

A Review and Reflection on “The Universal Christ”, by Richard Rohr

I see my experience over the past several weeks of the “The Universal Christ” Book study as an extension of what I started a year ago, a study of the Lord’s Prayer in Aramaicⁱ. The message of incarnation as a worldview and God’s intent for us to journey towards a non-dualistic paradigm aligns, for me, with the Aramaic language itself. And, from what I’ve come to believe, Jesus responded to the request with a verbal a map of the journey to incarnation. This map is what we know as the Lord’s prayer, a map routing the journey to resurrection.

This book provides the map commentary; it fills in the blanks left in this two-sentence retort. In short, in my opinion, Rohr is simply using 80,000 words to help us understand the two-sentence response.

The first part of the book helps us understand more clearly what we are called to do: it is titled “Another Word for Everything,” which actually means the journey to Resurrection (though that is not made clear until chapter 14, in the second part of the book). The first part of the book introduces the ingredients for the journey: what we are resurrecting to; what we need to accept; how we look along the way; where we are really coming from, in spite of what we think; what love actually is; something about the sacred experience and the sweetness upon arrival.

The second part of the book tells us how contemplative prayer steps us through the journey; thus, the title: “The Great Comma,” meaning the actual life of the fully human Jesus, the example that Christians have chosen to follow. I personally gained a better insight of Easter as a metaphor for my life and can now better appreciate the Christmas metaphor of Mary giving birth to God, as my responsibility of giving birth to God, me resurrecting. “Why Did Jesus Die” was the most important chapter for me

because it was quite existentially personal. I've been crucified a bit myself; and I've crucified more often than I care to remember. I saw a TV soap episode (*see appendix: A Thought for the week*) this week (starting August 18, 2019) that really drove the point home for me.

But most importantly the book helped put other spiritual readings in perspective. One of which is "A Course in Miracles." I always loved the material in the course but wondered how it is supposed to fit in what the church teaches what Christianity is to be. Thanks to Rohr's "The Universal Christ" explanation I can see A Course in Miracles as a very good articulation of an incarnated view of reality, an articulation that leaves little or no space for the prevailing duality world views that dominates the western culture.

The narrative is almost as if Jesus himself was the author and writing in English with a New York City accent, instead of speaking Aramaic in the first century in Palestine. But instead we are talking of a stream of consciousness Manuscripted by Helen Schucmanⁱⁱ, who described herself as Psychologist, educator, conservative in theory and atheistic in belief. What a hoot!

So now I have three works of A Course of Miracles reflecting authors on my desk: One a practicing Jewⁱⁱⁱ, one a Methodist Minister^{iv} and cofounder of the seminary I attended and a practicing Hindu^v.

Though I am glad to share my excitement my new connect with A Course in Miracles here, I do not recommend it to anyone else and I will not be teaching anything about it at St. John's Episcopal.

What I will do next, though, is teach The Beatitudes in Aramaic around the 1st of 2020. I've begun working on it in the past few days. As the "Lord's Prayer" served as foundation for my 2019 theological discoveries I suspect that Beatitudes will serve the same way in 2020. It is the language, "Aramaic", that makes the difference; it is a non-dualistic language and it

gets me past the dualism infused into Christianity by the Greeks and Romans, which prevails in Western Christian thought. Thanks to Richard Rohr for confirming that for me.

Appendix: A Thought for the Week

This week while trying to decide what I want to say my experience with the Universal Christ Book study and with Rohr's daily meditations on "nonviolence" all week, I made sure to keep up with one of my favorite TV soap operas, "Yellowstone." Yellowstone is anything but nonviolent and in fact allows its audience to feast on as many illustrations of retribution as possible. But out of that came for me one gem I feel call to share.

A few words on setting.

1. The show is about a powerful ranching family in Montana, the Dutton's, who've owned Yellowstone Ranch for two generation and are grooming the third generation; they own thousands of acres and rule the town.
2. The wife of the eldest son, Monica, who happens to be Native American is shopping in a downtown boutique. And because of the color of her skin was harassed by the store owner. When she tried to leave, she was held in the store and accused of shop lifting. Police were called and strip searching was done, the whole nine yards.
3. Early in the scene Monica had the presence of mind to call her sister in law, Beth, the retributive queen in the family, who came to the rescue. Upon her arrival, given she was known to be a Dutton, the strip search stopped, and the police were sent away. Then Beth began to wreak the place. In the mist of it all Monica got the store owner to apologize, which ended the ruckus.
4. Upon leaving the store Beth and Monica want to a near-by bar for a chat.

Now for what I want to share . . . it made me think of Chapter 12: Why Did Jesus Died.

Beth Says to Monica, "You are a kind soul; the whole world can see it. Some of the world hates you for it. Today was probably more about that than anything else. In looking at you she (the store owner) saw younger, prettier, and just better; she hates you for it and was willing to hurt you for it. But she is the one hurting now. And you, you will, in a couple weeks, forget all about her. But she will never forget you for forgiving her; it will haunt her for the rest of her days."

And Monica responds to Beth, " But *that wasn't my goal.*" And Beth retorts, "*That is why it will.*"

5. And then the show continued on for the rest of the hour, with the family steeped in their violent retributive battles with their perceived enemies. The little incident in the boutique went totally without notice. The women kept it among themselves.

ⁱ In Luke 11:1-4 the Disciples requested of Jesus, "Lord teach us to pray." And "The Lord's Prayer" was the response. It is reasonable to think that the word "prayer" meant something different than the way we commonly use the word. I like to think the word back then meant to practice interfacing with Allaha, that one which expresses itself uniquely through all things. The object of prayer is to have those temporary experiences of interfacing become a consistent seeing the world with new eyes. In other words, do what's needed to acquire an incarnational world view.

ⁱⁱ Helen was a Professor of Medical Psychology at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City.

ⁱⁱⁱ Maryanne Williamson's "A Return to Love: Reflections of A Course in Miracles."

^{iv} Dr Jon Mundy, PhD "Living A Course in Miracles: An essential guide to the classic text"

^v Michael Mirdad "The Heart of "A Course in Miracles: Understanding and applying the 12 primary concepts of the course"