... FOR THE FISH

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Category: Short-Term Mission

Yesterday, I received a really encouraging email from a complete stranger. My corespondent was working on a mission statement for a US based institution and in the process of his research he'd come across an article that I wrote about ten years ago. He wrote to tell me that the article had really helped him and that some of the things I had been a great help to him and would shape the work he was doing.

To say that I was touched by the email would be an understatement. For various reasons, I've been going through one of my regular crises of confidence about my writing. Though I produce a blog post most days and some people are kind enough to read them, I'm not sure that I actually have any impact. To hear that something I had written had made a concrete difference did me no end of good.

My purpose in writing this isn't to get people to say how wonderful my writing is (though you should feel free to do so). My point is that a letter of thanks to anyone can make a huge difference. As the internet gets increasingly fractious, we need to consciously think of ways in which we can thank and encourage those who have helped us. One email from a complete stranger, turned what had been a pretty rotten day into a rather good one, but it also makes me wonder how I can do the same for others.

If you are interested, the article that the person was referring to was onÂ *missio Dei* and the Church, you can find it here. It's much longer than most of my blog posts and has literature references and everything, I'd probably change some things if I were writing it today, but it's not bad. Here is a quote from the conclusion:

> *Over the past two hundred years, Evangelical missionaries, motivated for the most part by the GreatÂ Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) have played a key role in spreading the Christian message around the world. The call to â€˜go and make disciplesâ€™ was necessary in an age when the geographical spread of Christianity was so limited. However, the great commission with its stress on activity plays into one of the weaknesses of Evangelicalism which so often stresses activity over and above spirituality. Gurder speaks reproachfully of people who are not actively experiencing the blessings of the Gospel, seeking to engage inÂ mission. There is a need for some evangelicals to step back from a focus on activity and the target driven approach of much of their missiology and to rediscover a theocentric view of mission which emphasizes character and spirituality over and above activity. MissioÂ Dei and reflection on what many see as the key verse for Trinitarian mission, John 20:21 could provide the missingÂ dimension.*

On another note entirely, I wrote an article for Christian Today yesterday, which has stirred up a fair bit of response on FaceBook and elsewhere. It started out as a blog post, but ended up going in an online magazine. This quote will give you a flavour of what I was saying:

> *It could be that you think that I'm being overly negative: if young people want to go on mission trips and serve the Lord in exotic places we should encourage them and not squash their enthusiasm by insisting on training and orientation before they go. My response to that would be to ask how willing you would be to have an untrained (but very enthusiastic) African teenager, who doesn't speak English and knows next to nothing about British culture, running your youth group for a month, or preaching in your church this Sunday.*
>
> *If it isn't good enough for us, why do we think it is good enough for the rest of the world?*

You can find the whole article here.