



# Portraits of Christ Part 2

**Doug Olena • August 1, 2021 • Life Together at Evangel Temple**

Quoting G. K. Chesterton, “Your religion is not the church you belong to, but the cosmos you live inside of.”

**Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for, and Believe*, 16\***

\*Page numbers are from Apple Books edition on my desktop.

Tim Rohde

# The First Incarnation

## Book of Nature, the First Bible

- This session is an invitation to look at Christ from a universal perspective.
- Richard Rohr invites us to see a distinction between the roles of Jesus of the second incarnation and Christ of the first, the Universal Christ.
- Rohr is not a pantheist or panentheist, though some think of him as a process theologian. He invites us to contemplate Christ from the perspective of a universe enchanted with its designer and creator. Every bit of this universe has his stamp and is a signpost pointing to him.
- Rohr invites us to see religion as a means of reconnecting with God, “To help us see the world and ourselves in wholeness, and not just in parts.” 16

“Truly enlightened people see oneness because they *look out from oneness*, instead of labeling everything as superior and inferior, in and out.”

Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for, and Believe*, 14

“He came to unite and ‘to reconcile all things in himself, everything in heaven and everything on earth’ (Colossians 1:19).”

**Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for, and Believe*, 17**



# Christ is not Jesus's Last Name

Universal Christ in local settings

# Let there be light!

## First and second incarnation

- Is it any wonder that the first chapter of John begins at the beginning of the universe by claiming that the *arche* of the universe is Christ himself? John calls on Genesis to make a point. Jesus is the Christ who created the universe.
- Rohr asks whether Jesus and Christ have different roles in our religion. I think it's a fair question.
- Also, can it be that in the first incarnation, creation of the universe is a set up for the second where Jesus can finish the job of preparing redemption for his universe and us and say "It is finished."

“What must be made clear is that apparently we cannot so simply and naïvely assume that what lies behind the name of Christ is known from Christian piety, literature, art and tradition.”

Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian*, p 129.

# At this point...

## Standard Evangelical Story

- At this point, it should be fair to ask how evangelicalism got to the place in its theology where its members could tell:
  - who was saved and who wasn't
  - who could be saved and who couldn't
  - who was in and who was out
  - how the pagans and Christians are different from each other.
- How did the universal Christ become so quickly particularized to Western Christianity, so that it became a tool of colonization, repression, and culture war? My suggestion is that they lost sight of the universal by descent into the political.
- My hope is that we could aspire to something higher than politics.

“Intellectuals in the last century have denied the existence and power of such great wholeness—and in Christianity, we have made the mistake of limiting the Creator’s presence to just one human manifestation, Jesus.”

**Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for, and Believe*, 27**

A young girl with dark skin and long, dark dreadlocks is laughing joyfully. She is wearing a light blue t-shirt. The background is a blurred natural setting with a waterfall on the left and green foliage on the right. The text "A Universal and Personal God" is overlaid in large white letters across the center of the image.

# A Universal and Personal God

Never Lonely Again

# But...

## Rohr's Universal Christ

- “Numerous Scriptures make it very clear that this Christ has existed ‘from the beginning’ (John 1:1–18, Colossians 1:15–20, and Ephesians 1:3–14 being primary sources), so the Christ cannot be coterminous with Jesus. But by attaching the word ‘Christ’ to Jesus as if it were his last name, instead of a means by which God’s presence has enchanted all matter throughout all of history, Christians got pretty sloppy in their thinking.
- “Our faith became a competitive theology with various parochial theories of salvation, instead of a universal cosmology inside of which all can live with an inherent dignity.” 28-29

“A merely personal God becomes tribal and sentimental, and a merely universal God never leaves the realm of abstract theory and philosophical principles.”

**Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for, and Believe*, 32**

# An Exit from Creation?

## Rohr's Universal Christ

- “Sadly, we have a whole section of Christianity that is looking for—even praying for—an exit from God’s ongoing creation toward some kind of Armageddon or Rapture. Talk about missing the point! The most effective lies are often the really big ones.” 33
- Many of us have grown up in this environment. But it has eviscerated our souls. Tim Rohde offers himself as an example of this. And some of us have children who have just lost interest in Christianity because of it. We can take the respect for God and his Word from evangelicalism, but abandon the grimy sectarian impulse, the insider/outsider template of a particular Christ that it promotes, and find the universal Christ in contrast.

# A New Template

## Built like the Trinity!

- “Jesus is a map for the time-bound and personal level of life, and Christ is the blueprint for all time and space and life itself.
- “Both reveal the universal pattern of self-emptying and infilling (Christ) and death and resurrection (Jesus), which is the process we have called ‘holiness,’ ‘salvation,’ or just ‘growth,’ at different times in our history.
- “For Christians, this universal pattern perfectly mimics the inner life of the Trinity in Christian theology, which is our template for how reality unfolds, since all things are created “in the image and likeness” of God (Genesis 1:26–27).”



# Jesus Christ and the Beloved Community

“Primordial Pattern for Reality.” 35

*“The whole of creation—not just Jesus—is the beloved community, the partner in the divine dance. Everything is the ‘child of God.’ No exceptions. When you think of it, what else could anything be? All creatures must in some way carry the divine DNA of their Creator.”*

**Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for, and Believe*, 35**

# Rational Assent?

Built like the Trinity!

- “Unfortunately, the notion of faith that emerged in the West was much more *a rational assent to the truth of certain mental beliefs, rather than a calm and hopeful trust that God is inherent in all things, and that this whole thing is going somewhere good.*” 35
  - *“No one religion will ever encompass the depth of such faith.*
  - *No ethnicity has a monopoly on such hope.*
  - *No nationality can control or limit this Flow of such universal love.*” 36

*“Frankly, Jesus came to show us how to be human much more than how to be spiritual, and the process still seems to be in its early stages.”*

**Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for, and Believe*, 37**

Buy *The Universal Christ* from  
Amazon <https://amzn.to/3fziqp9>