... WOULD SMELL AS SWEET

Posted on January 27, 2016 by Eddie

I'm English, but I'm also a Northerner. This means that I share some background and identity with people from my part of the world.
Category: Observations

How do we describe ourselves? How do we describe others?

Yesterday, I came across two fascinating posts that looked at this question from two different standpoints and in two very different contexts.

Ian Paul wroteÂ about the need to label different types of Christian:

> *Do labels create differences between people, or do they function as a way to identify and recognize difference? The rice and the pasta sitting on our pantry shelves are not distinct because we have labeled them; the labels help us recognize the differences that are already there. My theological differences with others donâ€™t ariseÂ because I own a different theological label; my label is simply a recognition that I have particular convictions about faith and theology, and not everyone is going to share these convictions.*

Meanwhile, a group of children in Djibouti struggled with how to classify Rachel Pieh Jones:

> *â€œWhat do we call a red person (white â€“ another kid shouted from the other side of the street) who fears God?â€ the girl asked.*

I'd strongly recommend reading both of these blog posts (especially Rachael's which is superb). Even though they come to rather different conclusions, I find myself agreeing with both of them. Rachael is right that we shouldn't just lump people into categories, we need to talk to them, find out their names and grow to understand their stories.

However, we can't ignore labels altogether. I'm English, but I'm also a Northerner. This means that I share some background and identity with people from my part of the world. It doesn't constrain me; I don't feel that I have to like whippets, black pudding or clog dancing, but it does describe something of who I am.

Equally, I'm a Christian; I can say the Nicene Creed with the best of them, but I'm also an Evangelical. I have certain beliefs about Scripture,Â the cross, conversion and the need for putting faith into practice. Evangelicalism is not a structure or a denomination; it is a movement which cuts across those boundaries. I identify most closely with Christians who are also Evangelicals; we don't agree on everything, but we do have a shared set of core convictions. The label "Evangelical" is far more important to me than any organisational or denominational affiliation.

Just a thought.