



May 30, 2010 Sermon by Kimiko Karpoff  
*Sophia Dancing Divine*

Readings: Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

"Wisdom is calling us, Sophia is calling  
Raising her voice, she stands by the city gates,  
at the crossroads, on the mountain top.  
At every entrance she is standing, shouting  
to us: "Oh people," she calls, "learn from me!  
Listen to me, for I speak nothing but truth.  
Know my ways, for they are richer than silver.  
Know my secrets, and you do not need gold.  
Listen to me, my words are more precious than rubies.  
My words are riper than figs, sweeter than dates,  
more nourishing than apples and olives.  
Kings and princes and careful judges know me,  
and so do those who simply love knowledge.  
Follow me on the path to truth.  
Follow me to the way to justice." Proverbs 7 - 9<sup>1</sup>

The Bible is infused with Sophia. Her presence, like God's, is everywhere from the beginning to the end. Every time we hear from Wisdom or of Wisdom, it is Sophia.

In Proverbs we hear that she is created at the beginning of God's works, before all else. The language here is quite interesting, though. The word used for created, can also be translated as acquired. "God acquired Sophia when God's purpose first unfolded."<sup>2</sup> Hagia Sophia, in Greek, Holy Wisdom, is often associated with the Holy Spirit. In Christianity the Holy Spirit is a part of the trinity, an aspect of God or a way of understanding God. She is not a separate creation but in naming her separately, we begin to understand that God is about relationship. God is not *an* entity, but is how all entities interconnect.

When I imagine that time of beginning, I imagine the burgeoning consciousness of the Creator percolating over chaos then calling forth the spinning, dancing presence of Sophia as part of Creator and Creation, to help shape the whole cosmos, including stars and planets, solar systems, this earth and it's water ways, mountains, trees, flowers, seeds, insects, animals, fish, birds and peoples. Proverbs describes this. Listen to these words again.

"Ages ago I was set up; at the first, before the beginning of the earth  
When there were no depths I was brought forth;  
when there were no springs abounding with water  
Before the mountains had been shaped; before the hills I was brought forth--  
when he had not yet made earth and fields; or the world's first bits of soil

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1 [http://www.sistersinfreyasmoon.com/Level1\\_Project\\_LadySophia.html](http://www.sistersinfreyasmoon.com/Level1_Project_LadySophia.html)

2 <http://www.pinn.net/~sunshine/book-sum/sophia.html>

Sophia, in the biblical creation was not a god, but was a divine being. It is not clear that she was uncreated like Jesus:

the word used to refer to her creation also means "acquired" by God. Proverbs 8:22 -"God created me [acquired me]

(Sophia) when God's purpose first unfolded."

When he established the heavens, I was there;  
    when he drew a circle on the face of the deep  
when he made firm the skies above; when he established the fountains of the deep  
when he assigned to the sea its limit; so that the waters might not transgress his command  
when he marked out the foundations of the earth;  
    then I was beside him, like a master worker  
and I was daily his delight;                rejoicing before him always  
rejoicing in his inhabited world                and delighting in the human race"

Sophia was brought forth as the co-creator of the cosmos. And if we go back to the early creation story, right at the beginning of Genesis this is what it says:  
It says, "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters."

Here it says, "darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters."  
In Proverbs we heard, "I was there when he drew a circle on the face of the deep."

That wind of God is the wind of Sophia drawing circles over the face of the waters, over the face of the deep.

This is where I think liturgical dancing would be a great gift. And also some kind of technology that could produce for you to see, what I visualize in my brain. Let me try to describe what I imagine...

As we put ourselves into this as audience, we would be like specs of dust in the vastness of the theatre auditorium, like stars in the heavens. We watch this from a great distance, and yet an intimate distance. And as audience, we are part of the performance.

It is dark, but there is a tangible presence, a tension, anticipation perhaps and then an explosion followed quickly by a whoosh that starts gathering particles in the way that wind will gather leaves into a swirling cluster. And it is like a dance. It is Sophia in a cosmic dance with the chaos, bringing order to the debris, creating something new. And as in a dance, the chaos and the ordered universe, Sophia, they are partners. They are both aspects of the dynamic of the creative process out of which we and all of this are formed.<sup>3</sup>

Sophia is important in the cosmology of the early Christians because it is she who calms the chaos. In that early understanding, God was the only thing standing between the relative order of the world and a return to that early chaos.

I think it must be hard for us to truly imagine how people 4000 years ago, or 2000 years ago would understand these stories. We live in a world where we believe that we understand how the world works. Back then, people had no scientific understanding of the world in any modern sense. And they believed that they understood how the world worked.

How was it that the great waters did not simply drain over the edge of the earth? Why did water sometimes fall from the sky and other times not? It was the act of gods.

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<sup>3</sup> See Bruce Sanguin. *Darwin, Divinity, and the Dance of the Cosmos*. [Kelowna: Woodlake Books, 2007]. 230.

Their lives were organized to limit chaos as much as possible, to try to maintain the relative stability of their lives. God was not peripheral to this, but at the core. Managing chaos was God's job. That was part of the covenant. Sophia brought that core into their lives. Sophia called to them to follow the ways of wisdom, rather than foolishness.

This dance of creation continues even today. With our scientific instruments we can see the vortex of stars that are still spinning in the heavens. With our understanding of science, we can see the evolution of our world as the dance continues. Chaos in tension with order. It occurs to me that the reading today is from Proverbs and we have a modern proverb that is really about this. "Necessity is the mother of invention." This talks about the dance of bringing order to the chaos. Where there is chaos, we identify a need and bring order through innovation. That is that way that evolution works.

It is also the case that sometimes order needs a bit of chaos to shake things up. Sophia in her cosmic dance ensures that both happen. There are times when our ordered lives become complacency in a status quo that is not life-giving. Destabilizing that allows for a new order to be danced into being.

This ancient Sophia connects to the modern science of quantum physics. With quantum theory scientists have acknowledged that the world is intricately connected through our very thoughts and being. They now know that particles change their behaviour simply by being observed and will respond to scientific tests based on what the scientist believes the outcome will be. Our thoughts, our very being impacts the world. What we think, how we think becomes part of what is manifest.

In the beginning, God as that undefined relational connection, had an inkling of the world, just an inkling. Like all amazing ideas, it was and continues to be an evolving process as each new thought becomes part of the whole. Each of us is part of that. With Sophia dancing in delight with chaos, the world began to form and is still forming.

And so it is that Wisdom, Sophia, the divine Holy Spirit, animates but also calls to us to listen to her wisdom. She stands at the places where people gather, the city gates, the cross roads, and at the quiet places, the mountain tops. And she calls out, "Choose wisely. Follow my path." This is a path of justice, it is a path of abundance. Abundance doesn't mean acquisition, but moderation. Knowing that there is enough for everyone when we share rather than hoard. Gratitude.

Hagia Sophia implores us to understand that how we live, what we think and do, all become part of the mix that shapes the cosmos. She invites us to know ourselves as part of the dance. Let's put ourselves back into that auditorium. We are specks of dust, or stars, watching the interplay, the swirling, dancing vortex. And we realize that we are not really mere observers in this theatre. There are no mere observers. As much as we imagine ourselves on the edge, as incidental specks, we are part of the on-going creation of the dance. Our being determines the next moves. We are caught up in the whole of it, even those of us who have turned our backs and are determinately putting our fingers in our ears.

Sophia calls us to come back to the dance. Not just to watch it, but to get caught up in it. But wisely. because wise or not we will shape the ongoing creation of the Cosmos.

Sophia was there from the beginning delighting in Creation. We are here now. Let us, too, delight in this on-going dance.

May it be so.