

Chapter 8

THE DIVINE DANCE

The Trinity And Your Transformation

by Richard Rohr with Mike Morrell

Reviewed by David Bradshaw

“What gets us into trouble is not what we don't know. It's what we know for sure that just ain't so.” -Mark Twain

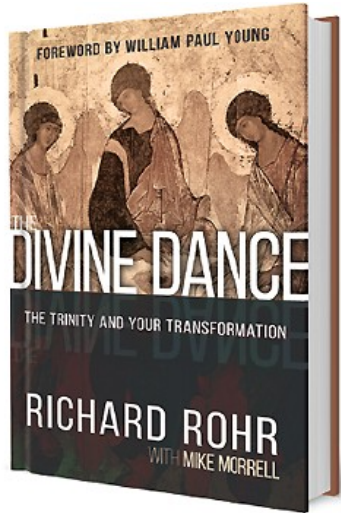
As our broken, disconnected world dances on the precipice of widespread civil unrest, *The Divine Dance*, by Richard Rohr and Mike Morrell, is quietly and gently calling us toward another dance - and ultimately a reflective, spiritually transforming revolution.

In this latest installment of wisdom from Richard Rohr, a Franciscan teacher and man I'm increasingly finding myself a willing disciple of, readers are challenged to take a fresh look at the mystery of the Trinity.

This book is extremely timely given the sharp left-right political, economic and religious divisions which presently exist - as well as the tendency of Christians to ignore or ridicule the other major wisdom traditions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism and especially Islam.

Rather than seeking to divide, Rohr is calling Christians to find areas of agreement and unity without compromising our core beliefs. This is so entirely refreshing that this book deserves a place in your library. Even if you do not agree with all of his conclusions, I promise you will be challenged to rethink things you thought you knew "for sure."

The Divine Dance is calling the entire faith community to embrace contemplation and a major restoration of the mystery and majesty of participatory Christianity, which thrived during the first three centuries of the Christian faith, and he believes is leading up to a “Trinitarian revolution.” This mostly internal revolution has the potential to help heal and bring together our fragmented world.



“What if changing our perception of God has the potential to change everything?” asks Rohr. “We might still be in the infancy stage of Christianity...Mystery isn’t something you can’t understand, but rather something you endlessly understand.”

Rohr believes, “God has become a very contested idea today...debates argued, wars waged and hearts broken trying to own, define or even relate to this being.” Gaining more intimacy and relationship with a loving God can help serve as a bridge over today’s cultural impasse. He bravely leads seekers on a journey of self-discovery of what’s going on inside the Godhead.

“God is relationship itself...absolute relatedness...salvation is the readiness, capacity and willingness to stay in relationship,” declare Rohr and Morrell. “When you don’t give other people any power in your life, when you block them, I think you’re spiritually dead. And not far from evil...The Way of Jesus is an invitation to a Trinitarian way of living, loving and relating - on earth as it is in Godhead.”

Rohr is announcing the end of spectator spirituality which today still dominates the church, Catholic and Protestant. In its place, Rohr teaches readers how to flow into participation with the Trinity so that heaven is reflected in us, on earth, as we prepare for eternity.

Rohr’s premise, running through all of his books, is simply: “The way down is the way up.” This requires letting our self-guard down and permitting God’s spirit to rule our hearts, minds, words and actions.

When Jesus prays in John chapter 17 that believers are taken “out of the world,” He is speaking of being taken out of the world’s system of thinking and values, which Rohr says are “almost always going in the opposite direction of the mystery of the Trinity.” And I would add, the opposite of the Kingdom of God.

Rohr is not talking about just a slight adjustment in our view of God, but rather a major paradigm shift; “from Supreme Monarch living in isolation as a Critical Spectator,” to “the Ultimate Participant in everything - both the good and the painful...The Trinitarian Revolution reveals God as being with us in all of life instead of on the sidelines.”

If you’re like me, likely you’ll find yourself underlining key statements for future reference and reflection. Below are 35 key takeaways from my first read of this important book. My prayer is that these short quotes will help give you a glimpse of why this may be Rohr’s most transformational book yet - and what you might gain (and lose) by reading it yourself.

PART I: WANTED: A TRINITARIAN REVOLUTION

1. RESTORING CONNECTEDNESS

“The greatest dis-ease facing humanity right now is our profound sense of disconnectedness - from God, ourselves, each other and the world.”

2. POSITIVITY'S DIRECTION

“If God is the great I AM, then we would have to say that evil/Satan is the I AM NOT, who is forever accusing others, denies humans their substance and makes negativity, opposition and the creation of separateness his primary task. The Trinity beautifully undoes the negativity by a totally positive movement that never reverses direction.”

3. INTERFAITH INCLUSIVITY

“Our new appreciation of the Trinity is giving us a new grounding for interfaith understanding. Trinitarian theology is going to offer us perhaps the best foundation for interfaith dialogue and friendship we've ever had.”

4. MIND/HEART UNITY

“...something beautiful is afoot - the reversal of a century-long lover's quarrel between science and spirituality, mind and heart.”

5. ATOMIC TRINITY

“The atom is the basic building block of the universe (proton, electron, neutron)... describing Trinity mystery is similar to atomic energy... as it is within, so it is without...the shape of the cosmos - from quasar to quark - is triune... when atoms are destabilized, we created a bomb of death and destruction.”

6. CHOOSING GRATITUDE

“Neuroscience now tells us fear, negativity and hatred stick like Velcro to our nerves... while positivity, gratitude and appreciation slide away like Teflon from those same nerves until we savor them or choose them for a minimum of 15 seconds - only then do they imprint.”

7. RESTORING HOPE

“Trinity is the ultimate paradigm shift... we cannot separate Jesus from the Trinity... God as Trinity gives hope to society as a whole.”

8. EMPTY, THEN INFILLED

“Emptiness alone is prepared for fullness - Father, infinite one, Son, imminent one, Spirit intimate one - when we are at home with all three, we are living inside Trinitarian spirituality.”

9. CIRCULAR POWER

“The law of Three changes everything - the magic of three breaks us out of our dualistic impasses. Trinitarian theology says true power is circular, not hierarchic.”

PART TWO - WHY THE TRINITY? WHY NOW?

10. CONTEMPLATION TRAINING

“Contemplation is training yourself to see things overlooked, the wholeness in all things.”

11. A LOVING FATHER

“We feared the Father more than loved Him. We’re currently suffering from a Trinity Deficit Disorder ... Here's why; Absentee Father. When God as a loving Father is missing, there is a fundamental scariness and insecurity to our whole human journey... you’ll believe anything and do anything to feel dignity and meaning ... in a fatherless society you've got to save yourself.”

12. TRINITARIAN BIRTHING

“Do you want to know what goes on in the core of the Trinity? In the core of the Trinity, the Father laughs and gives birth to the Son. The Son laughs back at the Father and gives birth to the Spirit. The whole Trinity laughs and gives birth to us.”
-Meister Eckhart, 14th cent. German Dominican

13. DIVINE ACCEPTANCE

“If you ascribe negativity on to God, you’re really in trouble spiritually because you’ve got no way out... without traversing four stages of grief and dying - denial, anger, bargaining & depression - before reaching divine acceptance.”

14. EMBRACING BOTH PATHS

“Two paths that allow people to have a genuinely new experience: the path of wonder and the path of suffering.”

15. STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

“Suffering is the only thing strong enough to break down your control systems, explanatory mechanisms, logical paradigms, desire to be in charge and carefully maintained sense of control.”

16. THE UN-COMFORT ZONE

“Let pain bring its gift of vulnerability. Let some of it change you, let some it call you outside your comfort zone to this bigger place where we are all one. (at-onement)”

17. SPIRITUAL REBIRTH

“Maybe our Christian religion in its present formulation has to die for a truly cosmic and love-centered spiritual path to be born.”

18. SUFFERING LOVE

“Whenever we love, we are in some way participating in the very suffering of God, the necessary self-emptying that must precede and make room for every infilling.”

19. PARADOXICAL FORGIVENESS

“To forgive you have to be able to see the other person - at least momentarily - as a whole person, as an image of the Divine, containing holiness and horror at the same time...You have to learn to live well with paradox or you can't forgive.”

20. MATURE SPIRITUALITY

“The Bible is the best book in the world, but has often been the worst book - not because of its content - but because of the spiritual maturity of those reading it.”
“Corruption of the best is the worst” -Thomas Aquinas

21. SHARED SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

“In Hindu theology, there are three qualities of God and all reality, 1. ‘Sat’ - Father, being, 2. ‘Chit’ - Son, consciousness, knowledge, 3. ‘Ananda’ - Spirit, bliss, happiness - Now more than ever, we need to draw from or shared spiritual heritage to better understand our own belief.”

22. KNOWING LIGHT & DARK

“In the long tradition of Christian mysticism, there are two great strains of knowing; ‘kataphatic’ (seen according to the light) or a positive way and ‘apophatic’ (seen against the light) or a negative way...The apophatic has largely disappeared over the last 500 years...this has resulted in an eclipse of the Father.”

23. ALL VULNERABLE GOD

“We haven't realized that God has forever redefined divine power in the Trinity. The Christian God's power comes through his powerlessness and humility. Our God is much more properly called all-vulnerable than all-mighty.”

24. AN INCLUSIVE SAVIOR

“We made Jesus Christ into an exclusive savior instead of the totally inclusive savior he was meant to be.”

25. A FEAR-LESS FAITH

“Once Christians learn to honor the Cosmic Christ as a larger ontological (the nature of being) identity than the historic Jesus, then Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and spiritual-but-not religious people have no reason to be afraid.” 94

26. LOSS AND RENEWAL

“The Divine pattern revealed in Trinity is loss and renewal, self-emptying and living on an expanded level, surrender and receptivity, death and resurrection, darkness and light. The Pascal pattern is always loss and renewal. There is no renewal without loss.” (*The Wisdom Pattern: Order ~ Disorder ~ Reorder*)

27. RESURRECTION REQUIRES DEATH

“By and large, what human beings want is resurrection without death, answers without doubt, light without darkness, the conclusion without the process.”

28. IMPLANTED HOPE

“Let’s call Holy Spirit Implanted Hope. When God the Holy Spirit is missing, there’s no inner momentum...no inner aliveness that keeps people from dying from their wounds.”

29. FROM HURTING TO HEALING

“We move from hurting people hurting others to wounded healers healing others.”

30. KNOWING GOD'S HEART

“God refuses to be known except through trustful loving relationship. You cannot know God with your mind alone.”

31. SEEING WHOLENESS

“A mystic is precisely one who sees things in wholes and not just in parts ... Big truth must be presented on small stages for humans to get the point.”

PART 3 - THE HOLY SPIRIT

32. HOLY SPIRIT HEALING

“The Holy Spirit sustains and heals all things into Love by slowly unveiling the inherent goodness, truth and beauty in everything.”

33. TRINITY OF LOVE

“The Holy Spirit is the love relationship between the Father and the Son.”

34. DESTINATION LOVE

“Love is not something you do; love is someone you are, your True Self. Love is where you come from and where you are going.”

35. HEAVEN ON EARTH

“Your job is simply to exemplify heaven now... the remedy when you find it hard to exemplify heaven now, to let love happen.”

TRINITY

(Ballad/song based on lyrics by Richard Rohr)

God for us, we call you Father
God alongside us, we call you Jesus
God within us, we call you Holy Spirit
Trinity, three in one.

You are the eternal mystery,
That enables, enfolds and enlivens all things,
Even us, and even me. Trinity.

God for us, we call you Father
God alongside us, we call you Jesus
God within us, we call you Holy Spirit
Trinity, three in One.

Every name falls short of your goodness and greatness,
We can only see who You are in what is.
We ask for such perfect seeing,
As it was in the beginning, in now, and ever shall be. Trinity

God for us, we call you Father
God alongside us, we call you Jesus
God within us, we call you Holy Spirit
Trinity, three in One.

