

ON WISDOM  
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TOPICAL SEMINAR  
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I was raised in the Judeo-Christian faith tradition and have spent my life surrounded by its stories, metaphors and symbols. As a young person I learned verses from Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Book of Job. If I had been born in the Middle East, India, Japan, China or many parts of Africa, my notions of Wisdom would be quite different.

My thinking and belief system came from neither the Roman Catechism nor the Fundamental Doctrines, but rather the more existential frames (e.g, Kierkegaard, Bultmann, Tillich, Niebuhr, and their followers and protege's).

The quest of finding greater philosophical and historical background let me to the work of Elaine Pagels, who was part of the team that has worked with and studied the Dead Sea Scrolls (writings found in caves near Qumran, Egypt in the middle of the 20th century).

Pagels' work narrowed in on the Gnostic Gospels. Her work also influenced the writings and teaching of scholar Karen Armstrong,

I found this "Gemini" summary quite helpful for today's purpose:

Wisdom ([Sophia](#)) is central to Gnostic Gospels, representing divine knowledge, a feminine spiritual principle, and the path to salvation, appearing in texts like *The [Sophia of Jesus Christ](#)*, where Jesus reveals cosmic secrets, and *The Gospel of Thomas*, focusing on inner knowing, contrasting with mainstream Christianity by emphasizing personal, experiential "gnosis" to overcome the material world and reunite with the divine source. These texts, discovered at Nag Hammadi, reveal esoteric teachings about creation, humanity's divine spark, and mystical union, highlighting wisdom as the key to spiritual liberation.

Elaine Pagels **views wisdom, particularly in her study of Gnosticism, as an inner, transformative knowledge (gnosis) distinct from mere doctrine, often personified as the feminine divine, Sophia, revealing a direct connection to the divine within, rather than through external authority.**

Pagel's recent Memoir *Miracles and Wonder* (2025, Doubleday) challenges the reader to revisit their knowledge of the historical Jesus.

After a career as researcher, teacher and writer, Karen Armstrong provides an example of bringing wisdom into one's life and is one of the founders of the [Charter for Compassion](#). In the midst of all the "goodness and light" smiling faces is the Charter itself, which is a call to bring the universal "wisdom" in the principles of compassion into our daily actions, speech, committee participation, and other "political" encounters in which we engage.

I submit that a discussion of Wisdom without bringing Sophia into the arena would definitely "miss the mark".

Respectfully  
Pat Newcomb  
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