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Vision of Praise

From the editor

This month, we would like to share a message "The Christ Identity" written for this wounded time by Yasushi Michael Suzuki, Kohitsuji no Mure staff workers.

The Christ Identity

Finding Our Identity in One Body of Christ

Michael Suzuki

Triggered by the "Black Lives Matter" movement which arose in the United States, human rights movement pursuing social equality and justice is spreading all over the world.

At first, it seemed like people were just venting their frustration and anger in their daily lives, but I can see that it was temporary and as the time went on, people began to look seriously at the deep-rooted problems in their societies. I believe this to be a positive step towards a real change.

Ultimately, I think this is a movement of people searching for their own identity. It manifests how important identity is to a human being. Identity is "I am who I am." It is not just about race; it involves so many factors to make up a person's identity. No matter what it is, it should never be trampled on.

However, as a believer in Christ who breaks down the barrier of dividing walls and reconciles what is divided and broken into Him, I am certain of one thing.

If we continue to pursue and insist on the respect for our

individual identity, what lies ahead is a conflict and division. I believe there is something much more concrete than our own identity we claim. It is to find it within the Body of Christ. In other words, to find ourselves and our own identity in the absolute love of God.

I would like to give you a few specific examples of my past experiences which made me think of identity.

I once read a book written by a Palestinian Christian leader. He said in the book: they say that the suicide bombers were created by Palestinians, but the first suicide bomber in the history was Jewish named Samson.

To him, the story of Samson in the book of Judges was about a suicide bomber. I sensed the comment reflected his anger and frustration towards people's prejudice and discrimination against Palestinians.

Even as he read the Bible, his pride in his Palestinian identity made him believe that Jews were inventors of suicide bombers, not his own people. I was saddened by the fact that rather than hearing the Word of God in a story of the Bible, he read the story to suit and justify his own viewpoint.

Another time, I saw an Argentine Christian leader being asked about a revival movement which took place in Argentina.

He was asked, "Why do you think God brought a revival movement to Argentina?" In response to the question, he said earnestly, "It is to bring the pride back to the South American people who have been looked down upon by the rest of the world."

At times, your identity provides you with a feeling of superiority, and other times a feeling of inferiority and inequality. Do you think it is God's wish to bring His

judgement upon such an emotional human level problem? I believe this is a vicious circle never healed or ended.

God's judgment should not bring hurt to one and healing to the other. He shall bring forth healing to all people.

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
(Philippians 3:20 NKJ)

“Citizenship” usually means where your identity belongs. The scripture states, “Our citizenship is in heaven.” In a deeper sense, this must mean the integration of all people's spirits in the name of Christ. It is the realization of the kingdom of God that Paul describes, “Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. (Col. 3:11) ”

In a simple statement of “Christ is all and in all,” Paul says that I am loved, you are also loved, and so we are created for the pleasure of the same God. There is no difference in Christ's love. Yet, each earthly attribute is different, so the love of Christ might be preached to all kinds of people through the difference.

Paul, due to his birth right, had a strong sense of confidence and pride in his identity. He himself has written a specific example of this.

Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the

righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

(Philippians 3:4-6 NKJ)

What he says here of “confidence in the flesh,” to be clear, is due to his background as an Israelite. It is his national and cultural identity and pride. And he called it “confidence in the flesh.” Yet he found something far more valuable than such confidence in his flesh. And he expressed his shock in the following words.

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

(Philippians 3:7-8 NKJ)

When Paul encountered the overwhelming love of Christ, he realized what he called “confidence in the flesh” was completely worthless. He described this as because of “the excellence of knowledge of Christ Jesus.”

I believe that when he encountered the immense love of Christ, he came to know of his true identity, that is worshipping and giving praise to God in spirit and truth. It was something that he was able to capture in his soul as well as in his spirit. He found it in one Body of Christ.

Paul was able to discover it not just in himself, but in others as well. That is why he said, “Christ is all and in all!” I believe in it is true peace and reconciliation.

In the end times, Jesus says, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. (Matthew 24:7)” Every person is supposed to be fighting for justice and equality, but

they clash, they hurt one another, and fall into despair.

The only One who can heal pain, sorrow, or anger at the root of every person is Christ. When our identity is revealed in Christ transcending our earthly nationality, we will return to our true home and experience eternal peace.

In worshipping God in spirit and in truth, we are united as one in Christ. The true worship transcends beyond racial and ethnic identities — it heals the pain and sorrow and brings new joy.

We know this from Jesus' words to a Samaritan woman.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father." (John 4:21 NKJ)

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him." (John 4:23 NKJ)

There is a world which transcends far beyond the traditional practices of Jews and the Samaritans when we worship God in spirit and truth. Worshipping and giving praises to God is our identity in one Body of Christ. Because God so loved all people that He gave us all the status of His beloved children.

I believe that one can then love and rejoice in himself as he is, without pain, without grief, without anger. And we can all be united with the same joy, the same minds.

I also believe that not only Paul but all of us shall be renewed and rejoice in our identity in one Body of Christ.

You have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. (Colossians 3:10-11 NKJ)

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Kohitsuji no Mure Christian Church
3-25 Yoko-cho, Ashiya, Hyogo 659-0034 Japan
[URL:https://kohitsuji.com/english](https://kohitsuji.com/english)