



## From Our Vicar

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### Will the Real Me Please Stand Up?

I've been reading a bit about identity lately, it being such a hot issue in Western society globally.

One writer<sup>1</sup> traces the shift that is exploding across the world back to the French writer Descartes, famous for his muse 'I think, therefore I am.' This claim made the individual's self-awareness the central reference point for their existence. Years later John Locke spoke of a person being 'their own possession'.

A further development has been that the self is no longer hidden, but everyone has the right to self-expression. Authenticity is claimed as the basis for this right, around which others are now required to adapt themselves.

There is of course merit in authenticity. Jesus affirmed Nathanael as 'an Israelite in whom there is no guile' when he expressed skepticism about the Messiah coming from backwoods Nazareth. Biblically, I think the nearest concept to authenticity is sincerity, claimed by Paul in his dealing with the churches he founded. He asserted that he did not put on a mask for greed, nor use flattery or seek to please people, rather seeking to please God.<sup>2</sup>

Yet identity in the Bible is paradoxical. Jesus said that 'the one who finds their life will lose it, while the one who loses their life for my sake will find it.'<sup>3</sup>

Paul writes, 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.'<sup>4</sup> And again, 'You are not your own. You were bought with a price. Therefore, honour God with your body.'<sup>5</sup>

The most telling quote that anchors our identity in Christ, into whose image we are being transformed by the Spirit, comes from 1 John 3. '... now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'<sup>6</sup> So who is the real me? That which I perceive, or that which others see? Bonhoeffer wrestled with this in his famous poem 'Who am I?', concluding, 'Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am Thine!'<sup>7</sup>

God bless, *Wayne*

<sup>1</sup>C. Watkin 'Biblical Critical Theory', chp 27, 2022 Zondervan

<sup>2</sup>1 Thess 2:1-12

<sup>3</sup>Matt 10:39

<sup>4</sup>Gal 2:20

<sup>5</sup>1 Cor 6:19b-20

<sup>6</sup>1 Jn 3:2-3

<sup>7</sup>In Dietrich Bonhoeffer 'Cost of Discipleship' pp18-20. 1963, MacMillan