reading, if it is active, is thinking, and thinking tends to express itself in words, spoken or written. The person who says he knows what he thinks but cannot express it usually does not know what he thinks. Third, writing your reactions down helps you to remember the thoughts of the author.

Reading a book should be a conversation between you and the author. Presumably he knows more about the subject than you do; if not, you probably should not be bothering with his book. But understanding is a two-way operation; the learner has to question himself and question the teacher. He even has to be willing to argue with the teacher, once he understands what the teacher is saying. Marking a book is literally an expression of your differences or your agreements with the author. It is the highest respect you can pay him.

There are all kinds of devices for annotating a book intelligently and fruitfully. Here are some devices that can be used:

1. *Underlining*—of major points; of important or forceful statements.
2. *Vertical lines at the margin*—to emphasize a statement already underlined or to point to a passage too long to be underlined.
3. *Star, asterisk, or other doodad at the margin*—to be used sparingly, to emphasize the ten or dozen most important statements or passages in the book.
4. *Numbers in the margin*—to indicate a sequence of points made by the author in developing an argument.
5. *Numbers of other pages in the margin*—to indicate where else in the book the author makes the same points, or points relevant to or in contradiction to those here marked; to tie up the ideas in a book, which though they may be separated by many pages, belong together. Many readers use the symbol “Cf” to indicate the other page numbers; it means “compare” or “refer to.”
6. *Circling or bracketing of key words or phrases*—this serves much the same function as underlining.
7. *Writing in the margin, or at the top or bottom of the page*—to record questions, (and perhaps answers) which a passage raises in your mind; to reduce a complicated discussion to a simple statement; to record the sequence of major plot points through the book.