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Fri, 2020-01-24 10:14 -- Ruth Wilde



“So why am I writing this book? Precisely because I think that the question “Who looks like you?” is at the heart of being human. As a Christian, I believe that we are called to live in relationship and continual, open conversation with both those who mirror us, and those who are other to us.”

- Alex Clare-Young, *Transgender. Christian. Human.* p.14.
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What does it mean to be human? We will each have our own distinctive answer to that question, and that answer may change over time. For me, the answer to this vital question is linked to my identity, being a trans Christian, and the life experiences that I have had as a result of who I am and who I am called to be.

In today’s society, we often encounter people as labels, rather than as unique, complex human beings. “Transgender?”, “Christian?” and even “human?” are labels. They lead to assumptions. Sometimes these labels, when used to identify oneself, are useful and important. Other times, they are used as a weapon, filled with assumption and hate.

One of the most pervasive questions throughout my life so far has been 'How can I invite people to look beneath the label?' Authenticity, openness, honesty are, I believe, core Christian values. But how to be open is an increasingly difficult question. So many people say that I 'don't look trans' and that I should 'just be happy to be seen as a man'. The problem is, both 'trans' and 'man' are labels that don't fully describe who I am, if I want people to see who I really am, I need both labels and stories.

Transgender. Christian. Human. is my attempt to expose some of the truths underneath are labels, to tell some of my story, and to tease out some insights from it. Insights about who God is, who we are, and how we can be more Christ-like in our day-to-day lives and life-long journeys. Some of the writing in TCH is very painful to read, it was painful to write too! Some of it is funny. It is all deeply felt and carefully intended. I want readers to feel what it is like to be me, and to consider how my experiences and understandings might be shared by countless others, both trans and cis.

Each chapter covers a different time in my life, together with a theme. The first section, 'Beginnings', starts with childhood and goes on to explore teenage years; teasing out ideas about the formation of our identities. The second section, 'Transforming?', explores the links between discipleship, calling and transition. Finally, 'Transformative?' considers what it means to live life 'in all its fullness?', with a focus on the ways in which we can live together with others. The penultimate chapter, written by my wife and my mum, discusses their experiences of my transition and, in the final chapter, I offer suggestions to help church communities to engage with trans identities and those of us who hold them.

Is TCH too honest? Too exposing? Probably but, for me, that honesty and authenticity is central to the living out of my Christian faith and ministry. As well as story, you will also find questions, group activities, prayers and liturgies that may help you on your own journey. I am Alex 'trans, Christian, human. Will you journey with me?

This blog was written by Alex Clare-Young, a URC minister.

Alex says: 'For more information about me, or if you would like to get in touch, please visit www.transgenderchristianhuman.com [1]. If you would like to buy the book, it is available via www.ionabooks.com [2].'

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[1] <http://www.transgenderchristianhuman.com>

[2] <http://www.ionabooks.com>