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The Historical Perspective: Gleanings from C.S. Lewis's Personal Library

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Of all the C.S. Lewis treasures residing at the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton College, perhaps one of the most fascinating is the collection of books Lewis possessed in his own personal library. Since they are books by other authors, one might wonder what value they have beyond recognition of Lewis's choice of books. That alone can reveal something of his mind and his interests, of course. Yet simply seeing a list of books that he owned is only a starting point for an analysis of their importance. More is needed if one wishes to understand how Lewis responded to the books he read.

Fortunately, Lewis gave us clues—sometimes vague, other times more direct—for what he thought about what he read. Lewis was an interactive reader, constantly underlining and/or marginal-lining phrases, sentences, and even whole paragraphs. Further, he often inserted commentary on some of those markings, providing more insight into his reaction to what an author had written.

Lewis's annotations obviously offer more specific guidance into his thoughts, as he sometimes even wrote summaries of each page's focus. These summaries show how he processed each page in a book, extracting what he believed to be the author's most salient points. Additionally, when one sees a book that Lewis painstakingly summarized, one knows he considered it to be worth the extra time involved in penning that summary; the book was significant enough, in his view, to merit the effort.

But when it comes to markings that have no annotations, how is one to evaluate those? Does an underlined section indicate Lewis's agreement with what he marked, or is it an indication of the opposite? Familiarity with Lewis's published works and letters can provide the key to those questions. In fact, the more one examines the markings, the more one can see connections to Lewis's own writings. Sometimes, one can see where he either got an idea that showed up in his writings later or something that is in concert with what he had already written. Disagreements with what he marked more often show up in the annotations. For instance, it's not difficult to know what Lewis thinks about a certain chapter in one of the books when he writes, "This whole chapter is nonsense" (Lewis annotation, Hinton 47).[1]

Delving into the Lewis Library can be daunting without a specific research goal. The research for this essay focuses on Lewis's views of history, particularly regarding historicism and periodization, and whether those views are confirmed through the notations and annotations he made in the books of his personal library.

Lewis and History

Lewis's areas of concentration in his Oxford degrees were in philosophy and literature, but the "Mods" portion of his studies provided a substantial historical underpinning for all of his work going forward. Philosophers draw on history; all literature is written in certain historical periods, and critical analysis of the literature requires a basis in the history of those periods. After all, how could Lewis have contributed his *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* as part of the Oxford History of English Literature series if he had existed in some kind of historical vacuum? His detailed history in that volume showcases a scholar who is adept at historical analysis and who is using it to shed light on the literature of that era. Another Lewis book, *The Discarded Image*, lays out the entire medieval worldview in detail.

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C.S. Lewis at his desk ca. 1940.

Lewis also authored numerous essays that have their grounding in history, even when the word "history" is absent from the title. In "De Audiendis Poetis," Lewis writes of the need to enter into the past: "In so far as we are historians, there is no question. When our aim is knowledge we must go as far as all available means—including the most intense, yet at the same time most sternly disciplined, exercise of our imaginations—can possibly take us. We want to know—therefore, as far as may be, we want to live through for ourselves—the experience of men long dead" (2).

"De Descriptione Temporum," the inaugural address Lewis gave when he was awarded a chair at Cambridge, challenged the usual periodization in history; the real division, he argues, is not between the Middle Ages and a Renaissance, but between "Old Western Culture"[2] and a modern age dominated by the machine. It is in this address that he famously refers to himself as a "dinosaur" because he is more attuned to the Old Western understanding. "I have said that the vast change which separates you from Old Western has been gradual and is not even now complete. Wide as the chasm is, those who are native to different sides of it can still

meet; they are meeting in this room. . . . I myself belong far more to that Old Western order than to yours" (13).

"God in the Dock" documents the basic historical skepticism of the common man, which Lewis experienced addressing R.A.F. pilots during World War II. Lewis notes that one thing he learned "was that the English Proletariat is sceptical about History to a degree which academically educated persons can hardly imagine. This, indeed, seems to me to be far the widest cleavage between the learned and unlearned." How did he perceive this? "The educated man habitually, almost without noticing it, sees the present as something that grows out of a long perspective of centuries. In the minds of my R.A.F. hearers this perspective simply did not exist. It seemed to me that they did not really believe that we have any reliable knowledge of historic man" (462–63).

"Is History Bunk?" serves as a critique of the view, espoused by Henry Ford, that history is only worthwhile is if it leads to something "practical." Lewis writes, "There will always be people who think that any more astronomy than a ship's officer needs for navigation is a waste of time. There will always be those who, on discovering that history cannot really be turned to much practical account, will pronounce history to be Bunk" (101).

"Learning in War-Time" is Lewis's apologetic for continuing the quest for education even during times of severe duress. History is valuable, he asserts, because we need "intimate knowledge of the past." It is the scholar who has lived—vicariously—in many times who can thereby dismiss much of the "cataract of nonsense" of the present era. The historical perspective is essential (58–59).

In "Modern Man and His Categories of Thought," Lewis portrays the public mind as having been radically altered from one that once believed in a consciousness of sin and the threat of divine judgment. He says this occurred through the promotion of an education no longer based on the ancients and through the development of historicism based on Darwinian Developmentalism. History, says Lewis, has a certain nobility, whereas historicism is a false philosophy—based on Darwinism—that says that whatever develops in history is what was supposed to develop and that we need to go wherever it is going:

> To the modern man it seems simply natural that an ordered cosmos should emerge from chaos, that life should come out of the inanimate, reason out of instinct, civilization out of savagery, virtue out of animalism. This idea is supported in his mind by a number of false analogies: the oak coming from the acorn, the man from the spermatozoon, the modern steamship from the primitive coracle. The supplementary truth that every acorn was dropped by an oak, every spermatozoon derived from a man, and the first

> boat by something so much more complex than itself as a man of genius, is simply ignored.
> ("Modern Man and His Categories of Thought" 63–64)

"On Living in an Atomic Age" is Lewis's appeal to historical perspective to understand that earlier ages had their severe problems also; there is nothing unique about an atomic age. "It is perfectly ridiculous," Lewis explains, "to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at all, but a certainty" (73).

"On the Reading of Old Books" reminds us that every age has its own outlook. Each can see certain truths particularly well but also is more liable to particular mistakes. "The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and this can be done only by reading old books," Lewis counsels (435).

The most robust among Lewis's essays with a strong historical component is simply titled "Historicism." In it, Lewis demonstrates his deep knowledge of the historical profession and historical analysis. He makes a clear distinction between a genuine historian and someone who falls into the historicist category. While a historian might infer "unknown events from known ones," the historicist

> tries to get from historical premises conclusions which are more than historical; conclusions metaphysical or theological. . . . The historian and the Historicist may both say that something "must have" happened. But *must* in the mouth of a genuine historian will refer only to a *ratio cognoscendi:* since A happened B "must have" preceded it; if William the Bastard arrived in England he "must have" crossed the sea. But "must" in the mouth of a Historicist can have quite a different meaning. It may mean that events fell out as they did because of some ultimate, transcendent necessity in the ground of things. ("Historicism" 132)

Historicism, therefore, is the philosophy behind common phrases like "get on the right side of history," "you are on the wrong side of history," and "you can't turn back the clock." Why? Because history is presumed to be moving forward on its own schedule as if it has a mind of its own—it is inevitable progress toward an ultimate goal.

This is a special danger for Christians, according to Lewis, since Christians believe that God is intimately involved in human affairs and that all of history might be viewed as transpiring exactly as God wants it to. Lewis shoots down this perspective in his robustly unique way:

> If, by one miracle, the total content of time were spread out before me, and if, by another, I were able to hold all that infinity of events in my mind and if, by a third, God were pleased to comment on it so that I could understand it, then, to be sure, I could do what the Historicist says he is doing. I could read the meaning, discern the pattern. Yes; and if the sky fell we should all catch larks. ("Historicism" 137)

For good measure, he adds, "I do not dispute that History is a story written by the finger of God. But have we the text?" (137).

History in the Lewis Library—Marked Sentences/Paragraphs

Research in the Lewis Library involved investigating Lewis's markings in approximately fifty of his books. Of that number, twenty-five were germane to the attempt to gain greater insight into his views on history. Disagreements with an author ordinarily appear in the annotations, which will be dealt with in the next section of this article. The following organization of Lewis's markings begins with views on history and its interpretation in general, followed by markings that deal with historicism and periodization in noting historical eras.

A. Lewis on History in General

Edward Gibbon's *Autobiography* is a good place to start. The author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is known for his critique of Christianity's role in that empire's decline, stating that Christians' lack of involvement in public affairs and the military helped speed the decline. His apparent distaste for this ancient religion gave rise to this comment in his autobiography, marked by Lewis: "The schools of Oxford and Cambridge were founded in a dark age of false and barbarous science; and they are still tainted with the vices of their origin" (37). As an academic who spent his entire adult life at both Oxford and Cambridge, Lewis naturally would have been interested in Gibbon's commentary on those universities. Beyond that, the quote reveals Gibbon's view of Christianity as a putrid remnant of what he considered to be "a dark age." This may be the most obvious occasion when Lewis's marking was based on disagreement with an author. After all, Lewis never would have accepted the idea that the medieval era was a dark age, let alone one encumbered with a barbarous science.

Lewis offered his view of Gibbon and other writers in his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, stating that even prior to his conversion, he found himself liking the Christian authors more than those without religious underpinnings: "Those writers who did not suffer from religion and with whom my sympathy ought to have been complete—Shaw and Wells and Mill and Gibbon and Voltaire—all seemed a little thin; what as boys we called 'tinny.'

. . . It wasn't that I didn't like them. They were all (especially Gibbon) entertaining; but hardly more. There seemed to be no depth in them. They were too simple. The roughness and density of life did not appear in their books" (207).

Another book in Lewis's library, D.S. Brewer's *Chaucer*, offers an inkling of how Lewis saw some of the difficulties involved with historical research. With regard to finding out details of Chaucer's personal history, Brewer writes and Lewis underlines, "Where all is guesswork the slenderest clues are worth following up, though one must beware of giving them more importance than they actually possess, simply because they have no competitors" (32). When the history is clouded and unclear, what is one to do? Follow even the "slenderest clues," of course. Yet the historian must heed the warning that goes along with slender clues: do not come to rigid conclusions when there are no competing sources that might provide balance to the clue one is following or might even reverse one's understanding of the facts.

In studying history, one is confronted with a multitude of evils committed throughout the ages. Reading about these evils can cause the reader a tremendous amount of pain, author Vernon Lee argues. In his *Euphorion*, Lee describes this pain in stark terms and calls the "intermeshing of evil with good" the most abhorrent evil of all. Lewis then underlines what follows: "Evil which is past, it is true, but of which the worst evil almost of all, the fact of its having been, can never be past" (13). This comment was significant to Lewis because, as a biblically grounded scholar, he is aware of how one generation can affect those that come after. History is not simply what happened previously; it has ramifications for the present.

B. Lewis and Historicism

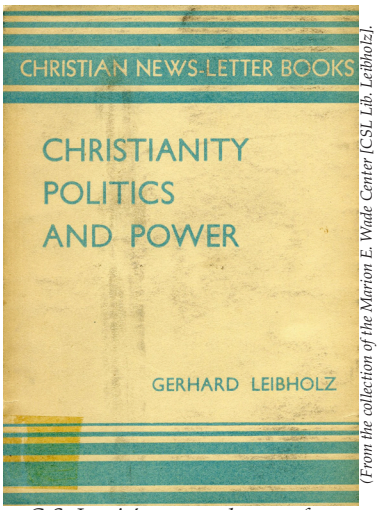
What might it mean if Lewis marked a paragraph with *double* lines in the margin? It would seem that he was drawing even more attention to a comment. He does so for a paragraph in Gerhard Leibholz's *Christianity, Politics, and Power*. The paragraph notes that often secular politicians, despite their claims, are not very realistic when it comes to their politics: "Think, for instance, of the Liberal faith in a continuous line of progress, of the Marxist doctrine predicting the triumph of the messianic proletariat, or of the totalitarian belief in a new order and of its prophetic messages of a new and happy life in times to come." That's rather utopian and unrealistic, Leibholz argues. In fact, it is the opposite of the Christian perspective, which recognizes the awfulness of sin and the evil it produces. The Christian, therefore, "has no romantic or utopian illusions. He knows that the Churches need make no promises which cannot be realised in the political sphere. He realises that Christianity is more true to life than all secular political systems" (31).

A few pages later, Leibholz states that National Socialism is based on force and power and that those who promote it make it "not only the means to a higher end, but also the end of life itself." Lewis then marks the next part:

> As Hitler himself said: "The men I want round me are those who, like myself, see in force the motive element in history and who act accordingly." Or in another connexion: "My great political opportunity lies in my deliberate use of power at a time when there are still illusions abroad as to the forces which mould the world." (34)

Both marked sections in Leibholz's book speak directly to Lewis's commentary on historicism, primarily in his "Historicism" essay, where he critiques any concept of (in Leibholz's words) "faith in a continuous line of progress" or the Marxist prediction of some type of "messianic proletariat." Neither does he accept adherence to some secular system as an "end of life itself."

Lewis marks a paragraph in R.H. Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* that also relates to the fallacy of historicism. This time, though, the author was pointing out how that idea could enter into a Christian view of history and the development of society. The subject was John Calvin, who "did for the *bourgeoisie* of the sixteenth century what Marx did for the proletariat of the nineteenth." Tawney asserts that Calvin's doctrine of predestination "satisfied the same hunger for an assurance that the forces of the universe are on the side of the elect as was to be assuaged in a different age by the theory of historical materialism." This doctrine, therefore, "taught them to feel that they were a chosen people, made them conscious of their great destiny in the Providential plan and resolute to realize it" (111). Lewis, while believing in a biblical doctrine of providence, also sees the problem with a misapplication of it. The "God is on our side because we are His chosen" article of faith can lead people to think that everything is going forward just as God ordained: history is always progressing toward the perfect.



C.S. Lewis's personal copy of Christianity, Politics, and Power.

(From the collection of the Marion E. Wade Center [CSL Lib. Leibholz]. Used by permission.)

C. Lewis and Periodization

The examples thus far have focused more on the issue of historicism, but Lewis was also interested in the various historical interpretations of different eras. How, for instance, have historians interpreted scholasticism, that academic foundation of medieval thought?

Basil Willey, in *The Seventeenth Century Background*, provided Lewis with some insight. Willey devotes some time to critics of scholasticism, those who

decided it could be dismissed as an intellectual endeavor worthy of consideration. Lewis underlines, "And until quite recently most historians have written of them from their own standpoint," meaning they have agreed with the critics. Willey goes on to say that those historians were "representing the intellectual history of the period as a process whereby error, fable and superstition were finally vanquished by truth and reason" (8). Later in the book, Willey writes that Descartes was largely responsible for a new "contempt for history." Lewis underlines the following: "For Descartes's thought, like all thought which is purely rational and intellectual, was fundamentally unhistorical." Lewis then underlines Willey's comment, "When we can construct the world from the inner certainties, what need of history to tell us how things have come to be as they are? We have that within which passes history" (90).

Another book in Lewis's library, Charles Haskins's *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, offered Lewis some food for thought as he developed his own periodization model. Lewis marked the following: "Dante, an undergraduate once declared, 'stands with one foot in the Middle Ages while with the other he salutes the rising star of the Renaissance!'" (9). Dante was one of Lewis's most admired writers, but one wonders if he would identify him as a transitional figure, especially when Lewis downplayed the traditional view of the Renaissance.

In *The Discarded Image*, Lewis compares medieval writing with the Elizabethan/Renaissance and Romantic writing that followed it. He says that writers of the latter seem to invest "a great deal of work" into their poetry, while medievalists write in such an effortless way that "the story seems to be telling itself." Medieval imagination "is not a transforming imagination like Wordsworth's or a penetrative imagination like Shakespeare's." He then turns to Dante as an exemplar of the medieval form.

> Macaulay noted in Dante the extremely factual word-painting; the details, the comparisons, designed at whatever cost of dignity to make sure that we see exactly what he saw. Now Dante in this is typically medieval. The Middle Ages are unrivalled, till we reach quite modern times, in the sheer foreground fact, the "close-up." (*Discarded Image* 205–206)

Lewis's intimate knowledge of how medieval society functioned led to his underlining of a passage in J.W. Gough's *The Social Contract*. In this passage, Gough compares the medieval conception of the relationship between monarchy and law with what later arose post-Renaissance when the belief in the divine right of kings became more acceptable. Gough contrasts the two viewpoints starkly. An absolutist monarchy was "foreign to early medieval thought," Gough asserts. Whenever there was positive law in medieval times, it was considered inferior to the law of nature that came from

God. Further, any positive law had to be in conformity with that law of nature. "Law . . . was in medieval thought prior to rather than the creature of government; the whole people, in some sense, was its repository, and though the king's function was to declare it, it was not in his power to manufacture it arbitrarily" (24–25). As Lewis writes in *The Abolition of Man*, using the term "Tao" to represent the law of nature,

> Only the *Tao* provides a common human law of action which can overarch rulers and ruled alike. A dogmatic belief in objective value is necessary to the very idea of a rule which is not tyranny or an obedience which is not slavery. (73)

In William Haller's *The Rise of Puritanism*, Lewis finds his comment on the transition between medieval writing and that which followed afterward to be of significance. Haller makes the case that writers such as Shakespeare and Spenser, although often referred to as the beginning of the "modern spirit," were actually "the last expression of medieval culture, flaring up in perhaps its grandest outburst on the eve of its final extinction" (46), an insight Lewis thought worth marking. One can find this theme throughout Lewis's *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*. Commenting on what some see as a definite link between the literature of the late medieval era and the so-called Renaissance, Lewis simply says, "It is . . . true that many movements of thought which affected our literature would have been impossible without the recovery of Greek. But if there is any closer connexion than that between the *renascentia* and the late sixteenth-century efflorescence of English literature, I must confess that it has escaped me" (2). Another example covers the gamut of changes that some see in the transitional period, yet Lewis offers a caution:

> Historians of science or philosophy, and especially if they hold some theory of progress, are naturally interested in seizing those elements of sixteenth-century thought which were later to alter Man's whole picture of reality. Those other elements which were destined to disappear they tend to treat as mere "survivals" from some earlier and darker age. The literary historian, on the other hand, is concerned not with those ideas in his period which have since proved fruitful, but with those which seemed important at the time. He must even try to forget his knowledge of what comes after, and see the egg as if he did not know it was going to become a bird. (*English Literature* 4–5)

In essence, one can perhaps be misled into thinking that earlier writing was a precursor to what developed later, when, in fact, it was more an aspect of its own age.

When Lewis delivered his "De Descriptione Temporum" speech that inaugurated his tenure at Cambridge as professor of medieval and Renaissance English literature, he mused over the name of his position:

> From the formula "Medieval and Renaissance," … I inferred that the University was encouraging my own belief that the barrier between those two ages has been greatly exaggerated, if indeed it was not largely a figment of Humanist propaganda. At the very least, I was ready to welcome any increased flexibility in our conception of history. All lines of demarcation between what we call "periods" should be subject to constant revision. Would that we could dispense with them altogether! (2)

And what of the idea that the Renaissance was some bold new undertaking in literature? Douglas Bush's book in Lewis's library, *English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century*, explains, "The false modern emphasis on the bold confidence and rebellious energy of the Renaissance has ignored the great mass of writing which perpetuated Hebraic, classical, and medieval pessimism" (278), a sentence Lewis found noteworthy enough to underline.

To Lewis, much of the modern worldview had deviated from the premodern era, to the detriment of modern society. Reading his *Abolition of Man* and the novel that springs from it, *That Hideous Strength*, one sees Lewis's deep concern over this historic change. So, when he saw comments in books that pointed to that disastrous change, he marked them consistently.

Studies of Political Thought from Gerson to Grotius by J.N. Figgis, another book in Lewis's library, offers a couple of key thoughts along those lines. Martin Luther, Figgis argues, transferred the "halo of sanctity" from ecclesiastical authorities to a temporal sovereign (72). In the lines Lewis underlined, Figgis explains that "what has vanished from Machiavelli is the conception of natural law. . . . When . . . natural law and its outcome in custom, are discarded, it is clear that the ruler must be consciously sovereign in a way he has not been before, and that his relations to other rulers will also be much freer" (74–75).

Lewis also found support for his views in Christopher Dawson's *Beyond Politics*, where he underlined the following: "For the greatest danger that threatens modern civilization is its degeneration into a hedonistic mass civilization of the cinema, the picture paper and the dance hall" (78). When Dawson seeks to explain the distinction between the old Liberalism and the new Democracy, he points to the movement away from individual rights and the freedom of private opinion to modern attempts by government to control all the activities of life: "It is quite ready to treat the State as a sort of universal aunt and to welcome its intrusion into the most intimate relations of life" (103).

This is the same type of language Lewis uses in his essay "Is Progress Possible? Willing Slaves of the Welfare State," where he writes,

> "The modern State exists not to protect our rights but to do us good or make us good—anyway, to do something to us or to make us something. Hence the new name 'leaders' for those who were once 'rulers.' We are less their subjects than their wards, pupils, or domestic animals. There is nothing left of which we can say to them, 'Mind your own business.' Our whole lives are their business" (514).

History in the Lewis Library—Annotations

Annotations go further than underlinings in conveying Lewis's reactions to the books he read. As discussed earlier, sometimes he found a book so instrumental in his thinking that he took the time to write a summary at the top of each page, noting what he considered the key point therein. He did so with a chapter in the book mentioned at the end of the previous section, Christopher Dawson's *Beyond Politics*, published in 1939. As World War II loomed, Lewis summarized each page in the chapter called "Politics and National Culture," completing his reading of the entire book, according to his own notation at the end of it, in April 1940. Dawson's thesis in that chapter is the rise of totalitarian governments, noting not only fascism, but also communism. Lewis, in response to Dawson's comment that both communism and fascism are one-sided, writes in the margin, "Which none the less had a tradition behind it in Russia and Germany" (Lewis annotation, Dawson 37). Dawson even warns that democracies could become totalitarian in their intent, which leads Lewis to pen this response: "Strict ideological Democracy . . . and Dictatorship both children of the Revolution and dist. from tolerationist Democracy of the English style" (Lewis annotation, Dawson 41).

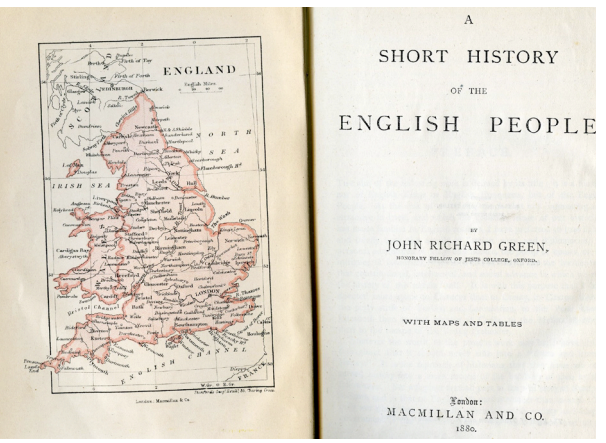
Less extensive but still illuminating are Lewis's annotations in Passerin d'Entreves's *The Medieval Contribution to Political Thought*. The author notes that Christian political philosophy did not lead to institutions being created via contract. Medievalists instead saw the state as a necessary and divinely appointed institution to punish and provide remedies for sin. One can almost hear Lewis sigh when he writes in response, "But this was later lost sight of" (Lewis annotation, Passerin d'Entreves 15). A few pages later, the author writes of the change from the traditional law of nature that dominated the Middle Ages to the notion, which found "its complete development only in Machiavelli and Hegel," of the state as the source of law. Lewis, though, despite his agreement with the author's concern over this alteration in the source of law, offers a slight corrective to Passerin d'Entreves's commentary, writing, "But this did not (as some think) abolish, rather it transmitted, the doctrine of Natural Law" (Lewis annotation, Passerin d'Entreves 18). So

even though there was a fundamental shift, Lewis thought it was important to remark that the concept of natural law had not been abolished entirely.

As Passerin d'Entreves explains Aquinas's views, Lewis raises this question at the top of page 27: "How can he [Aquinas] reconcile the supremacy of the Aristotelian common good with the Xtian supreme importance of the individual?" On page 28, Lewis answers his own question: "It looks to me as if he doesn't (in this world anyway)." What this indicates is how Lewis interacts with the text. One page raises a question in his mind; the next page answers it (however insufficiently), and he records the progression of his thoughts as he reads.

John Green's *A Short History of the English People* elicits a greater number of annotations from Lewis. When the author writes about the theological problems in Protestantism, Lewis underlines, "It wasted its strength in theological controversies." He then annotates at the bottom of the page: "Luther—Calvin Evil influence of their doctrines" ["doctrines" is underlined] (Lewis annotation, Green 461). If anyone needs to know Lewis's views on certain aspects of Lutheran and Reformed theology, this provides insight.

In a discussion of the transfer of power from Elizabeth to James and the ensuing gunpowder plot, Lewis underlines, "The dream of a reformation of the universal Church was utterly at an end. The borders of Protestantism were narrowing every day, nor was there a sign that the triumph of the Papacy was arrested" (Green 463). To the side of this quote, Lewis writes, "happening still!!" (Lewis annotation, Green 463).



Title page from C.S. Lewis's copy of John Green's A Short History of the English People.

Green writes of the large number of Catholics who were named as recusants [those who refuse to submit to an authority or to comply with a regulation]. Lewis writes in the margin, "unwarranted severity" (Lewis annotation, Green 463), indicating that even though he had qualms about Catholic intrigue during the era, he could acknowledge when the reaction went too far. Pressure from Spain during the reign of James I [due to the proposed marriage of Charles to the Spanish princess] led England to relax its laws against Catholics. Lewis underlines, "The abrogation of the penal laws against the Catholics,

a Catholic education for the Prince's children, a Catholic household for the Infanta, all were no sooner asked than they were granted" (Green 463). In response to this, Lewis writes, "Catholic tyranny which fortunately ended in nothing"—strong words as a reaction to what Spain sought to accomplish (Lewis annotation, Green 463).

A description of the low moral state of society in the mid-eighteenth century led Lewis to underline, "In spite however of scenes such as this, England as a whole remained at heart religious" (Green 717). In the margin, he writes, "a testimony to the fact that the middle class makes the country" (Lewis annotation, Green 717).

Lewis appears to have had a few issues with W.R. Inge's book *Protestantism*. In the margin of page 20, he inserts an exclamation point and a question mark beside this sentence about despotism: "At present the Roman Catholic polity is the sole [Lewis underlines this word] survivor of this type of government, a highly interesting specimen of a species which has everywhere else become extinct." This is especially interesting as this book was written in 1935, during the height of fascism. It seems clear that Lewis disagrees with this assertion. Further, the author writes on page 27, "It was a change in the whole conception of authority, which from being an absolute and Heaven-ordained relation of subservience to a theocratic system, became a mutual agreement between the rulers and the ruled." Lewis comments, "The truth precisely the reverse. Real change from Lex Regia to Divine Right!" (Lewis annotation, Inge 27). Another disagreement, albeit scholarly and civil in nature.

When R.H. Tawney, in his *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, seeks to describe Puritans as people living their lives in a hostile territory, Lewis questions this perception of Puritanism by remarking, "Where in literature does one *meet* this Puritan?" (Lewis annotation, Tawney 206). Lewis has thought long and hard about the nature of Puritanism; his conclusions can be found in his *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*. Comparing Puritans with Humanists, Lewis does not find a great difference with respect to their place in society, let alone have patience with the idea that Puritans were living in a hostile territory. There is a certain nuance to be understood:

> They [Puritans] usually remained in the Establishment and desired reform from within. There were therefore degrees of puritanism and it is difficult to draw a hard and fast line. . . . By a humanist I mean one who taught, or learned, or at least strongly favoured, Greek and the new kind of Latin; and by humanism, the critical principles and critical outlook which ordinarily went with these studies. Humanism is in fact the first form of classicism. It is evident that if we use the words in this way we shall not see our period in terms of a conflict between humanists and puritans. . . . In reality, the puritans and the humanists were quite

> often the same people. Even when they were not, they were united by strong common antipathies and by certain affinities of temper. (*English Literature* 17–18)

Conclusion

What, then, is the value of examining C.S. Lewis's library in search of his views on history? While we have many of his published writings to rely upon, it is still fascinating to see him interact, so to speak, with these other authors. His annotations and other markings often confirm what shows up in his published works. And while we cannot firmly establish if he received any of his views directly from a particular book, we do see that he found affirmation for much of what he eventually wrote; further, we can note those points on which he disagreed with an author, thereby showing how he processed what he was reading.

K. Alan Snyder
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Notes

[1] This was in reference to chapter VII, "Self Elements in Our Consciousness," in Charles Hinton's *A New Era of Thought*.

[2] Lewis defines Old Western Culture as history from its pre-Greek beginnings "down to the day before yesterday" ("De Descriptione" 12). What he means by that is that Old Western Culture exists right up to the point where modern culture begins, a dividing line that he believes is found around the time of Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott.

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