

# Reflections

SEPTEMBER 2022

## More Ways Than One



In a paper titled *“De Audiendis Poetis”*, C.S. Lewis offers an analogy between travelling to a foreign country and reading old books and, in doing so, provides practical advice about both. An excerpt follows.

There are more ways than one of reading old books... There are two ways of enjoying the past, as there are two ways of enjoying a foreign country. One man carries his Englishry abroad with him and brings it home unchanged. Wherever he goes he consorts with the other English tourists. By a good hotel he means one that is like an English hotel. He complains of the bad tea where he might have had excellent coffee... In the same way there is a man who carries his modernity with him through all his reading of past literatures and preserves it intact...

But there is another sort of travelling and another sort of reading. You can eat the local food and drink the local wines, you can share the foreign life, you can begin to see the foreign country as it looks, not to the tourist, but to its inhabitants. You can come home modified,

thinking and feeling as you did not think and feel before. So with the old literature. You can go beyond the first impression that a poem makes on your modern sensibility. By study of things outside the poem, by comparing it with other poems, by steeping yourself in the vanished period, you can then re-enter the poem with eyes more like those of the natives; now perhaps seeing that the associations you gave to the old words were false, that the real implications were different from what you supposed...

You can go beyond the first impression that a poem makes on your modern sensibility.

I am writing to help, if I can, the second sort of reading. Partly, of course, because I have a historical motive. I am a man as well as a lover of poetry: being human, I am inquisitive, I want to know as well as to enjoy. But even if enjoyment alone were my aim I should still choose this way, for I should hope to be led by it to newer and fresher enjoyments, things I could never have met in my own period, modes of feeling, flavours, atmospheres, nowhere accessible but by a mental journey into the real past. I have lived nearly sixty years with myself and my own century and am not so enamoured of either as to desire no glimpse of a world beyond them...<sup>1</sup>



While there can be benefits from actively entering into the culture of another country or even the world of an old book, this is especially true when we enter the world of the Bible. While we read the Bible differently from other old books, since it is the very Word of God, there are some parallels. In his four-part series of articles *How to Read the Bible*, Bill Kynes points out that since God makes use of the words of human authors to produce His Word, “the Bible must be interpreted through grammatical-historical means to seek the intention of the human authors as expressed through what they have written.”<sup>2</sup> This includes “[taking] into account the entire range of the historical, cultural, religious, linguistic, and literary factors that help us arrive at that intention.”<sup>3</sup> While other old books may offer wisdom and lead us to change in various ways, the Bible, as Kynes points out, gives us the wisdom for salvation. He explains further, “The wisdom given to us in the Bible not only enables us to come to faith; it also empowers us to grow in our faith...”<sup>4</sup> In what ways might you open your heart and mind to explore the ideas, world and culture of the Bible?



*“... how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”*

2 TIMOTHY 3:15 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> “*De Audiendis Poetis*” in C.S. Lewis, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 1-4.

<sup>2</sup> Bill Kynes, “How to Read the Bible, Part 2: The Science and Art of Interpretation”, *Knowing & Doing*, Summer 2019, pdf, p. 11, <https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/how-to-read-the-bible-part-2-the-science-and-art-of-interpretation/>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Bill Kynes, “How to Read the Bible, Part 4: How is the Bible Useful?”, *Knowing & Doing*, Spring 2020, pdf, pp. 7, 9, <https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/how-to-read-the-bible-part-4-how-is-the-bible-useful/>.

