

THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS AND THE QARARA CODICES

SOME PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

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Summary

The recent publication of the Coptic text of the Gospel of Judas has raised a number of questions about the nature, history, date and importance of this ancient gospel. By paying close attention to the context of the find, the other literature within the same codex, and the question of the date, both for the Coptic codex and the original composition, this article helps locate the Gospel of Judas into its proper historical and theological context of the mid-to-late second century.

1. Introduction

The *Gospel of Judas*, although probably originally composed in Greek, is extant only in a Coptic translation, discovered in the 1970s and recently published to considerable fanfare and publicity in April 2006.¹

¹ An English translation and several essays are published in R. Kasser, M. Meyer & G. Wurst (eds), *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos* (Washington: National Geographic, 2006). A provisional transcription of the Coptic text is available on the National Geographic website (pending the publication of the critical edition of the whole codex): 'The Gospel of Judas: Coptic Text established by Rodolphe Kasser & Gregor Wurst' (Washington: National Geographic, April 2006): accessible from <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lostgospel/index.html> (this website also has a range of other material relevant to the study of the gospel). The 'official' story of the discovery and abuse of the manuscript is told in H. Krosney, *The Lost Gospel: The Quest for the Gospel of Judas Iscariot* (Washington: National Geographic, 2006). An additional source of information, especially including the full text of S. Emmel's 1983 report on the codex, is J. M. Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas: The Story of the Misunderstood Disciple and his Lost Gospel* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006). The first of a long line of follow-up books was B. D. Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot: A New Look at Betrayer and Betrayed* (New York: Oxford UP, 2006).

The publicity was, predictably enough, of the ‘controversial Gospel suppressed by the early church challenges traditional teachings’ type, with equally predictable responses from representatives of those ‘traditional teachings’.² The point of the publicity was equally predictable: money. In a strange quirk of history the publication of the text mirrored in various ways the history of the manuscript itself: the codex in question was physically damaged in a marketing quest for substantial sums of money; now, in the marketing of the published form of the text, our understanding of the document has been damaged due to the deliberate sensationalising of the marketable product.³

In view of the publicity this manuscript has generated, and the potential importance of the find for our understanding of early Christianity, it is all the more important to take our time to investigate the manuscript closely to see what can be learned from it – even though this can only be in a preliminary manner since the promised scholarly publication has not yet been forthcoming and the information available is quite incomplete (we do not have access to the manuscript itself or even to complete photographs).⁴ I am not going to bother disputing with every outlandish opinion I have ever heard about the *Gospel of Judas*. I am, however, going to make several points that I have not heard being made about this manuscript. My guiding principle, in this as in other explorations, will be F. J. A. Hort’s observation in a related discipline, that ‘knowledge of documents should precede final

² E.g. in the UK *The Mail on Sunday* splashed the story on March 12th 2006 with the absurd claim that this was the ‘greatest archaeological discovery of all time’ (hint: try Googling this phrase and consider the number and significance of the other, numerous, claimants). For sane responses see N. T. Wright, *Judas and the Gospel of Jesus: Understanding a Newly Discovered Ancient Text* (London: SPCK, 2006), and S. J. Gathercole, ‘The Gospel of Judas’ *Exp. Times* 118.5 (2007): 209-15; cf. his *The Gospel of Judas* (Oxford: OUP, 2007 forthcoming); also announced: S. E. Porter & G. L. Heath, *The Lost Gospel of Judas: Separating Fact from Fiction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

³ It is worth noting that some of the scholars involved in the project have complained about the potential for sensationalisation. Steve Emmel (a member of the National Geographic Society’s ‘Codex Project Advisory Panel’) is quoted as saying: ‘there are some people involved in the project who do not seem to understand much of anything except stupid sensationalism, and so I can certainly not guarantee that the publication of the text and translation will not be accompanied by some phoney hoopla’ (from Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*: 166; cf. also the ET of an interview with Emmel in pp. 174-75: ‘the current owners are out for sensation’).

⁴ I am grateful to Tze-Ming Quek for an invitation to address the St John’s Theological Society on this subject on 2nd November 2006 and for comments and encouragement that came from that evening.

judgement upon readings'.⁵ In other words, before an examination of the readings, or the content of the *Gospel of Judas*, we must learn more about the document itself, its make-up, context, and content. In this way we shall also learn more about its historical setting and importance.

2. The Discovery and the Four Qarara Codices

According to the account of the discovery of the codex reported by its early owners, the codex containing the *Gospel of Judas* was discovered during an illegal 'excavation' of a tomb near Jebel Qarara, 60 km north of Al Minya on the right bank of the Nile in Middle Egypt (or 8 km south of Oxyrhynchus).⁶ This codex was apparently not alone, but was found in a limestone box with three other codices.⁷ The four codices were: a fourth- or fifth-century papyrus codex containing the book of Exodus in Greek; a papyrus codex containing Coptic gnostic material (Codex Tchacos which includes the *Gospel of Judas*); a fourth- or fifth-century papyrus codex containing the letters of Paul in Coptic; and a portion of a mathematical treatise in Greek: *Metrodological Tractate*. Neither the collection as a whole nor the individual manuscripts have survived intact, indeed several have been deliberately split into portions by dealers anxious for a sale. Leaving aside Codex Tchacos just for a moment, it is possible to trace some information about the ancient and contemporary status of the other three codices: piecing together the available information suggests:

- The Greek Exodus codex was a papyrus codex originally containing approximately 88 leaves (measuring approximately 26 x 16 cm), each with a single column of around 32 lines of text. The text is written in a fine biblical majuscule hand of the fourth or fifth

⁵ B. F. Westcott & F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Introduction* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1881, 1896 reprint): 31.

⁶ Krosney, *The Lost Gospel*: 9-12 provides a narrative; the basic details are also found in the account given to Stephen Emmel in 1983, see Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*: 120.

⁷ This material was certainly together in 1983 when they were examined by Emmel and other scholars (see Emmel's report in Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*: 117-120, and further details given on 91-102; and in Krosney, *The Lost Gospel*: 105-20). Emmel reports the claim of the then owner that all four manuscripts had been discovered together (Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*: 120); the same claim, presumably from the same source is implicit in Krosney's account in *The Lost Gospel*: 9-12.

century, and includes normal features such as nomina sacra.⁸ The text itself appears to be very important, exhibiting independence from the other major early texts of Exodus, which makes the dismembered and scattered state of the manuscript rather disappointing, to say the least.⁹ Seven fragments have recently been published by Desilva and Adams.¹⁰ An almost complete page is in the Beinecke library (P.CtYBR inv. 4475).¹¹ Five leaves containing Exodus 4:17–6:12 and 7:12–21 are present in the Schøyen Collection (MS 187).¹²

- The current whereabouts of the codex of Paul's letters in Coptic is unknown so consequently little is known of the manuscript and its text. Most of our information comes from Emmel's report in 1983: a fourth- or fifth-century papyrus codex in Sahidic dialect comprising leaves of approximately 24 x 16 cm containing a single column of text outlined with pink chalk. At least one part of the leather binding for the cover was present. Pagination up to 115 was observed among the complete leaves (with most of it representing more numerous smaller fragments). Emmel identified text from Hebrews, Colossians and 1 Thessalonians.¹³ The anonymous and undated report records that there are colophons present for those three and also adds

⁸ An undated and anonymous report which seems to have been prepared with a view to the market value of the codices (from perhaps as early as the 1980s) described the unfortunate state of this manuscript: 'The fragments are wrapped in a bundle of paper and include several large sections of two quires (c. 30 leaves per quire) and hundreds of fragments varying in size from a nearly full leaf to a thumbnail.' This also reported: 'Page numbers survive on a few pieces, ranging as high as 141' (http://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/manuscripts/gospel_of_judas/index.htm#Detailed).

⁹ For a preliminary list of the Exodus material compiled by Ernest A. Muro, Jr. see <http://www.breadofangels.com/geneva1983/exodus/index.html>.

¹⁰ D. A. Desilva & M. P. Adams, 'Seven papyrus fragments of a Greek manuscript of Exodus' *Vetus Testamentum* 56 (2006): 143–70. The fragments (including one belonging to Ashland Theological Seminary and six other belonging to an anonymous collector) contain Exod. 10:3–5, 8–9, 12–15, 17–22, 24–28; 11:2–5; 12:9–12, 15–18; 26:21–25, 30–33; 30:11–15, 18–21; 34:12–15, 20–24; 35:9–17, 22–25.

¹¹ <http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/papyrus/oneSET.asp?pid=4475> qua (with photo).

¹² <http://www.nb.no/baser/schoyen/4/4.1/412.html#187> Three factors in particular link this text to the other material: i) Schøyen 187 was purchased from Bruce Ferrini who dealt with and dismembered much of the Qarara Codices; ii) the layout of Schøyen 187 (i.e. single column of 22 x 12 cm, 32 lines per column/page) is very similar to what can be deduced from other fragments from the Qarara Greek Exodus edited recently by Desilva and Adams; iii) the photograph of Schøyen 187 shows the same hand, layout and scribal characteristics as can be observed in these other fragments (see the information provided by Matthew Hamilton and other photographs at http://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/manuscripts/gospel_of_judas/exodus.htm).

¹³ Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*: 118.

Galatians to this list,¹⁴ while recently Muro has added Ephesians and Philippians.¹⁵

- The mathematical fragment in Greek comprised of at least seventeen leaves and hundreds of small fragments. It has been described as ‘a mathematical text, dealing with geometry (the measuring of triangles and liquid volume, among other things), and hundreds of small fragments. There are numerous drawings, some mathematical and related to the text, others appear to be purely decorative (crosses).’¹⁶ The manuscript was split into (at least) two portions by the dealer Bruce Ferrini, who sold the separate sections to two different buyers – one portion owned by Lloyd E. Cotsen, consisting of three large fragments, has been donated to Princeton University; the other portion is in private hands.¹⁷ Krosney asserts that this text must have been written 307 CE; since it is said to contain information designating its origin as relating to a location described as ‘Pagus 6’ – a portion of the Oxyrhynchite Nome that only came into being in 307 or 308 AD.¹⁸

The sad demise of the other three Qarara Codices is mirrored and perhaps magnified in the fourth codex of the limestone box, that which contains the *Gospel of Judas* and has become known as Codex Tchacos (after and by the current owner, Frieda Tchacos Nussberger). To this we now turn.

The Gospel of Judas in Coptic is the third of four texts in this papyrus codex of 33 leaves or 66 pages altogether [c. 29 x 16 cm] (pagination is included in many of the pages, although lacking because of damage from some pages). The four texts contained in this codex are as follows (with the pages given):

pp. 1-9: *Letter of Peter to Philip* [This text is already known from Nag Hammadi Codex VIII.2, although the title is given slightly differently in each place.]¹⁹

¹⁴ http://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/manuscripts/gospel_of_judas/index.htm#Detailed.

¹⁵ <http://www.breadofangels.com/geneva1983/paul/index.html>.

¹⁶ http://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/manuscripts/gospel_of_judas/index.htm#Detailed.

¹⁷ Both portions together to be published by A. Jones (Toronto) & R. Bagnall (Columbia) in 2008 (according to Krosney, *The Lost Gospel*: 226-27).

¹⁸ Krosney, *The Lost Gospel*: 298. No details are provided about the nature of the reference to ‘Pagus 6’ or the connection with Oxyrhynchus.

¹⁹ *The Letter of Peter to Philip* is a tractate of late second- or third-century date, which was named after the letter with which it begins, but which is basically a narrative vehicle for a series of revelations from the resurrected Jesus (for a brief introduction and ET by F. Wisse see *NHLE*: 394-98). Notably different from *GJudas*,

pp. 10-32: *Revelation of James* [This text is also already known from Nag Hammadi Codex V.3.]²⁰

pp. 33-58: *Gospel of Judas* (pp. ΛΓ – NH: mostly extant except for pages 50-53 [p. 54 & p. 57 partially extant])

pp. 59-66: *Book of Allogenes* [This part is reported to be seriously damaged; the text is not previously known (different from *Allogenes* in Nag Hammadi Codex XI.3)]

In 1983 Emmel described the state of the codex as follows:

At the time that the codex was discovered, it was probably in good condition, with a leather binding and complete leaves with all four margins intact. But the codex has been badly handled; only half of the leather binding (probably the front cover) is now preserved and the leaves have suffered some breakage.²¹

Clearly the manuscript continued to deteriorate in the intervening years until the time (2001) a scholarly conservation and restoration effort was initiated.²² This can be observed in recently published photographs. For example, the frontespiece of Kasser, Meyer & Wurst's, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchaco* showing the end of the letter of Peter to Philip reveals that the codex has been torn almost completely in two

The Letter of Peter to Philip reinforces both the leadership of Peter among the apostles and the importance and status of the apostles as recipients and witnesses of these special revelations. Nor is the Gnostic outlook identical to that exhibited in *GJudas*.

²⁰ Entitled *The First Apocalypse of James* (NHLE: 242-48) in order to distinguish it from *The Second Apocalypse of James* (Nag Hammadi V.4; NHLE: 249-55) although both originally had the same original title, simply 'The Apocalypse of James'. The revelation of which the title speaks takes place through a dialogue between Jesus and James the brother of the Lord (although the opening speech of Jesus qualifies this relationship: 'It is the Lord who spoke with me: "See now the completion of my redemption. I have given you a sign of these things, James, my brother. For not without reason have I called you my brother, although you are not my brother materially.'" (NH V.24.10-17; NHLE: 242).

²¹ Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*: 118.

²² The anonymous and undated report, which appears to be later than Emmel's 1983 report stated as follows: There are at least fifty pages of the manuscript either substantially complete or represented by major fragments (page numbers are preserved at the top of most leaves), but the pages are badly deteriorated and impossible to turn at the moment without breaking off further pieces. There are also hundreds of small pieces already broken off. Colophons or titles exist for all three works. It is not impossible that there are other texts intervening between the end of the Epistle of Peter to Philip and the beginning of the *Gospel of Judas*. The papyrus is, in general, in brittle condition and desperately needs conservation. Portions of the original binding are present and contain inscribed cartonnage.

with a large amount of damage to the central section.²³ Krosney states that it took the conservator Florence Darbre and the Coptic scholar Gregor Wurst five painstaking years to reassemble almost a thousand fragments, thus restoring eighty percent of the text.²⁴ It also seems clear that some pages of the codex had been separated out from the rest and sold separately (e.g. the lower portions of pages 37-38 were found only very late in the process according to Kasser).²⁵ Other pages or portions may have been sold by Bruce Ferrini during the time that he held the manuscript: large portions of pages 41 and 42 are missing (c. 16 lines); portions of pages 55 and 56 (c. 7 lines); and smaller portions of pages 57 and 58.²⁶

The extensive damage to the manuscript and the intricate reconstruction process has not yet been properly documented so that the work can be checked carefully by other scholars. Disagreements about the placement of various fragments will lead on to disagreements about the reconstruction of the text and thus to disagreements about the interpretation of the meaning of the *Gospel of Judas*. This part of the scholarly project has as yet barely begun, but is part of what renders our current state of knowledge only preliminary.

Relatively complete information about the manuscript (including a transcription of the Coptic text, several photos of different pages of the manuscript, and an English translation) is only available for the *Gospel of Judas* section.²⁷ In this portion the text is presented in a neat, right and left justified, single column of around twenty letter-characters per line and with an average and norm of 26 lines per column (ranging from 24 to 28 lines per column). The hand is a careful, clear and upright Coptic uncial. Consecutive pagination is placed above the

²³ The same photograph is also used as the first plate in Krosney, *The Lost Gospel*: opposite p. 166. Krosney reports that the whole codex was in fact torn in two and held by separate people for some time.

²⁴ Krosney, *The Lost Gospel*: 301. In 1983 Emmel had estimated ‘that it would require about a month to reassemble the fragments of the manuscript and to arrange the reassembled leaves between panes of glass’ (Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*: 120).

²⁵ M. Meyer, ‘Introduction’ to Kasser, Meyer & Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos*: 14.

²⁶ Krosney, *The Lost Gospel*: 227, 232.

²⁷ See note 1 for details. Some information is not yet available – the popular edition has been published before the promised scholarly edition and facsimile. For example, it is unclear how the codex is constructed. Krosney claims that Emmel identified it as having multiple quires but offers no evidence or details in his discussion (Krosney, *The Lost Gospel*: 114-15); nor is this reported in Emmel’s 1983 report as cited in Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*: 117-20.

centre of each column. Emmel's 1983 report stated that the pagination number was 'decorated with short rows of diples [hatch-marks] above and below';²⁸ but these decorations are not marked in the published transcription and do not appear to be always used (a photograph of the upper section of page 33 – the first page – clearly shows the pagination numbers with only a supralinear bar; whereas a photograph of page 58 – the last page – does show some hatch-marks below the pagination number, but not above it).²⁹ There are no internal numbering or section divisions or subheadings used in the manuscript text.³⁰ Some punctuation is indicated by dots and by blank spaces of various sizes. Short lines are filled in with spacing or hatch-marks (in some cases a whole line is filled in with such marks: 46:26; 51:27). We shall return shortly to the manuscript and text of the *Gospel of Judas* in this manuscript, but before we do we shall consider the interesting ways in which the different texts in this single codex are linked.

Firstly, it appears from the available photographs that the four different texts of the codex are written by the same scribe, in a basically similar format, with similar decorations used around the subscripted titles.³¹ They are all written in Sahidic (a dialect of Coptic). Although there are logical inconsistencies among the texts (for example in the evaluation of the twelve apostles – positive in *The Letter of Peter to Philip*; but negative in *The Gospel of Judas*); they all offer a narrative that relates to the gospel events of Jesus' last week and his resurrection. We don't know anything as yet about the contents of the fourth text in

²⁸ Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*: 119.

²⁹ The photograph of page 33 is in Krosney, *The Lost Gospel*: the sixth plate (following p. 166). The photograph of page 58 is in Kasser, Meyer & Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos*: before p. 1.

³⁰ Subheadings of two types are introduced into the English translation in Kasser, Meyer & Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos*: subject descriptions in capitals (seventeen in total) and scene enumeration and descriptions in italics (three in total). Unfortunately exactly the same type of capitals are used for the closing title, THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS, which is clearly also present in the original Coptic text. The editors did not introduce any general sentence or paragraph enumeration, which would have facilitated close reference to the text (but could not easily cope with the future incorporation of lost material into the text). For the moment reference shall be made to the codex page (clearly marked in the English translation as well as the transcription of the text), and if necessary as well to the particular line of the column.

³¹ The end of the *The Letter of Peter to Philip* (on the ninth page of the codex) can be found in Kasser, Meyer & Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos*: front: TEPISTOLH MPETROS SHAFILIPPOS. The end of the *Gospel of Judas* (on page 58 of the codex) is shown in Kasser, Meyer & Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos*: before p. 1.

the codex (*Book of Allogenes*), but common elements in the other three texts (*Letter of Peter to Philip*, *Revelation of James*, *Gospel of Judas*) may begin to explain why they were gathered together, and how the three texts may have been interpreted together.

All three display familiarity with portions of the New Testament which deal with this period and especially the Acts of the Apostles:

- *The Letter of Peter to Philip* opens with Peter's statement that 'We received orders from our Lord and Saviour of the whole world that [we] should come [together] to give instruction and preach, in the salvation which was promised us by our Lord Jesus Christ' which sounds like a condensation of material from the early chapters of Acts (NB also the gathering of the apostles on the Mount of Olives, their rejoicing in Jerusalem, their presence in teaching and healing in the temple, the priority of Peter in proclamation etc.).³²
- *The Revelation of James* presumes the appearance of the risen Lord to James noted in 1 Corinthians 15:7 and the importance of James's leadership in Jerusalem as noted in Acts (15; 21).
- *The Gospel of Judas* tells a story loosely based on the events recorded in the passion narratives of the canonical Gospels; and refers more-or-less explicitly the story of finding a replacement for Judas in Acts 1: 'Someone else will replace you, in order that the twelve [disciples] may again come to completion with their god' (*GJudas* 36).

All three of these texts include reflections on the nature of Jesus' suffering (and the implications of Jesus' suffering for his followers).

- *The Letter of Peter to Philip* discusses the connection between the suffering of the Lord and the suffering of his apostles: 'It was said, "If he, our Lord, suffered, then how much (must) we (suffer)?"' Peter answered, saying, "He suffered because of [us], and it is necessary for us too to suffer because of our smallness." Then a voice came to them, saying, "I have told you many times, it is necessary for you to suffer ...".'³³ Later Peter provides an important summary: 'Our illuminator, Jesus, [came] down and was crucified. And he bore a crown of thorns. And he put on a purple garment. And he was [crucified] on a tree and he was buried in a tomb. And he rose from

³² NH VIII.132.17 – 133.1; *NHLE*: 395.

³³ NH VIII.138.14-24; *NHLE*: 397.

the dead. My brothers, Jesus is a stranger to this suffering. But we are the ones who have suffered at the transgression of the mother.³⁴

- *The Revelation of James* speaks of suffering repeatedly. Twice James expresses distress on hearing about the sufferings of Jesus;³⁵ twice Jesus predicts that James too will suffer.³⁶
- *The Gospel of Judas* begins with a statement that all that follows precedes Jesus' Passover (*GJudas* 33). Jesus calls Judas apart from the other disciples: 'Step away from the others and I shall tell you the mysteries of the kingdom. It is possible for you to reach it, but you will grieve a great deal.' (*GJudas* 35) Later Judas has a great vision: 'In the vision I saw myself as the twelve disciples were stoning me and persecuting [me severely]. And I also came to the place where [...] after you' (*GJudas* 44-45).

All three of these texts explicitly discuss the divesting of the outer physical humanity in order to set free the inner person.

- *The Letter of Peter to Philip* includes Jesus' statement: 'concerning the item that you are being held, the reason is that you belong to me. When you strip off from yourselves what is corrupted, then you will become illuminators in the midst of dead men.'³⁷
- *The Revelation of James* describes James' ultimate hope, in Jesus' words, as to 'cast away from yourself blind thought, this bond of flesh which encircles you. And then you will reach Him Who Is. And you will no longer be James; rather you are the One Who Is.'³⁸
- *The Gospel of Judas* offers two passages on this theme. Firstly the general statement, 'Jesus said, "The souls of every human generation will die. When these people, however, have completed the time of the kingdom and the spirit leaves them, their bodies will die but their souls will be alive, and they will be taken up."' (*GJudas* 43). Secondly Jesus' striking statement to Judas: 'You will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me' (*GJudas* 56).

It is fairly obvious therefore, that the contents of the manuscript as a whole, including some of the common themes evident in the three texts, not to mention the content of the *Gospel of Judas* itself, suggest a

³⁴ NH V.139.15-23; *NHLE*: 397.

³⁵ NH V.30.13-16; 31.6-8; *NHLE*: 245.

³⁶ NH V.32.16-19; 32.29-33.4; *NHLE*: 246.

³⁷ NH VIII.137.4-9; *NHLE*: 396.

³⁸ NH V.27.2-10; *NHLE*: 243.

gnostic context for the material, not dissimilar to the Nag Hammadi codices. Nevertheless it is important to note, as Robinson has argued, that given the different provenance and the lack of any positive evidence (for example, the cartonnage associated with the leather binding and the techniques of codex construction), there is nothing to warrant any physical connection with the Nag Hammadi codices.³⁹

3. The Date of the Gospel of Judas

There are two issues to address in relation to the dating of this material. Firstly, the date of the writing of this particular manuscript of the Gospel of Judas (and the three other texts); and secondly the date of the original composition of the text of the Gospel of Judas. As regards the former we should note that two methods of dating this particular manuscript have been discussed – paleographical analysis of the handwriting and scientific analysis of the amount of the radioactive isotope carbon 14 in the papyrus itself.

As regards the paleographical analysis a number of fairly consistent opinions have been expressed by scholars who have viewed the manuscript. In 1983 Emmel had suggested a fourth century date for the codex, presumably on paleographical basis.⁴⁰ H. Attridge echoed Emmel's analysis and suggested a probable date of fourth to fifth century for the hand.⁴¹ Kasser had (in 2004) suggested a date of fourth or fifth century for the codex, based on paleographical and linguistic considerations.⁴² Wurst proposes that 'the traditional method of comparing its design and the form of writing with other datable papyrus codices, such as those preserved within the Nag Hammadi library' indicates 'a date in the first half of the fourth century.'⁴³

To these paleographical estimates we can add the reported results of a carbon 14 analysis of five samples taken from the manuscript and its

³⁹ Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*: 101-09, esp. 108f.

⁴⁰ Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*: 118.

⁴¹ As quoted in Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*: 126. Robinson (2006: 128) also reproduces a list of the prices that Martin Schoyen was willing to pay for the four codices in 1990, which suggests the following dates (no scholarly source is indicated): Exodus in Greek fourth century; Gnostic codex fourth century; Letters of Paul, c. 400; mathematical codex: fifth century.

⁴² Krosney, *The Lost Gospel*: 238; cf. p. 274: 'no later than the first quarter of the fifth century'.

⁴³ Kasser, Meyer & Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos*: 133.

binding, both the leather and the papyrus used interior to the binding (although the details of this analysis have not yet been published and the report, as we shall see, contains some problems Krosney, 2006: 269-74):⁴⁴

- Papyrus from interior of leather cover: 209 AD +/- 58 years;
- Loose papyrus from fragments associated with codex: 333 AD +/- 48 years;
- Leather with attached papyrus from binding: 223 AD +/- 51 years;
- Papyrus from page 9: 279 AD +/- 50 years;
- Papyrus from page 33: 279 AD +/- 47 years.

Krosney reports that the anomalous loose fragment, which registered a much later date than the others, was therefore discounted since it 'was apparently not part of the manuscript'.⁴⁵ Combining the four other samples suggested a 95% statistical probability that the codex was created between 220 and 340 AD, with a statistical mean of 280 AD. This, Krosney clearly implies, is more authoritative than the previous estimates based on paleographical analysis.

Several problems remain with the procedure as outlined by Krosney (technical details related to the analysis have not been made available). It seems an exceedingly strange procedure to simply jettison the latest date in the sample on the basis that its proposed date range is somehow incompatible with the other material. Firstly, treating the small fragment as if it was a contamination from some other source requires explanation and some defence – presumably, before the analysis there was no indication that this piece was different in colour or construction to the other pieces. Secondly, the occasion of contamination should be established (or at least rendered plausible). Thirdly, if it was implemented it would have biased the discussion towards an earlier date simply by selecting the evidence in favour of the early date. The date assigned to the isolated fragment was not in fact exceptional in relation to the other dates assigned to the other pieces: 209, 223, 279, 279 and 333. Fourthly, it is not clear from the conclusion reached that it was in fact not reckoned into the equation which determined 280CE as the statistical mean (if 333 had been discounted then one would expect a

⁴⁴ Krosney, *The Lost Gospel*: 269-74. The analysis is attributed to Tim Jull, director of the NSF-Arizona Accelerator Mass Spectrometer Facility in the University of Arizona, Tucson.

⁴⁵ Krosney, *The Lost Gospel*: 274.

statistical mean of around 240-50). Fifthly, considering that the binding material (the two pieces which registered the two earliest dates) would most probably have comprised older material, no longer in direct use as a text at the time of the construction of our manuscript, but cut up and reused in the formation and strengthening of the binding, the dates assigned to these two pieces could more plausibly be disregarded in terms of determining the date of the manufacture of this codex. Sixthly, given the possible range of dates proposed on the basis of carbon 14 analysis it is not obvious that this 'scientific' analysis should somehow 'trump' the paleographical analysis of Kasser and others. Of course, the comparative material for conducting a paleographical investigation of the development of the Coptic hands is severely limited and the expressed opinions may require some adjustment. For the moment we can be reasonably confident in suggesting a fourth-century date, or perhaps a little earlier, for this particular Coptic manuscript. At the same time some fuller discussion and documentation of these points is certainly needed.⁴⁶

The further, and in some ways more significant, question concerns the date that may be assigned to the original composition of *The Gospel of Judas*. Determining this hinges primarily on the question of whether this newly discovered Coptic *Gospel of Judas* is the same text (albeit translated from Greek into Coptic) that was referred to by Irenaeus in his work, *Against Heresies*, published in around 180 AD. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, wrote a work against heresies (false systems of belief) in which he refers to an apocryphal, or 'fabricated' gospel text entitled 'the Gospel of Judas'.

And others say that Cain was from the superior realm of absolute power, and confess that Esau, Korah, the Sodomites, and all such persons are of the same people as themselves: for this reason they have been hated by their maker, although none of them has suffered harm. For Wisdom

⁴⁶ In an email (12.2.07) Tim Jull explained 'We certainly hope to publish these results in a scientific publication. Indeed, our position is that the radiocarbon dates support the palaeographic interpretations (similar to the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example), not that they are superior to them or supplant them. The description of Krosney should be clarified. The "loose piece" to which he refers was in a box of fragments of papyrus. This box was fragments said to be from the *Gospel of Judas* but not of clear provenance. The other samples were removed from the papyrus itself or from the cover material. Obviously, a sample of unknown provenance is not a date on the GoJ and cannot be used in the final analysis.' For another account of the process, attributed to Jull see <http://uanews.org/cgi-bin/WebObjects/UANews.woa/4/wa/SRStoryDetails?ArticleID=12470> (this includes a photograph of some of the fragments).

[Sophia] snatched up out of them whatever belonged to her. And Judas the betrayer was thoroughly acquainted with the truth as no others were, and so accomplished the mystery of the betrayal. By him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thrown into dissolution. And they bring forth a fabricated work to this effect, which they entitle the Gospel of Judas. (*Adv. Haer.* I.31:1)⁴⁷

G. Wurst has argued that Irenaeus is not necessarily suggesting that the entire theology of this group is exhibited in the *Gospel of Judas* (because in fact it is noteworthy that ‘Cain’ is never referred to within the Gospel of Judas); rather he is insisting that this group found in the fabricated *Gospel of Judas* support in particular for their belief that Judas was ‘thoroughly acquainted with the truth as no others were’ and for an interpretation of his act of betrayal in terms of the accomplishment of a mystery, as (‘in terms of a gnostic view of history of salvation’) in some sense involving the dissolution of all things. Wurst argues convincingly that ‘these two thoughts run throughout the new Coptic Gospel of Judas.’⁴⁸

Firstly, Judas is throughout (this is essential to the narrative from the incipit cited above) depicted as the only one of the disciples entrusted with true knowledge of Jesus’ identity.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.31.1 (ET Kasser, Meyer & Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos*: 123). Cf. the Greek citation of this passage in Theodoret of Chyrrus, *Haereticorum fabularum compendium* I.15; PG LXXXIII.368 (lines from this edition, sourced from TLG):

Ἄλλοι δὲ, οὓς Καϊνοὺς ὀνομάζουσι, καὶ τὸν (15)
Καῖν φασὶν ἐκ τῆς ἄνωθεν αὐθεντίας λελυτρώσθαι,
καὶ τὸν Ἡσαῦ, καὶ τὸν Κορὲ, καὶ τοὺς Σοδομί-
τας, καὶ πάντας δὲ τοὺς τοιούτους συγγενεῖς ἰδίους
ὁμολογοῦσι, καὶ τούτους ὑπὸ μὲν τοῦ Ποιητοῦ μιση-
θῆναι, μηδεμίαν δὲ βλάβην εἰσδέξασθαι. Ἡ γὰρ σοφία (20)
ὅπερ εἶχεν ἐν αὐτοῖς, ἀνῆρπασεν ἐξ αὐτῶν· καὶ τὸν
προδότην δὲ Ἰούδαν μόνον ἐκ πάντων τῶν ἀποστόλων
ταύτην ἐσχηκέναι τὴν γνῶσιν φασί, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὸ
τῆς προδοσίας ἐνεργῆσαι μυστήριον. Προφέρουσι δὲ
αὐτοῦ καὶ Εὐαγγέλιον, ὅπερ ἐκεῖνοι συντεθείκασιν (25)
ἐκεῖνος γὰρ εὐθὺς τὴν ἀγχόνην ἔλαβε τῆς προδοσίας
μισθόν.

⁴⁸ G. Wurst, ‘Irenaeus of Lyon and the Gospel of Judas’, in Kasser, Meyer & Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos*: 121-35 (quotations from p. 128).

⁴⁹ Epiphanius of Salamis picks up this theme in his *Panarion*: “And therefore”, they say, “Judas has found out all about them [the higher powers].” For they claim him as

- This is the point of the opening scene, which reaches a climax with Judas' positive statement about Jesus ('You are from the immortal realm of Barbelo') and the following statement: 'Knowing that Judas was reflecting upon something that was exalted, Jesus said to him, "Step away from the others and I shall tell you the mysteries of the kingdom."' (35)
- A little later Jesus emphasises the importance of Judas: 'You will become the thirteenth, and you will be cursed by the other generations – and you will come to rule over them' (46). He again invites Judas to receive special revelation, 'Come, that I may teach you about [secrets] no person [has] ever seen. For there exists a great and boundless realm, whose extent no generations of angels has seen, [in which] there is [a] great invisible [Spirit] ...' (47)
- Towards the end Jesus says to Judas: 'Look, you have been told everything. Lift up your eyes and look at the cloud and the light within it and the stars surrounding it. The star that leads the way is your star.' (57)

Secondly, Wurst argues that Jesus' prophecy about Judas' betrayal (in the badly damaged pages 55-57) includes the idea that the stars, the five combatants and 'their creatures' will be destroyed and the 'image of the great generation of Adam' will be exalted through Judas' betrayal of Jesus. This, he argues, is 'a close parallel' to Irenaeus' statement about the dissolution of all things: 'By him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thrown into dissolution.'⁵⁰ His conclusion follows from these two points:

We have seen that in the Coptic text Judas is presented as the only disciple of Jesus endowed with perfect knowledge, and we also find in the text points that can be paralleled with Irenaeus's statement that 'all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thrown into dissolution'. On this basis, and because we have no evidence to suppose that more than one Gospel of Judas circulated in antiquity, we can be confident in saying that the Gospel of Judas mentioned by Irenaeus is the same as the newly discovered Coptic Gospel of Judas.⁵¹

If this argument is accepted – and there seems to be no reason not to do so – then it is obvious that the date of the origin of the *Gospel of Judas*

kin too and consider him particularly knowledgeable, so that they even attribute a short work to him, which they call *The Gospel of Judas*.' (*Panarion* 38.1.5)

⁵⁰ Kasser, Meyer & Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos*: 131.

⁵¹ Kasser, Meyer & Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos*: 132.

must precede Irenaeus' composition of the *Adv. Haer.* in around AD 180. How much earlier than Irenaeus cannot be determined with confidence. If we further accepted Irenaeus' apparent statement that the gospel was produced by the Cainites (rendered above less specifically as 'they bring forth'; in a less ambiguous manner by Robinson: 'they produce a fabricated work'⁵²) then it might be possible to trace the history of this group from other sources in such a way as to indicate a date for *Gospel of Judas*. But in fact as Irenaeus is our earliest source of information on this (as on so many other subjects) it is not possible to ascertain the date with more confidence by this means. Parallels with other gnostic works and the content itself suggests a date somewhere around the middle of the second century. It is not really possible to be more specific about the date, since beyond the general associations with gnostic material, there are no other specific indications of date from within the text.

Even though we have accepted above that the parallels between this text entitled the *Gospel of Judas* and the comments of Irenaeus suggest that Irenaeus was referring to the same text as the *Gospel of Judas*, some degree of caution is required in any attempt to recover the second-century form of the *Gospel of Judas*: the original text of the *Gospel of Judas* was almost certainly written in Greek – Irenaeus wrote in Greek and refers to what we presume was the Greek form of the *Gospel of Judas* – while the only currently extant form of the text is the Coptic translation.⁵³ It is difficult to assess when the Coptic translation was made and the quality of the translation as a rendering of the original Greek text.⁵⁴ It is also difficult to assess whether significant developments occurred in the combination of transmission and translation process that must account for the period between c. 180 AD and the date of the Coptic manuscript.⁵⁵

⁵² Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*: 54.

⁵³ The Coptic version also contains a large number of Greek terms which we might presume have been carried over from the Greek original.

⁵⁴ This is a problem raised by a large number of the Coptic texts from Nag Hammadi, cf. Robinson, 'Introduction', *NHLE*: 2.

⁵⁵ Cf. in this connection the Gospel of Thomas.

4. Some Notes on the Contents of the *Gospel of Judas*

We have already noted that there are no explicit textual division markers or headings in the manuscript of the text. The Coptic text does not use a title, but begins ‘The secret account of the revelation that Jesus spoke in conversation with Judas Iscariot during a week three days before he celebrated Passover.’ This opening identifies Judas from the outset as the chosen recipient of this special revelation (the decorated subscript which includes the titular ‘the gospel of Judas’ is thus reflective of the content of the whole text) and further defines the nature of the material in typically gnostic style: ‘The Secret Account of the Revelation of Jesus’.⁵⁶

The mention of ‘three days’ in the opening incipit provides a background to the discussions that follow (‘one day’... ‘the next morning’ ... ‘another day’: *GJudas* 33, 36, 37); although on this basis the vast bulk of the material takes place on the third day. The editors of the English translation use a different method which only partly coincides with these ‘days’ and which utilises repeated ‘departures’ of Jesus to outline the contents of the text as an introductory opening text, a brief summary of Jesus’ earthly ministry and then a series of three scenes. Thus Scene One opens simply with ‘One day he was with his disciples in Judea ...’ (*GJudas* 33) and contains a dialogue between Jesus and the disciples, followed by a private discussion between Jesus and Judas, which closes with the comment: ‘When he said this, Jesus left him’ (*GJudas* 36). Scene Two opens with ‘the next morning, after this happened, Jesus [appeared] to his disciples again’ (*GJudas* 36): this scene contains another dialogue between Jesus and the disciples, a discourse about the temple and is followed by a private discussion between Jesus and Judas, which closes with the comment: ‘after Jesus said this, he departed’ (*GJudas* 44). The two phrases which close the first two scenes (36, lines 9-10; 44, lines 13-14) are deliberately reminiscent of each other and are even closer in the Coptic than the English translation suggests. The second passage (44, line 14), which on this reckoning closes Scene Two, also features a much longer than usual empty space at the end of the line, signalling the close of a paragraph or section (the first of these so far in the manuscript). Scene Three is not as explicitly marked as the other two (one reason for this may be

⁵⁶ Cf. basically similar openings which emphasise the secret revelation: *The Apocryphon of John* (NHLE: 99).

that the last five lines of this scene are missing), and is concerned only with Jesus speaking with Judas and not at all with the other disciples. This division into three scenes thus has some basis in the manuscript itself and is a helpful way to describe the shape of the text and its narrative structure, such as it is.

In describing the *Gospel of Judas* we should not lose sight of the fact that the text of the *Gospel of Judas* is much shorter and briefer than the canonical Gospels. In English translation the text takes up 7 pages. In the Coptic manuscript the *Gospel of Judas* takes up 26 fairly small pages (c. 29 x 16 cm), with around 26 lines of text on each page. By way of comparison the Greek manuscript of the Pauline epistles P. Chester Beatty II (or P⁴⁶) is very similar in size (c. 28 x 16 cm) with between 26 and 32 lines per page. In this manuscript 26 pages corresponds to around the first ten chapters of Romans, or Galatians and Ephesians combined. Although we have no similarly sized manuscripts of Mark, I would suggest that the *Gospel of Judas* is around 40% as long as Mark's Gospel, or approximately equivalent, in length anyway, to the Markan passion narrative (Mark 11-16). The relative brevity of the *Gospel of Judas* is, of course, partly accounted for on the basis that this 'gospel' covers only (according to the incipit) three days leading up to the Passover – and the 'betrayal' of Jesus. In fact, while the incipit refers to 'three days' there is no chronological interest evident in the text itself, and the events could all take place on the same day. There is only the barest of narrative frameworks for the account, but it is clear that within the worldview inherent in this production it is revelatory discourse and personal enlightenment that drives the presentation rather than a particular narrative concern.

We have already noted the way in which each of the first two 'scenes' of the *Gospel of Judas* move from a dialogue between Jesus and the disciples to a private discussion between Jesus and Judas. The nature of these dialogues between Jesus and the disciples is highly critical. In the first 'scene' Jesus laughs at the prayer of thanksgiving which the disciples have offered; he does not acknowledge their confession that he is 'the son of our god', saying that 'no generation of people that are among you will know me' (*GJudas* 34). The disciples get angry with Jesus who challenges them to 'stand before my face', but only Judas was able to stand before Jesus and confess: 'I know who you are and where you have come from. You are from the immortal world of Barbelo. And I am not worthy to utter the name of the one

who has sent you.’ (*GJudas* 35). The second ‘scene’ moves similarly from Jesus laughing at the disciples through their trouble at his words (mentioned twice) and a discourse about the temple to an individual discussion between Jesus and Judas.

Notable in these scenes is not only the focus on Judas as the recipient of peculiar private revelations from Jesus, but also the lack of reference to any other disciple/apostle by name. The others do not appear as individuals at all, only as ‘the [or ‘his’] disciples’ or ‘they’ or ‘the Twelve’. The effect of this within the narrative of the *Gospel of Judas* is to reinforce, forefront and highlight the relationship and interchange between Judas and Jesus as the appropriate content of the ‘gospel’. The whole structure of the *Gospel of Judas* leads from a lot of different dialogical material (involving the Twelve, as ‘they’; Judas and Jesus), followed by a closer direct explanation and discussion between Jesus and Judas, almost in the form of a revelatory monologue, before concluding quite briefly with the narrative of the betrayal of Jesus.

The concept of the Twelve remains important within the *Gospel of Judas*, both in relation to the disciples of Jesus (e.g. 36, 44); and in the description of Judas as the ‘thirteenth’ (e.g. 44: Jesus describes Judas as ‘you thirteenth spirit’; 46: ‘you will become the thirteenth and you will be cursed by the other generations – and you will come to rule over them’). But the Twelve is not a particularly positive grouping within the outlook of this ‘gospel’. The disciples are described as basically relating to another god. Jesus speaks to them about ‘your god’ (34, 34), ‘that is the god you serve’ (39); or to Judas about ‘their god’ (36). Jesus mocks their eucharistic gathering (‘offering a prayer of thanksgiving over the bread’, 34), saying that ‘it is through this that your god [will be] praised’ (34). Following this the disciples even adopt this mode of speech, confessing (apparently wrongly), ‘Master, you are [...] the son of our god’ (34). During Jesus’ extensive gnostic cosmological monologue it emerges that the creator god is called ‘Saklas’: ‘Saklas said to his angles, “Let us create a human being after the likeness and after the image.”’ (52) ‘Saklas’, which means ‘fool’ in Aramaic, is an angelic figure.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Kasser, Meyer & Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos*: 37 note 114. The term ‘Sakla/s’ is used in a range of Nag Hammadi literature for the great angel involved in creating the world (e.g. *Hypostasis of the Archons*, NH II.4, 95.7 [NHLE, 158]; *Gospel of the Egyptians*, NH III.2, 57-58 [NHLE, 201]; *Apocalypse of Adam*, NH V.5, 74 [NHLE, 259]; *Trimorphic Protennoia*, NH XIII.1, 39). In the *Apocryphon of*

Although traditional christological expressions are not particularly affirmed within the ‘gospel’ of Judas, some traditional scribal motifs are present. For example, the name ‘Jesus’ is always abbreviated, most commonly using the three letter *nomen sacrum* IHΣ with a supralinear bar (24 times), and once using a two letter version, IΣ with a supralinear bar (46:8). The scribe uses a three letter *nomen sacrum* ΠΙΝΑ for *pneuma*, or ‘spirit’, both when this refers to the internal human spirit, which once enlightened, can leave the physical body behind (37:19; 43:19; 53:17, 20, 23, 25; 54:5) and when it appears to refer to a/the divine Spirit (49:12, 16). Some other significant ‘divine names’ are also marked out with supralinear bars (although without contraction or abbreviation):

- *Barbelo* (35:18, where it is used in the extremely significant christological statement: ‘You are from the immortal realm of Barbelo’);
- *Adamas* (48:22; ‘the paradigmatic human of the divine realm and the exalted image of humanity’⁵⁸);
- *Harmethoth* (52:7)); *Galila* (52:9); *Yobel* (52:10); *Adonaios* (52:11): four of the five figures who are said to have ‘ruled over the underworld’;
- *Adam* (52:18), *Eve* (52:19); and *Zoe* (52:21);
- *Michael* (53:20).⁵⁹

This use of uncontracted ‘divine names’ has the effect of marking them out as significant to the scribe and for his readers.

5. New Testament Notes

Since so much of the material content of the *Gospel of Judas* consists of discourse from Jesus on a variety of gnostic cosmological subjects, there are actually relatively few points of contact with the New Testament. The most that could be said in general is that there are occasional echoes of wording, perhaps especially of Matthew, rather than evidence of direct dependence. The closing comment is notable:

John ‘Saklas’ is described as a weak angel who impiously claimed a unique status, ‘I am God and there is no other God beside me’ (NH II.1, 11; *NHLE*, 105).

⁵⁸ Kasser, Meyer & Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos*: 35, n 100.

⁵⁹ The name Judas is similarly marked on one occasion (36.5), although this appears to be a scribal inconsistency, since in all other places the supralinear lines are lacking and this context is not particularly significant w.r.t. Judas.

Their high priests murmured because [he] had gone into the guest room for his prayer. But some scribes were there watching carefully in order to arrest him during the prayer, for they were afraid of the people, since he was regarded by all as a prophet. (*GJudas* 58)

With this we might compare a couple of passages from the canonical gospels:

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. But when they tried to arrest him, they feared the multitudes, because they held him to be a prophet. (Matt 21:45-46)

Now the feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death; for they feared the people. (Luke 22:1-2)

Beyond these general echoes of gospel-like terminology there is one important point of contact between the *Gospel of Judas* and the text of the New Testament. At the point at which Jesus invites Judas to ‘step away from the others’, he also notes that Judas will ‘grieve a great deal’ because ‘someone else will replace you, in order that the Twelve [disciples] may again come to completion with their god’ (*GJudas* 35-36). This clearly reflects knowledge of the events recorded in Acts 1:15-26: specifically the replacement of Judas (vv. 16-19), the completion of the Twelve (vv. 20-26), and God’s involvement in the whole event (vv. 20, 24-26). It is difficult, considering the allusive nature of the reference and the linguistic differences between the Coptic and the Greek text of Acts, to establish with absolute certainty that *The Gospel of Judas* definitely knew Acts rather than having some other source of information about the event (oral tradition, independent knowledge etc.). Several considerations tell in favour of the knowledge of Acts at this point: no other portion of the NT tells the story of the replacement of Judas and the re-establishment of the Twelve; indeed Matthew’s Gospel, the NT text with the most to say about Judas, simply uses ‘eleven’ as the number of Jesus’ disciples after Judas’ betrayal, without much hint of a restoration of the Twelve (Matt 28:16; cf. Luke 24:9, 33; Mark 16:14).

The two of the editors who address this question also both agree that *The Gospel of Judas* shows definite knowledge of the book of Acts. Wurst writes: ‘One fact that can be stated with certainty is that the

Gospel of Judas refers to the book of Acts from the New Testament.⁶⁰ While Ehrman writes, ‘This is a reference to what happens in the New Testament books of Acts, when after Judas’s death, the eleven disciples replace him with Matthias so they can remain twelve in number (Acts 1:16-26).’⁶¹ This is worth noting because several recent investigations have questioned whether we have any solid evidence for the use and knowledge of Acts prior to Irenaeus.⁶² Now it would seem that *The Gospel of Judas*, which is definitely earlier than Irenaeus, does provide evidence for the knowledge of Acts prior to Irenaeus, not among the orthodox only, but also among this particular heretical group.⁶³

6. Conclusion

Although we have not addressed every issue that this fascinating document raises, we can certainly agree with the judgement of James Robinson that ‘*The Gospel of Judas* is a second-century apocryphal Gospel that in all probability tells us about the Cainite gnostics of the mid-second century, not about what happened in AD 30!’⁶⁴ Hopefully further study of the *Gospel of Judas* and the other material in this codex might serve to clarify the nature and content of mid-to-late second century gnostic thought. A first stage in this process will be to ensure that all the available material is included in the reconstruction of the codex. Checking of the reconstruction will only be possible when complete photographs are published. In due course alternative interpretations and translations should be produced. Perhaps a thorough check of previously unidentified Greek papyrus fragments of non-canonical Jesus’ material (or revelatory discourse or gnostic spec-

⁶⁰ G. Wurst, ‘Irenaeus of Lyon and the Gospel of Judas’ in Kasser, Meyer & Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos*: 121-35 (quotation from pp. 132-33).

⁶¹ B. Ehrman in Kasser, Meyer & Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos*: 98.

⁶² Notably A. Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus: Looking for Luke in the Second Century* (WUNT 2.169; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003): 350-51; cf. H. von Campenhausen: ‘Acts is not at all attested before Irenaeus’ in *The Formation of the Christian Bible* (ET; London: A & C Black, 1972): 128.

⁶³ Knowledge of Acts is also, I think (against Gregory, *Reception*: 314), evident in Polycarp’s letter to the Philippians esp. 1.2 cf. Acts 2:24 (other general evidence 2:1 cf. Acts 10:42; 2:3 cf. Acts 20:35; 6:3 cf. Acts 7:52; 12:2 cf. Acts 26:18).

⁶⁴ Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*: 177.

ulation), might turn up earlier Greek witnesses to the text of the *Gospel of Judas*.

Already we can see that the theology of the *Gospel of Judas* is somewhat reactionary. It is against the eucharist, against the Twelve, against seeing Jesus as the Son of God. As Irenaeus himself argued, this only serves to demonstrate the priority of the orthodoxy that must have preceded this reaction.