

## Personal Renewal Book List

Augustine. *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. Oxford World's Classics. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

A Christian classic written by the 5<sup>th</sup> Century Bishop of Hippo. This is St. Augustine's spiritual auto-biography, which is full of personal anecdote and astute theological analysis. It is from this book that we have the famous quote, "You made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." This is a book full of insight into the human heart and love. It is also a great introduction to the early church Fathers.

Baxter, Jason M. *The Medieval Mind of C. S. Lewis: How Great Books Shaped a Great Mind*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022.

This is a fun look at the books that shaped the great Anglican thinker, C. S. Lewis. Baxter shows how the great Christian books of the past shine through Lewis' fiction. He also demonstrates the importance of the imagination and its role in forming our love. If you aren't familiar with Lewis' writing, Baxter is a good and readable tour guide.

Boersma, Hans. *Five Things Theologians Wish Biblical Scholars Knew*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021.

An Anglican Priest, theologian, and professor at Nashotah House Seminary, Fr. Boersma offers advice on how to read the Holy Scriptures well. He lays out five things without which we cannot read Holy Scripture according to its purpose (to see and love Christ). For new readers of theology, this book might be work, but those who persevere will reap much good fruit.

Boersma, Hans. *Pierced by Love: Divine Reading with the Christian Tradition*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2023.

A delicious book – both for the eyes and the mind. Fr. Boersma introduces the history and practice of *lectio divina*, which is a four step spiritual discipline for reading Holy Scripture. The goal of *lectio divina* is union/love with God through Christ by way of contemplation. Surely this is a resource that fits with the goal of Personal Renewal!

Dreher, Rod. *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Age*. New York: Sentinal, 2016.

A trained journalist and astute cultural critic, Dreher maps out where we are as a culture and how we got here. In the second half of the book, Dreher lays out strategies for the renewal and preservation of the Church and its Tradition in the midst of our growing cultural storm. This is a very readable book, written by a journalist for a popular level audience.

Eldredge, Mark. *Revive: Bringing Health, Vitality, and Growth Back into Your Church*. American Anglican Press, 2021.

This is the book form of the Revive Weekend we did with Fr. Canon Mark Eldredge. This is the framework in which we are working as we pursue Personal Renewal.

Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. New York: HarperOne, 1998.

Originally published in 1978, this book has become a go-to introductory book on the Spiritual Disciplines, which are a prime means to our Personal Renewal. Foster presents three types of disciplines – Inward, Outward, and Corporate Disciplines – with each type broken into four specific disciplines (e.g., Inward = Meditation, Prayer, Fasting, and Study). For each specific discipline, he explains the Biblical warrant as well as the “why” and “how.” A very readable and easily applied resource for Personal Renewal.

Holmes, Christopher J. *A Theology of the Christian Life: Imitating and Participating in God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021.

In this insightful book, Anglican Priest and Theologian, Fr. Chris Holmes, draws on our understanding of who God is in Himself (what we call, Theology proper) to give a picture of the shape and purpose of the Christian life. Who God *is* has a direct impact on how we are to love Him and become like Him. A denser read, but worth the effort for the adventurous reader.

Irenaeus. *On the Apostolic Preaching*. Translated by John Behr. Popular Patristics Series 17. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997.

This Doctor of the Church was Bishop of Lyon in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. He is best known for his work defending the Christian faith against the Gnostic heretics of his time. In this short book, however, the great Saint lays out the Christian Faith following the narrative arc of Holy Scripture. Another good place to start reading the Fathers. It is also a good place to start if you desire to learn more about the whole of Scripture. St. Irenaeus has had a profound effect on my own faith and understanding!

Lewis, C. S. *The Abolition of Man*. New York: HarperOne, 1974.

A must read for anyone who wants to understand the world/culture in which we live! Originally a three part lecture series, it was later published as a book in 1944. This book reads like Lewis is standing over our shoulder reading our mail to us. Not only does Lewis name our ailments, he offers us cures along the way. If Renewal requires us to say “no” to the world (it does), then this book helps us understand the world so we can.

Pickavance, Timothy. *Knowledge for the Love of God: Why Your Heart Needs Your Mind*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2022.

Anglicans have long embraced the Augustinian maxim, “Faith seeking understanding.” In that vein, Pickavance explains, through personal story and teaching, how reason relates to faith, and how our knowledge about God leads to knowledge/love of God. Written to the laity, this is a helpful encouragement to the discipline of study for the sake of Personal Renewal.

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York: Penguin Books, 2006.

Another great insight into our current cultural moment. In this book (originally published in 1985), Postman shows how the TV has changed how we view the world, made us less literate (verging on illiterate), and damaged our public discourse. All of these have an impact on our loves and distract us from our First Love, Jesus. An accessible, yet personally challenging, read.

Sayers, Mark. *Disappearing Church: From Cultural Relevance to Gospel Resilience*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2016.

In class I spoke of Philip Rieff’s theory of cultural cycles – the three cultures. In this book calling the Church in the West to renewal, Sayers explains Rieff’s ideas at a lay level. However, not only does Sayers offer critique of “this cultural moment” (the name of a podcast he did), he also offers strategies to renew ourselves and the Church in this moment.

Smith, James K. A. *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016

This book is aimed exactly at Personal Renewal as a recommitment of our love. Indeed, Smith explains that the question isn’t whether we will love – all humans love something as ultimate – but rather *what* we will love. Central to forming our loves is liturgy. But note, the Church has its liturgy, and so too does the world. We must guard our hearts while also training them. Smith teaches us why and how. This is a fun and accessible read.

Thornton, Martin. *Christian Proficiency*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1988.

Fr. Thornton, an Anglican Priest and theologian, aims at our spiritual maturation in this book. He does so by teaching on various spiritual disciplines that can lead to such growth. While a bit dry at times, this is an inspiring book that can assist in our pursuit of Personal Renewal through the spiritual disciplines.

## Fiction for our Personal Renewal

Lewis, C. S. *The Chronicles of Narnia*

My 67 year old dad just finished this series while on sabbatical over the summer. He said he was equally struck by how Lewis' storytelling touched both his heart and his mind. Truly, Lewis, the master story teller, weaves the deep things of the Christian Faith throughout this accessible and entertaining story such that the heart is moved to a deeper love of Christ. A fun and formative read for every age and reading level.

Lewis, C. S. *The Space Trilogy*, sometimes called, *The Ransom Trilogy*.

In this three part series (*Out of the Silent Planet*, *Paralandrea*, and *That Hideous Strength*), we follow the hero, Ransom, on an interplanetary adventure in the first two books before staying closer to home in the final book. We learn much about human nature and divine nature, especially as it is revealed in Jesus. We are also given a glimpse of our own culture in the final book; many have noticed that *That Hideous Strength* is essentially *The Abolition of Man* in story form. These rank as some of my favorite stories.

Lewis, C. S. *The Screwtape Letters*

In this creative bit of fiction, Lewis turns the tables to give us a sneak peek into the life and work of a demon, Screwtape, and his mentor, Wormwood. Here Lewis exposes many of our enemy's tactics in order that we may better fend them off and pursue our first love without distraction.

O'Brien, Michael. *Island of the World*

O'Brien is a Roman Catholic author that writes beautiful stories alive with the presence of Christ and the faith He handed down. In this particular piece of historical fiction, the main character, Josip, represents the biographies of several people compressed into this one character. Through much suffering, spanning from WWII in modern day Croatia through the Yugoslavian/Serbian wars up into our own age, Josip learns to love Jesus as his first love, even in the midst of pain and suffering. This is a beautiful story that will touch your heart on many levels.