

CATHOLIC RADICALISM READING LIST



PETER MAURIN

Peter Maurin was a French Catholic social activist and co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement alongside Dorothy Day. Born on May 9, 1877, in the small rural village of Oultet in southern France, Maurin came from a devout Catholic family. His early education was influenced by the Christian Brothers, an experience that shaped his lifelong commitment to the teachings of the Church and the pursuit of social justice. As a young man, Maurin joined the Christian Brothers with the intent of

becoming a teacher, but after several years, he left the order to seek a different path.

After serving in the French army, Maurin traveled throughout Europe, immersing himself in various intellectual and political movements, particularly Catholic social thought. Inspired by figures like St. Francis of Assisi and philosophers such as Emmanuel Mounier, he developed a strong belief in personalism—a philosophy that emphasizes the dignity of the individual in a communal society. In 1909, he immigrated to Canada and later to the United States, where he worked as a laborer and handyman. During this time, Maurin continued his intellectual and spiritual development, reading widely and formulating his vision for a society grounded in Catholic principles of justice, hospitality, and voluntary poverty.



Catholic Radicalism

Maurin's life took a decisive turn when he met Dorothy Day in 1932. Their collaboration led to the founding of the Catholic Worker Movement, which sought to address the economic, social, and spiritual needs of the poor and marginalized. Maurin's influence was profound; he developed what he called "Easy Essays," short, poetic reflections on Catholic social teaching, distributism, and the responsibilities of Christians to the poor. These essays articulated his vision of a society based on "Houses of Hospitality"

for the poor, "Farming Communes" to foster self-sufficiency, and the promotion of manual labor as a means of spiritual fulfillment. His teachings emphasized a radical form of charity and community that rejected both capitalist materialism and state socialism in favor of a decentralized, agrarian society modeled on the teachings of the Gospels.

Throughout his life, Maurin lived simply, practicing the poverty he preached. His vision for society was deeply rooted in the Catholic Church's teachings on social justice, particularly the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. He believed that the Christian response to the ills of modern society, especially during the Great Depression, should not be mere charity but a radical restructuring of society in accordance with Christian values. Maurin's legacy endures through the Catholic Worker Movement, which continues to run houses of hospitality, publish the *Catholic Worker* newspaper, and advocate for peace, justice, and the dignity of every person. Though less well-known than Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin's influence on Catholic social activism and the broader Christian response to poverty and inequality remains significant.



[Peter Maurin - Wikipedia](#)

[Personalism - Wikipedia](#)

[Dorothy Day - Wikipedia](#)

[Catholic Worker Movement - Wikipedia](#)

[Rerum Novarum - Wikipedia](#)

[Easy Essays by Peter Maurin](#)

The following list was originally published by Maurin at the end of his book Catholic Radicalism: Phrased Essays for the Green Revolution. While some inclusions may feel slightly outdated to contemporary sensibilities—particularly the frequent reference of Eric Gill—the list continues to be intriguing and serves as a valuable resource for those in search of a more inclusive Catholic society.

[Catholic Radicalism: Phrased Essays For The Green Revolution PDF](#)



All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

1. Art in a Changing Civilization by Eric Gill

- Synopsis: This work discusses the relationship between art and society, emphasizing how art should reflect moral and social truths. Gill critiques modern industrial society for its detachment from true craftsmanship.
- Author Bio: Eric Gill (1882–1940) was a British sculptor, typeface designer, and printmaker known for his religious art and typography. His works often explored the intersection of faith, craftsmanship, and morality.
- [Wikipedia - Eric Gill](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)

2. The Bourgeois Mind by Nicholas Berdyaev

- Synopsis: Berdyaev explores the spiritual and philosophical deficiencies of the bourgeois class, critiquing its materialistic values and lack of spiritual depth.
- Author Bio: Nicholas Berdyaev (1874–1948) was a Russian religious philosopher. His work centered on existentialism, Christian philosophy, and critiques of both capitalism and communism.
- [Wikipedia - Nicholas Berdyaev](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)

3. Brotherhood Economics by Toyohiko Kagawa

- Synopsis: This book discusses Kagawa's vision of a Christian-based economic system that emphasizes cooperation over competition, inspired by the teachings of Christ.
- Author Bio: Toyohiko Kagawa (1888–1960) was a Japanese Christian pacifist, reformer, and labor activist. He worked extensively on issues of poverty and is known for his advocacy of social justice in Japan.
- [Wikipedia - Toyohiko Kagawa](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)

4. Charles V by Wyndham Lewis

- Synopsis: A historical and biographical work on Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, focusing on his life, reign, and influence on European history.
- Author Bio: Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957) was a British writer and painter associated with the Vorticist movement. His work spanned criticism, satire, and historical biography.
- [Wikipedia - Wyndham Lewis](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)

5. Catholicism, Protestantism, and Capitalism by Amintore Fanfani

- Synopsis: Fanfani examines the influence of religious thought, particularly Catholicism and Protestantism, on the development of capitalism in Western Europe.

- Author Bio: Amintore Fanfani (1908–1999) was an Italian politician and economist. He served as Prime Minister of Italy multiple times and was known for his scholarly works on the intersections of religion and economics.
- [Wikipedia - Amintore Fanfani](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)

6. Christianity and Class War by Nicholas Berdyaev

- Synopsis: This work critiques the class struggle from a Christian perspective, emphasizing spiritual unity over economic conflict, and arguing that true Christian ethics transcend class divisions.
- [Wikipedia - Nicholas Berdyaev](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)
- [ThriftBooks](#)

7. The Church and the Land by Fr. Vincent McNabb

- Synopsis: McNabb advocates for a return to agrarian society, emphasizing the moral and spiritual benefits of living close to the land and away from industrial urban centers.
- Author Bio: Fr. Vincent McNabb (1868–1943) was a Dominican priest and one of the leading voices in the Distributist movement, advocating for a decentralized, agrarian economy based on Catholic social teachings.
- [Wikipedia - Vincent McNabb](#)
- [IHS Press](#)
- [eBay](#)

8. Discourse on Usury by Thomas Wilson

- Synopsis: This early work on economics critiques the practice of usury, reflecting moral and theological arguments against excessive interest rates.
- Author Bio: Thomas Wilson (1523–1581) was an English diplomat and scholar, known for his writings on rhetoric and economics, particularly his opposition to usury.
- [Wikipedia - Thomas Wilson](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)
- [Open Library](#)

9. The Emancipation of a Free Thinker by Herbert E. Cory

- Synopsis: This book is an exploration of intellectual freedom, examining the struggles and triumphs of free thinkers in a society bound by conventional norms and ideologies.
- Author Bio: Herbert E. Cory (1883–1941) was an American literary scholar and professor, known for his work on English literature and intellectual history.
- [Wikipedia - Herbert E. Cory](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)
- [ThriftBooks](#)

10. Enquiries Into Religion and Culture by Christopher Dawson

- Synopsis: Dawson examines the historical and cultural development of religion, particularly Christianity, and its impact on Western civilization. He argues that religion is a driving force in shaping cultures.
- Author Bio: Christopher Dawson (1889–1970) was a British historian who specialized in the study of Christian culture and the role of religion in civilization. He is regarded as one of the most influential Catholic intellectuals of the 20th century.
- [Wikipedia - Christopher Dawson](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)
- [CUA Press](#)

11. Fields, Factories, and Workshops by Peter Kropotkin

- Synopsis: In this classic anarchist work, Kropotkin argues for decentralization and local self-sufficiency. He critiques both industrial capitalism and Marxist centralization, proposing a cooperative model for society.
- Author Bio: Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921) was a Russian anarchist, geographer, and philosopher. He was one of the most prominent anarchist thinkers and activists, known for his advocacy of mutual aid and self-governance.
- [Wikipedia - Peter Kropotkin](#)
- [Barnes & Noble](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)

12. Fire on the Earth by Paul Hanly Furfey

- Synopsis: This book presents Furfey's vision of a radical Christian sociology rooted in love, charity, and social justice. He argues for the Church's active role in addressing societal problems, such as poverty and inequality.
- Author Bio: Paul Hanly Furfey (1896–1992) was an American Catholic priest and sociologist. He was a strong advocate for social justice and emphasized the role of the Catholic Church in addressing systemic issues of poverty and oppression.
- [Wikipedia - Paul Hanly Furfey](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)
- [Kubik Fine Books](#)

13. The Flight from the City by Ralph Borsodi

- Synopsis: Borsodi's influential book advocates for a return to self-sufficient rural living as a solution to the problems of modern industrial urbanization. He presents practical steps for those looking to live independently from the industrial economy.
- Author Bio: Ralph Borsodi (1886–1977) was an American agrarian theorist and writer, known for his promotion of decentralization and homesteading. He was a leading figure in the back-to-the-land movement.
- [Wikipedia - Ralph Borsodi](#)

- eBay
- AbeBooks

14. The Franciscan Message to the World by Father Agostino Gemelli

- Synopsis: Gemelli explores the spiritual and social teachings of St. Francis of Assisi and their relevance to contemporary societal issues, advocating for a revival of Franciscan values in the modern world.
- Author Bio: Father Agostino Gemelli (1878–1959) was an Italian Franciscan friar, physician, and psychologist. He founded the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan and was an influential figure in Catholic intellectual circles.
- [Wikipedia - Agostino Gemelli](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)

15. Freedom in the Modern World by Jacques Maritain

- Synopsis: Maritain explores the nature of freedom in the context of modern society, examining the philosophical, political, and theological dimensions of true freedom, as distinguished from libertinism.
- Author Bio: Jacques Maritain (1882–1973) was a French Catholic philosopher and one of the most influential figures in 20th-century Thomistic thought. He contributed significantly to Christian democratic theory and the philosophy of personalism.
- [Wikipedia - Jacques Maritain](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)

16. The Future of Bolshevism by Waldemar Gurian

- Synopsis: Gurian analyzes the future prospects of Bolshevism, assessing its ideological foundations and its potential trajectory in a post-revolutionary world.
- Author Bio: Waldemar Gurian (1902–1954) was a German political scientist and historian who specialized in totalitarianism and Russian politics. He was an early critic of both Nazism and Bolshevism.
- [Wikipedia - Waldemar Gurian](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)

17. A Guildsman's Interpretation of History by Arthur Penty

- Synopsis: Penty offers a historical analysis of guild socialism, advocating for a return to guild principles as a solution to the problems of industrial capitalism and social alienation.
- Author Bio: Arthur Penty (1875–1937) was an English architect, writer, and social thinker. He was a major proponent of guild socialism and contributed to the development of distributist economic theory.
- [Wikipedia - Arthur Penty](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)

18. The Great Commandment of the Gospel by His Excellency A. G. Cicognani

- Synopsis: This work reflects on the central role of love and charity in Christian life, interpreting the "great commandment" as a guiding principle for personal and societal conduct.
- Author Bio: Amleto Giovanni Cicognani (1883–1973) was an Italian Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church who served as Secretary of State of the Vatican and played a key role in Vatican diplomacy.
- [Wikipedia - Amleto Giovanni Cicognani](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)

19. Ireland and the Foundation of Europe by Benedict Fitzpatrick

- Synopsis: Fitzpatrick explores the role of Irish culture and Christianity in the shaping of European civilization, arguing that Ireland played a crucial role in the development of Western Europe.
- Author Bio: Benedict Fitzpatrick was an Irish-American historian and author whose work focused on the influence of Ireland in European and early Christian history.
- No Wikipedia page available
- [AbeBooks](#)

20. I Take My Stand by Twelve Southern Agrarians

- Synopsis: A manifesto written by twelve Southern intellectuals, this book advocates for the preservation of traditional agrarian values in the face of industrialization. The authors critique the rapid modernization and industrialization of the South.
- Author Bio: The Twelve Southern Agrarians were a group of writers and poets, including figures like John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate, who argued for a return to rural values and criticized industrial capitalism's dehumanizing effects.
- [Wikipedia - Southern Agrarians](#)
- [ThriftBooks](#)

21. The Land of the Free by Herbert Agar

- Synopsis: In this work, Agar critiques American society, highlighting the erosion of liberty and democracy due to economic inequality. He emphasizes the need for reforms to restore the American dream.
- Author Bio: Herbert Agar (1897–1980) was an American journalist and historian, best known for his work on American politics and history. He won the Pulitzer Prize for History in 1934.
- [Wikipedia - Herbert Agar](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)

22. Lord of the World by Robert Hugh Benson

- Synopsis: A dystopian novel set in a future world dominated by secular humanism, Benson's work explores themes of faith, apostasy, and the rise of the Antichrist. It is often cited as an early precursor to the dystopian genre.
- Author Bio: Robert Hugh Benson (1871–1914) was an English Roman Catholic priest and author. He is best known for his religious novels, many of which explore themes of faith and the apocalypse.
- [Wikipedia - Robert Hugh Benson](#)
- [ThriftBooks](#)

23. The Making of Europe by Christopher Dawson

- Synopsis: Dawson examines the formation of European civilization, arguing that Christian culture played a central role in shaping Europe's intellectual, cultural, and social identity.
- [Wikipedia - Christopher Dawson](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)
- [Barnes & Noble](#)

24. Man, the Unknown by Dr. Alexis Carrel

- Synopsis: Carrel discusses the limitations of modern science in understanding the full complexity of human life. He emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to studying human biology, psychology, and spirituality.
- Author Bio: Alexis Carrel (1873–1944) was a French surgeon and biologist who won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1912. His work often ventured into questions about the limits of science and medicine.
- [Wikipedia - Alexis Carrel](#)
- [Barnes & Noble](#)
- [Target](#)

25. Nazareth or Social Chaos by Father Vincent McNabb

- Synopsis: This book offers a critique of modern industrial society and advocates for a return to a simpler, agrarian lifestyle grounded in Christian values.
- [Wikipedia - Vincent McNabb](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)
- [Barnes & Noble](#)

26. Our Enemy, the State by Albert Jay Nock

- Synopsis: Nock argues that the state, rather than protecting individual liberty, has become the primary enemy of freedom. He critiques the expansion of government and its intrusion into personal lives.
- Author Bio: Albert Jay Nock (1870–1945) was an American libertarian author, social critic, and theorist. His works, particularly "Our Enemy, the State," have influenced libertarian thought.
- [Wikipedia - Albert Jay Nock](#)

- [Barnes & Noble](#)

27. The Outline of Sanity by G.K. Chesterton

- Synopsis: Chesterton presents a critique of both capitalism and socialism, advocating instead for Distributism, an economic philosophy that promotes the widespread ownership of property and small businesses.
- Author Bio: G.K. Chesterton (1874–1936) was an English writer, philosopher, and critic known for his Christian apologetics and his creation of the beloved detective character, Father Brown.
- [Wikipedia - G.K. Chesterton](#)
- [Barnes & Noble](#)
- [ThriftBooks](#)

28. A Personalist Manifesto by Emmanuel Mounier

- Synopsis: This book lays out the principles of personalism, a philosophy that emphasizes the dignity and worth of the human person over materialist and collectivist ideologies.
- Author Bio: Emmanuel Mounier (1905–1950) was a French Catholic philosopher and a prominent advocate of personalism, a movement that focuses on human dignity, community, and social justice.
- [Wikipedia - Emmanuel Mounier](#)
- [Biblio](#)
- [Archive.org](#)

29. A Philosophy of Work by Etienne Borne

- Synopsis: Borne delves into the meaning and significance of work in human life, exploring its ethical, social, and philosophical dimensions. He critiques the dehumanizing nature of modern industrial work.
- Author Bio: Etienne Borne (1907–1993) was a French philosopher and professor who focused on ethics, politics, and the philosophy of work. His work emphasized the importance of personalism in modern society.
- No Wikipedia page available
- [AbeBooks](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)

30. Post-Industrialism by Arthur Penty

- Synopsis: Penty critiques the failures of industrial capitalism and argues for a return to pre-industrial guild-based systems that emphasize craftsmanship, community, and sustainability.
- [Wikipedia - Arthur Penty](#)
- eBay

31. Progress and Religion by Christopher Dawson

- Synopsis: Dawson critiques the modern notion of progress, arguing that religion is the fundamental driving force behind cultural and social development. He stresses the importance of religion in maintaining moral and spiritual order.
- [Wikipedia - Christopher Dawson](#)
- [Tumblr House](#)
- [Christianbook](#)

32. Religion and the Modern State by Christopher Dawson

- Synopsis: Dawson explores the relationship between religion and the state in the modern world, warning against the dangers of secularization and state control over religious practices. He argues that religion provides a necessary moral foundation for society.
- [Wikipedia - Christopher Dawson](#)
- [ThriftBooks](#)
- AbeBooks

33. Religion and the Rise of Capitalism by R.H. Tawney

- Synopsis: Tawney examines the relationship between religion, particularly Protestantism, and the development of capitalism in the West. He argues that religious ideas played a central role in shaping economic behavior and institutions.
- Author Bio: Richard Henry Tawney (1880–1962) was a British economic historian, social critic, and advocate for Christian socialism. His works on economic history and ethics have influenced debates on capitalism and socialism.
- [Wikipedia - R.H. Tawney](#)
- [Verso Books](#)
- Penguin Random House

34. Révolution Personnaliste et Communautaire by Emmanuel Mounier

- Synopsis: In this manifesto, Mounier calls for a personalist revolution that seeks to overcome individualism and collectivism through a new social and political order based on the dignity and rights of the human person.
- [Wikipedia - Emmanuel Mounier](#)
- AbeBooks
- [Walmart](#)

35. Saint Francis of Assisi by G.K. Chesterton

- Synopsis: Chesterton offers a biographical and spiritual portrait of Saint Francis of Assisi, celebrating his life of simplicity, humility, and devotion to God. He presents Francis as a model for living a life of joy and charity.
- [Wikipedia - G.K. Chesterton](#)
- Penguin Random House
- [Christianbook](#)

36. Social Principles of the Gospel by Alphonse Lagan

- Synopsis: Lagan explores the social teachings of the Catholic Church, focusing on the principles of justice, charity, and the common good as outlined in the Gospel. He applies these principles to contemporary economic and social issues.
- Author Bio: Alphonse Lagan was a Catholic theologian and writer known for his contributions to Catholic social teaching. He emphasized the role of Christian ethics in shaping a just society.
- No Wikipedia page available
- AbeBooks
- [Walmart](#)

37. Soviet Man - Now by Helen Iswolsky

- Synopsis: Iswolsky critiques the Soviet regime and its vision of the "new Soviet man," exploring how totalitarianism dehumanizes individuals. She argues for the importance of spiritual freedom and human dignity.
- Author Bio: Helen Iswolsky (1896–1975) was a Russian émigré writer, translator, and scholar. She was a strong critic of Soviet communism and a proponent of Christian humanism.
- No Wikipedia page available
- [eBay](#)
- AbeBooks

38. Du Régime Temporel et de la Liberté by Jacques Maritain

- Synopsis: Maritain examines the relationship between temporal power and spiritual freedom, arguing that the Church should remain independent of the state to safeguard true religious liberty.
- [Wikipedia - Jacques Maritain](#)
- AbeBooks

39. The Theory of the Leisure Class by Thorstein Veblen

- Synopsis: Veblen critiques the social and economic behavior of the wealthy elite, coining the term "conspicuous consumption" to describe how the upper class uses leisure and consumption to display social status. He analyzes the implications of this behavior for society.

- Author Bio: Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929) was an American economist and sociologist best known for his critiques of capitalism and his theory of social stratification. His work, especially "The Theory of the Leisure Class," remains influential in sociology and economics.
- [Wikipedia - Thorstein Veblen](#)
- Penguin Random House

40. Thomistic Doctrine of the Common Good by Seraphine Michel

- Synopsis: This book explores the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas regarding the common good, examining how Thomistic principles can be applied to contemporary social, political, and ethical issues.
- Author Bio: Seraphine Michel was a Catholic theologian and scholar known for her work on Thomistic philosophy, particularly in applying Aquinas' teachings to modern social issues.
- No Wikipedia page available
- No links found

41. Things That Are Not Caesar's by Jacques Maritain

- Synopsis: Maritain argues for the separation of Church and State, emphasizing the importance of spiritual autonomy. He explores the tension between religious freedom and political authority, advocating for a balanced relationship between the two.
- [Wikipedia - Jacques Maritain](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)
- [ThriftBooks](#)

42. Towards a Christian Sociology by Arthur Penty

- Synopsis: Penty argues for a Christian approach to sociology, critiquing both socialism and capitalism from a moral perspective. He advocates for a return to medieval guild systems and distributism as solutions to social and economic problems.
- [Wikipedia - Arthur Penty](#)
- [ThriftBooks](#)
- [Bookshop.org](#)

43. True Humanism by Jacques Maritain

- Synopsis: Maritain offers a vision of humanism rooted in Christian principles, contrasting it with secular and materialistic forms of humanism. He argues that only a Christian humanism can fully respect the dignity of the human person.
- [Wikipedia - Jacques Maritain](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)
- [eBay](#)

44. The Two Nations: A Financial Study of English History by Christopher Hollis

- Synopsis: Hollis explores the economic and financial history of England, focusing on the class divisions between the rich and the poor. He critiques the concentration of wealth and argues for economic reforms to address inequality.
- Author Bio: Christopher Hollis (1902–1977) was a British writer, politician, and historian. He was known for his writings on politics, economics, and Catholic social teaching.
- [Wikipedia - Christopher Hollis](#)
- [ThriftBooks](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)

45. The Unfinished Universe by T.S. Gregory

- Synopsis: Gregory reflects on the nature of the universe, arguing that the cosmos is in a state of constant development and change. He explores philosophical and scientific ideas about the universe's origin and evolution.
- Author Bio: T.S. Gregory was a British philosopher and scientist whose work focused on the intersections of cosmology, philosophy, and theology.
- No Wikipedia page available
- [AbeBooks](#)
- [ThriftBooks](#)

46. The Valerian Persecution by Father Patrick Healy

- Synopsis: Healy discusses the persecution of Christians during the reign of the Roman Emperor Valerian. The book provides historical context for the early Christian martyrs and the challenges they faced under Roman rule.
- Author Bio: Father Patrick Healy was a Catholic priest and historian, known for his scholarly works on early Christian history and the Roman Empire.
- No Wikipedia page available
- [ThriftBooks](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)

47. What Man Has Made of Man by Mortimer Adler

- Synopsis: In this work, Adler examines the consequences of modernity on human nature and society, particularly how scientific advancements and industrialization have reshaped human behavior and social structures.
- Author Bio: Mortimer Adler (1902–2001) was an American philosopher, educator, and popular author, known for his work on the Great Books of the Western World and his contributions to the philosophy of education and ethics.
- [Wikipedia - Mortimer Adler](#)
- [ThriftBooks](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)
- [eBay](#)

48. Work and Leisure by Eric Gill

- Synopsis: Gill explores the relationship between work and leisure in modern society, critiquing the dehumanizing aspects of industrial labor and advocating for a more balanced and meaningful approach to work, rooted in craftsmanship and spirituality.
- [Wikipedia - Eric Gill](#)
- [AbeBooks](#)
- [Royoung Bookseller via ABAA](#)

