

INTRODUCTION

It has been ten years since I wrote *The Star in My Heart: Discovering Inner Wisdom*. When I think about how that book came to birth, I am still amazed. In the preface to *The Star in My Heart*, I explained how I had no intention of writing about Divine Wisdom until the moment when I saw my friend's two-year-old daughter, Elizabeth, dancing around, smelling the flowers in her family's rose garden. Even then I did not comprehend that what had surfaced in my consciousness was a connection with the beautiful verse from Proverbs 8 in which Sophia describes herself as playing in the universe at the time of creation. As I contemplated the young, dancing child in the rose garden, I found myself taking pen and paper and beginning to write about Holy Wisdom. That moment gave rise to *The Star in My Heart*.

Elizabeth is now a budding young woman. She has grown a lot. So have I. At the time when Elizabeth danced among the flowers in a Sophia-like posture, I barely knew that "Sophia" was the Greek word for Wisdom. I did know how unusual it is to have Wisdom referred to as "she" and "her" in the Bible and that it is rare to have any biblical references about the feminine

as a divine quality. However, I had only a tiny awareness of the depth and the beauty found in the scriptural passages referring to Sophia. I had been attracted to wisdom for a long time, but my cultural conditioning had kept me viewing wisdom as a “thing,” as a quality or a characteristic of the Divine but not the Divine herself. The Biblical wisdom texts do contain wise sayings (things), such as those in Proverbs, but they also contain passages that refer directly to wisdom as a person.

It was only when I prayerfully dwelt inside the scripture passages that contain the “wisdom literature,” that I really came to a personal relationship with Sophia. I moved from viewing “wisdom” as a quality of the Divine One to perceiving “Wisdom” as the Divine One herself. It was then that I began naming Sophia as the One for whom I have yearned and the One whom I have known for a long, long time. Since then, after nearly ten years of praying daily to the Divine in the name of Sophia, I realize in a much fuller way how deeply and tenderly she is a part of me.

Having said this, I also want to note that I believe all our names for the Divine, whether male or female, are inadequate. All these metaphors are our feeble human attempts and projections as we try to draw near to the Mysterious One. Probably the only adequate name for the Holy One is that which was written long ago: “I Am Who I Am” (Exodus 3:14). In order to have a personal relationship, however, it is helpful to name the Divine. “Sophia” has become the

best divine name for my prayer. I resonate immensely with her qualities of guidance, truth-bringing, and companionship. She is always with me as I search for the way home, which is what I am consistently doing on my spiritual path.

How Others Respond to Sophia

I remember how scared I was when a colleague of mine, a very critical thinker, read a part of the manuscript for *The Star in My Heart*. When she returned the pages to me, she challenged me with: "So, is Sophia divine?" I remember feeling alarm and concern. Would I be rejected or considered heretical if I said what I thought: "Yes, of course, she is one of the unique manifestations of the divine." Instead, I replied, "I'm not sure." Years later I smile at my early fears because now I know what a comfort and a joy Sophia is to me, and I never think of her as being anything other than the true Source of Life. I have also stopped being concerned about what others will think of me because I pray to Sophia.

In my travels and in my ministry, I have come to know that there is a great deal of anger and fear within the Christian community regarding Sophia. Many Christians brush her off with the dismissal of "It's a New Age thing." It pains me every time I hear that comment because I realize how much spiritual richness they are missing. I also wonder if they have ever reflected on the wisdom texts in the Bible. The deeper

issue is, I believe, that Sophia represents the feminine side of the Holy One. This approach to God-ness incites them to speak fearfully or angrily about heresy and condemnation. When I go back and remember my hesitations and concerns as I first began to think about Sophia as a manifestation of the Divine, I can more readily understand their hesitation and their refusal to accept Sophia.

It has been a great joy to me, though, to hear positive comments repeatedly from those who have discovered Sophia through *The Star in My Heart*. Letters have come from many places and from a variety of persons, both young and old, male and female. A number of these are older women who have written such things as, "I feel as though I have finally come home," "I have found a friend in Sophia," and "I have always longed to be able to relate to God in this way."

One of my true moments of joy was the time I was giving a conference on grief and loss. After the break, an older man stood up and he said, "Could you speak a bit about Sophia? My spiritual director introduced me to her, and it has been the best thing that has ever happened in my spiritual growth." I wanted to hug that man (and I did at the next break) for giving me an opportunity to speak about Sophia.

Sad to say, even those who find Sophia as their newly discovered divine soul-mate cannot always risk letting others know about her. I received a beautiful letter from a successful writer. She gave me permission to tell her story but not to use her name for

fear that her writings would be rejected if her readers discovered that she believed in Sophia. She wrote, "There are circles in which I speak where the mention of Sophia would cause people to think my spiritual trolley had slipped off the track." Unfortunately, her fear is probably valid. I long for the day when this will change.

My Hope for This Book

My goal for *Prayers to Sophia* is to present the beauty and depth that can be found in relating to Sophia. I hope that these prayers will act as catalysts and companions for an ever deepening relationship with her. I offer these prayers as a support and enhancement of the spirituality of those who are comfortable and at ease with the Divine Feminine. I am not out to convince anyone about Sophia. I leave whatever needs to be revealed about Divine Wisdom in her hands.

All of the divine qualities named in these prayers are a reflection of the qualities attributed to the Holy One by both Jewish and Christian scriptures. A wisdom verse accompanies each of the prayers so that the "root" of the prayer can be recognized. These texts are taken from some of the wisdom literature of the Bible: Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), Wisdom (often called The Wisdom of Solomon), and Baruch. (The latter three are from the Apocrypha.) I hope that the scripture verses connected with each prayer

will draw you to read and reflect on the wisdom passages. There is so much spiritual vitality to be gleaned from these texts of scripture.

About the Prayers

Almost all of these prayers to Sophia are from my journals. Sometimes I used just a few lines as the core of a prayer and then developed it further. Other prayers are printed almost entirely as I originally wrote them. A few are new ones that I prayed and created as I worked on the manuscript. Obviously, these prayers do not cover all the varied facets of our life experiences. I chose them somewhat at random, but when I took a closer look, I noticed that in one way or another, they all speak of Sophia's loving quality as a guide and companion. Not surprising, because I consistently look to Sophia for daily spiritual direction. My spiritual transformation depends on her graced presence in my life.

The suggestions for journaling that accompany each of the prayers are intended for your own personal exploration of your relationship with Sophia. These nudges are offered so that you can reflect on your life and discover a greater clarity about your spiritual path. May they sustain and encourage your compassionate presence in our hurting world.

Finally, I need to voice a concern about sharing these prayers with you. They may appear to be very "self-oriented." You will find "me" and "I" prevalent in

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these prayers. This is reflective of my relationship with Sophia. It is a very personal one. As this relationship continually unfolds, she constantly leads me deeper, challenges me to grow freer, and keeps inviting me to be more truly my best self. I know that this relationship is never just for myself. It is out of this affinity with Sophia and my ongoing transformation that I am consistently led outward to the world in which I am to give my life and service.

Sophia always draws me up and outward once I have been led down and inward. It is a cycle that I trust. I do believe that I am a much more compassionate woman for having sat in Sophia's presence. I do not know where she will lead me in the future. I only know that I am deeply grateful for having come to know and love her. It is with my heart in her heart, with joy and gratitude, that I offer the following fifty prayers to you.

A Birthing

Holy Midwife,
you rejoiced at the birth of creation.
I hold up to you the intuited mystery
of something new being birthed in me.
It has no face, no name, no sound, no shape.
I only know that something unperceived
is meant to come to life
inside the womb of my deepest self.
Is it greater depth or valuable clarity?
Is it a whole new way of being?
I fail to understand what it might be.
My knowing is as faint as the light of a new moon.

I know I must trust in your unfailing care.
You will be attentive to this unnamed one
who struggles mightily to be released within me.
Help me to be attuned to the contractions of my spirit,
to relax when I ought and push when I must.
Encourage me to believe in what I cannot yet see.
Be by my side as I await this mysterious new life,
still curled up inside my pregnant spirit.

Let me have faith in something good slowly taking shape and be trusting enough to stay in the birthing process. Let me be willing to endure the sweat and the groans and to cheer wildly when new life comes bursting forth.

“When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water . . . I was brought forth.”

Proverbs 8:24–25

Journaling

Is there something in your life that is currently being birthed but still has no name?

How are you nurturing the unnamed newness?

What do you need from Sophia to midwife this birthing?

A Little Space in Which to Grow

Source of Nurturance,
I have enough space in which to grow
if I will let myself believe it.
Each moment you offer me your deep embrace.
I need only to awaken and deepen my awareness.

You can fit into the tiniest space of my life.
No place is too small for growth.
You slip into my passages of thought.
You glide through my relationships.
You flow between the creases of my work.
You pass among my many emotions.
You sail into my night dreams.
You squeeze into my busyness.
You nestle in my solitude.
Every part of my life has space enough for you.

Loving One, Source of All Growth,
I am always in that little space
where spiritual sprouting can happen,

if only I desire and welcome it.
May I be intentional about looking for you.
May I be open and aware.

*"She will reveal her secrets to them."
Ecclesiasticus 4:18*

Journaling

What are "the little spaces" of your life where you least expect to grow?

When you look inside your life, where do you especially sense Sophia's nurturance and call to greater growth?