



How to Teach History with Wes Callihan

Lesson 10: Two Ancient Historians - Bede

Outline:

Bede (672-735 AD), Major Work: *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*

- Context of Bede's time; England had been re-Christianized.
- Bede was given to a monastery as a boy and became a Saxon monk.
 - In the monasteries he had a much better chance of a better diet, better health, and a better education.
 - Bede became a deacon, then a priest.
 - At the end of his famous history book he writes, "My chief delight in all my life is teaching, reading, writing."
- Bede popularized the use of A.D.
- Records the history of England as a Roman colony; invasion of the Picts.
 - Christianity was widespread. England was long a Christian country.
 - The Picts invade England, so they invite the Anglo-Saxons to drive out the Picts. The Anglo-Saxons stayed and destroyed the British and England becomes pagan again.
 - Missionaries come to England again.
- Records the life of Gregory the Great (died 604 AD) and his concern to evangelize the British.
 - Eventually Gregory the Great becomes pope.
 - As he grows in popularity in the city, he sees slaves being sold in the market. He wants to preach the gospel to these slaves.
 - He funds and sends missions to England. Christianity grows on the island.
 - The preservation of English culture even as it is Christianized.
 - Gregory says to tear down idols and burn them and cleanse the pagan temples. Turn the architecture to the purposes of Christ.
 - To the extent that the culture can be preserved, it ought to be.
- Records the story of the first English poet Caedmon (who could instantly turn Scripture into music).
 - People would come from miles around to see and hear Caedmon.
 - Although Bede doesn't tell us why people came, but when Caedmon turned Scripture into music he did so with pagan Anglo-Saxon meter.
 - Can people sing Christian songs with pagan meter?
- Records the geography of England (e.g., Irish, Picts, British, Angles)
 - With the coming of the gospel there is more peace.
 - The redemption of pagan cultures through the spread of Christianity.



- Successes of monasticism, but failures too
- Implications of our study of Bede: bring stories to life, pursuit of virtue, longing and fulfillment.