



Painting: *The Creation Song*
 by Shiloh Sophia McCloud ©
 Used with permission
www.shilohsophiastudios.com

Listen to the Voice of Sophia

ELAINE WAINWRIGHT focuses on Sophia's song of delight in creation in Proverbs 8:22-31.

We seldom hear readings from the Book of Proverbs in our liturgies. We're familiar with the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, and the historical Narratives – from Joshua to the Books of the Kings. We pray the Psalms regularly which are part of the third segment of the Bible – Wisdom Literature. But it is rare to hear readings from other books in the Wisdom collection.

The extract from Proverbs 8:22-31 is not typical of the maxims or proverbs that give the book its name. Rather it is a song of praise in the voice of *Sophia*/Wisdom of the one who created and shapes the universe. *Sophia* sings she is there – caught up in the creative activity as the

foundations are laid down. "I was by your side", she says to the divine one, "a unique craftswoman".

Through their history the people of Israel usually named God using male imagery, Lord and King being the most common. But encounters with neighbouring nations and more varied roles given to women expanded their imagery to include the female. In this song in Proverbs, *Sophia* draws us into the interrelationships of the universe.

Sophia sings of the "first" unfolding of the divine design, before the deep/*tehom* we read about in Genesis 1:2, before the oldest of the works of the Creating One.

Sophia already exists before life was called forth by the One who creates and shapes it. It is through the repetition of "before . . . before . . . before" that we can understand the agelessness of *Sophia* in relation to the apparent timelessness of the universe.

It is easy to see the relevance of this text from Proverbs to our world today. *Sophia* is concerned with ecology; she rejoices in the diversity of species: birds, insects, cattle and reptiles. When we think of the human destruction of so many living creatures and their habitats today we realise how far our situation is from the words of her song:


"I was by your side a unique craftswoman
 Delighting you day after day
 At play everywhere in the world,
 Delighting to be among the human family."

Elaine Wainwright is a biblical scholar specialising in eco-feminist interpretation and is currently writing a Wisdom Commentary on Matthew's Gospel.



The song draws us into the interrelationships among the divine, the human and the whole of material reality. It invites us to encounter *Sophia* at play everywhere in the world, delighting to be among the human family.

But we need also to be aware that *Sophia* would weep at human destruction of creation. Recent reports, such as IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) Global Assessment report, give us cause for concern and urgent action. They provide the evidence about the wellbeing of planet Earth from research in the sciences. The *National Geographic* magazine claimed in 2018 that even with its widely diverse collections of animals and plants, Australia leads in extinction rates worldwide. Australia has 35 endangered species and New Zealand has 28 – both countries registering threats to the survival of their native species through human actions.

We can imagine that the voice of *Sophia*, the one who was there before the oldest of God's works, might be lamenting in our time. Her voice from the heart of the Trinity needs to touch us. We, the human community, must now right our wrongs so that we can join in *Sophia's* voice song of delight in the Earth community. 

Proverbs 8:22-31

The Wisdom of God cries aloud
"You, my God, created me when your purpose first unfolded,
Before the oldest of your works.
From everlasting I was firmly set,
From the beginning before Earth came into being
The deep was not, when I was born,
There were no springs to gush with water
Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills, I came to birth,
Before you made the earth,
The countryside, or the first grains of the world's dust
When you fixed the heavens firm, I was there;
When you drew a ring on the surface of the deep;
When you thickened the clouds above
And fixed fast the springs of the deep,
When you assigned the sea its boundaries,
So the waters could not disobey you
And when you laid down the foundations of the earth,
I was by your side a unique craftswoman
Delighting you day after day
At play everywhere in the world,
Delighting to be among the human family."

[Source of Translation Unknown]

Shiloh Sophia McCloud has dedicated her life to the belief that self-expression is a basic human right. She brings this work to thousands around the world through her paintings, poetry and teachings. She leads a global movement of revolutionary education focused in Intentional Creativity®, as offered in the Color of Woman Teacher Training. She co-founded a Studio and Museum, called MUSEA, in Sonoma, California, with her husband Jonathan.

Poetry and Paintings: www.shilohsophia.com

Workshops: www.cosmiccowgirls.com

Movement: www.musea.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Artist.Shiloh.Sophia>

The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope For, and Believe

by Richard Rohr

Published by Convergent Books,
SPCK Publishing, 2019

Reviewed by Pat Neuwelt


BOOK

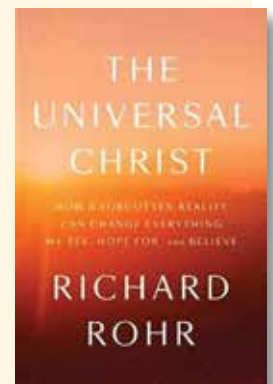
The *Universal Christ* is Richard Rohr's hot-off-the-press book – an absolute gem! It is a call to personal spiritual transformation and action for peace in the world. Rohr invites the reader to explore a richer understanding of Jesus in both his humanity and divinity – a Jesus Christ for our time. In my view, this book encapsulates Rohr's core teachings.

Drawing on a lifetime of study and human enquiry as a Franciscan priest and teacher of the Christian contemplative path, Rohr offers a series of profound insights that take the reader on a journey.

It begins in Part 1, "Another Name for Everything", in which he explores who and what "Christ" is, drawing on rich insights from science and from many Christian mystics.

In Part 2, "The Great Comma", Rohr takes the reader deeply into the humanity of Jesus, openly critiquing Church teachings offering "a disembodied Jesus". Rohr states: "Humanity needs a Jesus who is historical, relevant for real life, physical and concrete, like we are ... a Jesus we can practically imitate, and who sets the bar for what it means to be fully human. And a Christ who is big enough to hold all creation together in one harmonious unity."

While this book may sound heavy, Rohr writes in a conversational style that is honest, often humorous and truly heart-warming. For example, after dedicating the book to his recently deceased dog he later writes: "Honestly, and without any stretch, my dog Venus taught me more about 'real presence' over a 15-year period than my theological manual ever did." The writing style invites personal reflection. The book lends itself to being slowly savoured alone, but can also be broken open collectively. It is a book worthy of shared study by a circle of friends or small faith community – and there is a companion study guide available for purchase. *The Universal Christ* is highly recommended to anyone who has an inkling that Christ is truly another name for everything, a force of Love at the heart of the universe. 



Richard Rohr's *Daily Meditations* are at:
<https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/>