

THE PROGRESSIVE FORUM®

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Karen Armstrong Returns to The Progressive Forum November 11

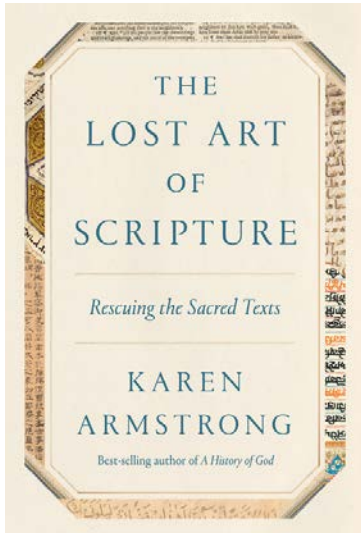


Photo credit: Michael Lionstar

One of the most admired writers on the topic of faith, Karen Armstrong returns to The Progressive Forum to discuss her new book, *The Lost Art of Scripture: Rescuing the Sacred Texts*.

The event is in Houston on Monday, November 11, at 7:30 p.m. at Congregation Emanu El, 1500 Sunset Blvd. Tickets are available online at ProgressiveForumHouston.org, and at 800-514-3849 Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. General admission tickets are \$45 and \$70 each for side and middle sections, respectively. Tickets for reserved seats and speaker reception are \$150. Tickets will also be available at the door on event night.

All ticket buyers attending will receive a free copy of *The Lost Art of Scripture*, a retail value of \$35.



“In an era of intolerance, Armstrong sheds historic light on scriptures worldwide, declaring extreme fundamentalism as a modern invention,” said Randall Morton, Progressive Forum founder and president. “Her insights offer a path to the rediscovery of spiritual engagement with holy texts, and a means to build bridges between faiths.”

The Financial Times hails Armstrong as “one of the best living writers on religion,” while *Salon.com* calls her “arguably the most lucid, wide-ranging and consistently interesting religion writer today.”

About her latest work, she writes: “Today we see the Quran being used by some to justify war and terrorism, the Torah to deny Palestinians the right to live in the Land of Israel, the Bible to condemn homosexuality and contraception. The holy texts at the centre of all religious traditions are often employed selectively to underwrite arbitrary and subjective views ... This narrow reading of scripture is a relatively new phenomenon. For hundreds of years these texts were instead viewed as spiritual tools: Scripture was a means for the individual to connect with the divine. ... Holy texts were seen as fluid and adaptable, rather than a set of binding archaic rules or a ‘truth’ that has to be ‘believed.’”

Armstrong is the author of several bestsellers, including *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (1994) where she traces from their beginnings the evolution of the three major monotheistic traditions, as well as *Hinduism and Buddhism*. In *The Case for God* (2009), she moves from the

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Paleolithic to the present, detailing the great lengths to which humanity has gone to experience a sacred reality. Her work has been translated into 45 languages.

In her 2009 Progressive Forum appearance, she discussed *The Case for God*, videography of which can be seen at ProgressiveForumHouston.org/speakers/karen-armstrong.

Other titles include *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time* (2007); *Buddha* (2004); *The Gospel According to Woman: Christianity's Creation of the Sex War in the West* (1991); *The Great Transformation: The World in the Time of Buddha, Socrates, Confucius and Jeremiah* (2005); and her memoir, *The Spiral Staircase: My Climb Out of Darkness* (2005).

Since the attacks on September 11, 2001, Armstrong became a widely sought-after authority on Islam and fundamentalism. She has addressed members of the U.S. Congress, participated in the World Economic Forum at Davos, and spoken at the United Nations.

In 2008, she was awarded the \$100,000 TED Prize, and worked with TED to create the online Charter for Compassion to restore the Golden Rule as central to religious practice, crafted with leading thinkers in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.

Armstrong spent seven years as a Roman Catholic nun in the 1960s, but left in 1969, saying she wanted nothing to do with the religion she writes about in *Through the Narrow Gate: A Memoir of Spiritual Discovery* (2005), and *The Spiral Staircase: My Climb Out of Darkness* (2005). She studied English literature at Oxford University, earning degrees of B.A. and M.Litt. She became a teacher, but after her 1984 “breakthrough experience” of writing and presenting a British television documentary on the life of St. Paul, she discovered how little she knew about religion and went on to devote her life to writing, lecturing, and broadcasting on religious affairs.

She calls herself a “freelance monotheist,” noting that, “Religion isn’t about believing things. It’s about what you do. It’s ethical alchemy. It’s about behaving in a way that changes you, that gives you intimations of holiness and sacredness.”

She is an ambassador for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and lives in London.

About The Progressive Forum

The Progressive Forum is the nation’s only lecture series expressly dedicated to progressive values. The Progressive Forum served the community for its first nine years as the city’s largest speaker organization, averaging 1,000 people per event. After a hiatus of three-and-a-half years, The Progressive Forum relaunched in the fall of 2017 by presenting Anthony Romero, executive director of the ACLU; leading climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe in the spring of 2018; the 68th Secretary of State, John Kerry, in the fall of 2018; and Pulitzer Prize winner Jared Diamond in the spring of 2019.

The Progressive Forum was founded by Randall Morton in 2005 by presenting Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and Houston Mayor Bill White in an event called “Our Environmental Challenges” at The Hobby Center.

The history of The Progressive Forum includes national book launches for Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Truth*, climatologist James Hansen’s *Storms of My Grandchildren*, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor’s *My Beloved World*, and the autobiography of Lester Brown’s *Breaking New Ground*. The Progressive Forum provided the film premiere of *Fighting Goliath: Texas Coal Wars*, introduced by Robert Redford, who commissioned and narrated the documentary. An appearance by Gloria Steinem celebrated the 30th anniversary of the National Women’s Conference in Houston. The Progressive Forum also presented U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and two Supreme Court justices, Sonia Sotomayor and the late Justice John Paul Stevens.

For more background on The Progressive Forum, go to ProgressiveForumHouston.org/about-us.