

7th November 2021

Discovery

**“For love is but discovery:
When that is made, the pleasure’s done.”**

Thomas Southerne, A song from ‘Sir Anthony Love’ (1690)

Every day’s a school day! Thomas Southerne reminds us that “love is but discovery”. It isn’t created, bought or given. It’s discovered, and there is much pleasure in that. But there are other pleasurable discoveries too.

A while ago I wrote about a “But and Ben”, an old-style Scottish house than has an “outer” and “inner” part, and mused on the Scots word “ben” as a welcome to a home. I discovered from a friend that though the word *binnen* – the Old English root of *ben* – isn’t in common use anymore, it is in German. A *binnenmeer*, for example is an inland lake or enclosed sea, such as The Baltic. In Dutch, *binnenzee* means the same. Now, I’m no linguist, but might there be similarities in the Norwegian language, for example? So my friend and I are left with a question: Might *ben* have come into Scottish usage from a Scandinavian – or specifically Norse – background, to sit alongside other words in Scots with a Viking influence, such as *kirk* and *bairn* and *ken*? Answers on a postcard please!

In any event, the Vikings were a people of discovery. Yes, history paints them as violent marauders, and there is evidence of the destruction they caused. But they gave us navigation and long-ship construction. And, above all else, they founded their travels on a thirst for discovery. That’s why Scotland, around its northern shores and islands, still carries, in language and placenames, so much Viking influence. And it’s said that they reached the American continent long before Columbus got there.

Discovery matters, in small ways and big ways, in culture and language, in understanding and influence. Every day’s a school day. Should the same not be true for our faith? Do we not still have much to learn? Are there influences we could benefit from which we haven’t thought of yet? Are there insights and language that could take our thinking in a new direction? I hope so. For, if every day *is* a school day, should we not be pleased we’re discovering more about our faith too?

A prayer for today

*Lord, help me to be open to discovering more and more about your Love,
and to find, as I do, that I’m still finding pleasure beyond my imagining. Amen*

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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