

Multiculturalism

It was the year 715 and Ceolfrith a traveller, who had nearly died struggling through terrible winter weather, has sought refuge at the priory on Lindisfarne. While the storm outside continued to rage, he was being shown about the priory by Aidan, one of the monks living there.

“And this is a very special room”, Aidan proudly announced.

“What makes it so special?” asked Ceolfrith.

A man sitting who had been sitting intently over a manuscript turned round.

“Well, why don’t you ask Eadfrith our bishop?”

“O.K. Well, Eadfrith why is this room so special?”

“Well, I never said that it was special.....”

“So what exactly are you doing?” asked Ceolfrith.

“Well, I’m just trying to make a book”.

“What about?”

“Well, it’s the Gospels, you know....”

“Can I have a look?”

“Yes, of course, but please be careful.....”

“I will....”

Ceolfrith looked at the pages produced. A furrow crossed his brow.

“But, you’ve done all the writing in Latin...”

“Of course. It is our sacred language.....”

“But didn’t Jesus speak in Aramaic?”

“Yes, probably. And the gospels were originally written in Greek. But I think Latin is the most appropriate language for this book.”

“But Jesus...he was Jewish wasn’t he?”

“Yes, of course. He was steeped in Hebrew culture.....”

“The artwork is beautiful. I must admit that. Some of it is very Celtic mind you...”

“Well, we have a Celtic heritage here. We were founded by monks from Iona you know.....”

“I see.....still I am glad to see that you have some of our Anglo-Saxon art on this page...”

“Well of course. We are Anglo-Saxons after all....”

“Indeed....”

There was a short pause. Then Ceolfrith spoke again.

“So, the book is written in Latin about the life of a man who spoke in Aramaic, but whose words were written originally in the gospels in Greek.”

“Yes.”

“And his life was steeped in Hebrew culture as he was Jewish....”

“Yes, yes, that’s right.”

“And the artwork is Celtic and Anglo-Saxon?”

“Yes.”

There was another pause before Ceolfith spoke again.

“No. I mean, no offence Bishop Eadfrith, but this will never be a success. Some of the artwork is indeed spectacular, but nobody is going to be interested in this book in years to come.”

“Why not?”

“Well it’s all so.....well, multicultural isn’t it? And everybody knows multiculturalism doesn’t work.....”

© Peter Sagar June 2014