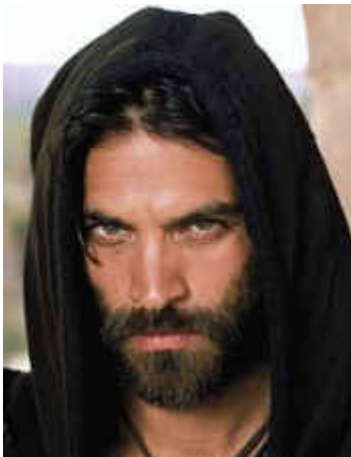


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This Gospel is Bad News

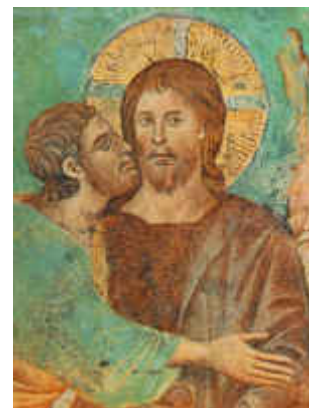
Marcellino D'Ambrosio, Ph.D.



On April 6, 2006, The National Geographic Society (www.nationalgeographic.com) unveiled a document that is not exactly true to its name. The term "Gospel" comes from the Greek term for "Good News" and has historically referred to an eyewitness account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

If this is what a Gospel is, then the "Gospel of Judas" does not qualify. Contrary to its name, it is the bad news of a Palestinian guru who doesn't really change things very much at all. True to the legacy of its purported author, the document is a betrayal of the one who gave his life that we might be free.

Jesus of Nazareth was crucified in the year 30 AD. Historical experts, Christian and non-Christian alike, generally agree that the four canonical Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, represent different eyewitness traditions and were written, in the form we now have them, between the years 65-95 AD. In the following century, a religious movement named Gnosticism arose and attempted to co-op Jesus and make Him their own, though radically twisting his person and mission to fit their own philosophical system. Various Gnostic "gospels" began to appear under the names of apostles and close associates of Jesus--the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, and the Gospel of Judas, among many others. They all have a few things in common--the attempt to hijack the authority of Jesus' closest disciples to lend credibility to their teaching, a verifiable origin over a century after the life of Jesus, and the complete absence of any theology of sacrifice and the cross. The Gnostics found it very convenient to embrace a religion requiring no sacrifice. St. Irenaeus, writing in 185AD, provides an overview of this movement and of the spurious "gospels" it produced, including one attributed to Judas. Why was the "Gospel of Judas" and other such documents lost for centuries?



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Because early Christians thought them so ludicrous that no one bothered to copy them and keep them in use.

Father Gerald O'Collins is a renowned Jesuit scholar who between 1996 and 2003 convoked a series of ecumenical, interdisciplinary summits for scholars on the historical Jesus. When this expert in Christology was asked what impact the discovery of the Gospel of Judas will have on the interpretation of Jesus he said it was "ridiculous" for anyone to claim publication of the Gospel of Judas will challenge mainstream Christianity



While including events supposedly related to the life of Jesus, the Gospel of Judas and the others really are texts "attempting to bolster the importance" of the personalities they are named after, not of Jesus, the priest said.

"To give Judas greater credit," the Jesuit said, the gnostics "portray Jesus giving him secret knowledge. It was a nice try," but there is no evidence to support the claim.

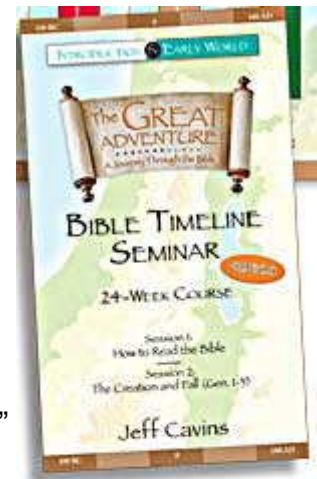
The Gospel of Judas "was junk then and it is junk now," he said. What the early Christians wisely consigned to the dust bin of history, the modern press seems determined to acclaim as a sensational discovery.

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