

Renaissance: The Power of the Gospel However Dark the Times

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"You will not regret a single minute invested in this book."

—Skye Jethani

What is the Future of Christian Faith?

Is it possible for society to have redemption and renewal? Is the Christian faith still relevant in the very global world of today? Os Guinness, in his new book *Renaissance*, declares a hopeful yes. We are in a time of renewal, of change, of continuous reformation, and, as Os writes in chapter one, "a movement that is led by the Spirit of God, which involves the people of God returning to the ways of God and so demonstrating in our time the kingdom of God, and not in word only but in power and with the plausibility of community expression."

Although we are in a time when the problems of western worldliness—exploitation of the poor, prevalence of prosperity gospel, to name a few—seem to be overtaking the church and the world more broadly, Os believes there is hope for the future.

Throughout the book, he describes how the Christian faith influenced and shaped culture over the last two hundred years. Christians have established universities, built great cathedrals, brought literacy to cultures, and generally displayed God's goodness through art, literature and science. Drawing on great thinkers like John Baillie, Christopher Dawson, C. S. Lewis, Thomas Cahill and others, Guinness shows that the church is in a moment of great transition, but it has been here before. In light of this, readers will see that now is the time to rely wholly on God's provision, knowing that with it the Christian faith can continue to be the cultural influence it's always been.

"For decades Os Guinness has been one of the most nuanced, realistic, yet hopeful voices calling Christians to engagement with culture," Tim Keller writes. "This latest volume from him should not be missed by anyone. Os summarizes some of the most helpful recent discussions, updates many of his own lifelong challenges to the church, and provides many fresh insights."

Renaissance leads readers back to a center point and challenge for the faith of the future. Os writes, "[This challenge] is, I believe, that we trust in God and his gospel and move out confidently into the world, living and working for a new Christian renaissance and thus challenge the darkness with the hope of Christian faith, believe in an outcome that lies beyond the horizon of all we can see and accomplish today."

Os closes each chapter with thought-provoking discussion questions and brief, stirring prayers that challenge and motivate readers to take action, however dark the times may seem.

Skye Jethani, executive editor at *Leadership Journal*, declares this book an essential resource:

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO SCHEDULE AN INTERVIEW CONTACT:

Krista Carnet, broadcast publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kkcarnet@ivpress.com

Alisse Wissman, print publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or awissman@ivpress.com

Adrianna Wright, online publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4096 or awright@ivpress.com

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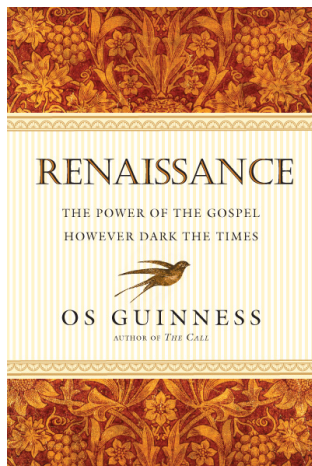


BOOK DETAILS

"Highly recommended."

—Tim Keller

"Os helps us see our present circumstances in the right light. He illuminates why the catastrophizing done by many Christians amid cultural change is unwarranted, but also soberly addresses the genuine challenges we face with new clarity and gravity. Most helpful of all, Os directs our sight back to Christ, the author and completer of our faith, in whom we find both the courage and the resources to be his people in our time. You will not regret a single minute invested in this book."



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The Danger of “Measurable Outcomes”

The pursuit of truth, beauty, excellence, whether in art, science or spiritual growth, has rarely taken its cue from John Q. Public or from Mr. and Mrs. Average. It aspires to the standards of the few and the exceptional – the great masters, the inspiring heroes and the extraordinary saints. Generous patrons have often been a fruitful part of the story, but grand masters, great models and generous patrons were seldom found in the crowds in their day. Lovers of truth, beauty, excellence and spiritual growth do not bother to curry favor with great numbers or any majority, and their accomplishments defy all quantifying. Too often, as Søren Kierkegaard declared, the crowd is “untruth” and “the public is chimera.” Or as the Stoic philosopher Seneca wrote even more bluntly, seconded later by the great Polish scientist Copernicus, “I never wanted to please the people. What the people want, I ignore, and what I know, the people do not realize.”

If the danger of the tyranny of numbers was evident in the nineteenth century, how much more so is it today? We are in the age of gargantuan numbers, truly instant information, ceaselessly hyperactive social media, when the worldwide web has become a flood-driven Niagara of raw, uninterpreted information and emotion that pounds down on us by the minute with its ceaseless roar and its drenching deluge. Who can hear themselves think, let alone make sense of it all with genuine reflection and seasoned judgments?

No wonder it is tempting to give up and go with the flow, rushing along with the crowds and swept past the best as we chase after the most. It is all too easy to get caught up in the sensational and forget the significant. Those who make this mistake miss the important for the urgent and become attuned to popular approval rather than divine authority. They count opinions rather than weigh them. The imprimatur they covet is to be called “in,” “cool,” “relevant,” or better still, one of “the hundred most influential” or part of a new “emerging majority.” For heaven’s sake, read anything and everything that is “in” at the present moment. But we must pray always and unceasingly that we are never, God forbid, “out of fashion” or fear being caught on “the wrong side of history.”

And now, to make the idolatry of numbers worse, our earnest and scientifically rigorous foundations lean on us heavily and require that we provide “measurable outcomes” for every project, plan and possibility that dares to knock on their door, when often the desired outcomes are quite unquantifiable, at least in advance, and at other times we can only fill in the application forms with wild guesses, wishful thinking or downright fabrications. In short, with their unfailing encouragement and blessing, we are invited either to deceive them or deceive ourselves and so become schooled in the art of lying to get their money.

Every age is fooled by its own fashions, and it is time to subject this modern idolatry of

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BOOK EXCERPT

opinion and numbers to decisive Christian thinking. For modern people, numbers are the key to control, but humans are more than *aides de camp* to the almighty computer. We would of course scorn anyone who put their half-baked preferences, momentary whims and brazen desires above serious concerns for truth. So why do we bow to opinion polls that are mostly just such emotions gathered with statistical scientific precision and expressed under the halo of grand numbers?

Consider the trend toward numbers in the light of original sin, for example, and it would be obvious that any democratic people's "we" is just as corruptible, if not more so than any autocratic ruler's "I." It used to be called the "nostrism" of the many in contrast to the "egotism" of the one or the few, but it is no less corruptible. If we do not want mass democracy to degenerate into a new and subtle tyranny of King Demos and his regime of numbers, we must recognize and resist the trend. Ten million ignorant assertions, even when magnified and accelerated in a hundred million tweets and "likes," still never add up to truth or wisdom.

What matters here, however, is not the danger to democracy but to the church. We therefore need to trace the overall damage of such worldly thinking. It develops Christians with an eye for the bandwagon rather than the Bible, for popularity rather than principle, and with a greater sensitivity to horizontal pressure than to vertical authority. It renders Christians vulnerable to the mob-masters of the virtual age, the high-tech wizards who can corral the opinion of millions within minutes. (This is a crucial factor in the cataclysmic suddenness of the triumph of the sexual revolution over the Jewish and Christian faiths that have shaped Western civilization for two thousand years.) The result is a church befuddled over the difference between success and faithfulness, hesitant to buck the going trends, fearful to stick her neck out and find herself in the minority, and reluctant to risk the loneliness of pursuing the true and the excellent regardless of all outcomes – in short, a church fatally weakened because it is worldly. In today's world, the courage of Athanasius *contra mundum* would be scorned as Athanasius marooned on the wrong side of history.

Such forms of worldliness are subtle, but whether they are subtle or crass, the goal of this friendly caution is clear. The church of Christ across the Global South must resist all worldliness, rise to its modern future with an unalloyed and clear-eyed loyalty to Jesus and his kingdom, and at the same time be prepared to engage with all the issues and challenges of advanced modernity, fully prepared and without fear. Will the future see the whole church of Christ both fully faithful and fully engaged in the modern world? Where the Western church once signally failed, the church in the Global South may yet succeed by the grace of God and so point the way forward for the Christian church as a whole.

– Taken from chapter two, "Grand Global Tasks"



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Social Critic, Influential Speaker, Writer

Os Guinness (DPhil, Oxford) is a prolific writer and social critic. He is the author or editor of more than twenty-five books, including *The American Hour*, *Time for Truth*, *The Call*, *A Free People's Suicide*, *The Global Public Square* and *The Case for Civility*. Previously, Os was a freelance reporter with the BBC, a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution and a guest scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Studies.

From 1986 to 1989, Os served as executive director of the Williamsburg Charter Foundation, a bicentennial celebration of the First Amendment. In this position he helped to draft the Williamsburg Charter, which was signed by former presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, Chief Justices William Rehnquist and Warren Burger, Coretta Scott King, Elie Wiesel, several members of Congress and many others.

A prominent social critic, Os is the founder of the Trinity Forum and was senior fellow there until 2004, conducting seminars for leaders around the world and publishing seven major curricula. He has been a frequent speaker and seminar leader at political and business conferences in both Europe and the United States, and has addressed audiences from the British House of Commons to the United States Congress. He has also been the subject of numerous media interviews, appearing on programs such as C-SPAN's *Booknotes*. His countless addresses at leading universities worldwide have helped to influence an entire generation of thinkers.

Os lives with his wife, Jenny, near Washington, D.C.

www.osguinness.com