

DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR “THE SECULAR GOSPEL OF SOPHIA”

1. What is “gnosis?”
2. Does the novel provide enough background on Gnostic beliefs and history? Too much?
3. Did Sophia fulfill Timaeus’ prophesy that she would be the protector of gnosis for the ages?
4. Athanasius is a saint in the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Egyptian Coptic churches, yet he is portrayed as a villain in the novel. How do you feel about that?
5. The book says that Athanasius was “guided by a genetic predisposition toward certainty of all things at all times.” Is there anyone either in your life or in contemporary public life whom this description fits? Explain.
6. Which one of Sophia’s husbands do you think she loved the most? Which one had the greatest influence on her life?
7. Why did Sophia go away with Timaeus? Did you find her decision believable? .
8. Are you a Trinitarian, an Arian or something else? (Trinitarian = Jesus and God are the same; Arian = Jesus is the son of God.)

9. Do you see any parallels between 4th Century Christianity and 21st Century Islam? What are the similarities and what are the differences?
10. Toward the end of the novel Sophia decides that she likes “Thunder, Perfect Mind” best of the gnostic texts she translates and observes, “When it came to the great mystery of existence it seemed that nothing was true without its opposite co-existing in truth with it.” What are your thoughts on this observation?
11. Prior to reading the novel, what did you know about the 1945 Nag Hammadi discovery? What did you know about “Gnosticism?”
12. Can you think of any effects of the Roman Empire’s adoption of Christianity that are still being felt today?
13. Did the appendix, “The Wisdom of Sophia,” change your opinion of who she was?
14. What did you like most about the book?
15. What didn’t you like about the book?