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Jacques van der Vliet

JUDAS AND THE STARS

PHILOLOGICAL NOTES

ON THE NEWLY PUBLISHED GOSPEL OF JUDAS* (*GOSJUD*, CODEX GNOSTICUS MAGHÂGHA 3)¹

THE FOLLOWING NOTES were assembled in the summer of 2006, while I prepared a Dutch translation of the *Gospel of Judas* (henceforth abbreviated *GosJud*).² As in the case of my translation, these notes are based on the preliminary edition of the text, published online by Rodolphe Kasser and Gregor Wurst in April 2006,³ not on photos and even less on an autoptical study of the manuscript. This preliminary edition is a very useful tool and the scholarly world owes a great debt to the editors for making it available as soon as possible. In spite of its considerable merits, however, it cannot claim to be final. The following observa-

* I wish to thank the members of the *Dutch Gnosticism Group* for their valuable criticism, and Dr. Tasha VORDERSTRASSE for correcting my English.

¹ The first editors named the manuscript *Codex Tchacos*, after one of the dealers through whose hands it passed. For reasons explained in my Dutch book, I find this name hardly felicitous and I suggest it should be called *Codex Maghâgħa* instead, after the town in whose vicinity the codex was reputedly found.

² J. VAN DER VLIET, *Het Evangelie van Judas; verrader of bevrijder?*, Utrecht–Antwerps 2006.

³ @ <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/lostgospel>.

tions may therefore be of some use for others using the same edition, and will hopefully serve for further discussions about this fascinating text.

Most of my remarks are concerned with the reconstruction of the Coptic text as published, not with its translation, although some of them (in particular no. 1) touch upon points of interpretation. They do not cover all doubtful or damaged passages in the text, but represent a mere selection. I have not included corrections that are either irrelevant to our understanding of the text or all too obvious, nor inconclusive suggestions that merely generate complicated discussions. Reference is made to page and line numbers of the manuscript as given in the edition.

I. TITLE:
'THE SECRET DOCTRINE OF THE 'ΑΠΟΦΑΣΙΣ'

The extensive title that precedes the body of the text (33.1–6) immediately provides a considerable amount of information about the text itself. For instance, it provides information about its genre (a dialogue), its main protagonists (Jesus and Judas Iskariot) and its chronological embedding in the narrative of the synoptic gospels (immediately before the start of the Passion story). In addition, the main subject is announced and this is obviously not Judas. The author is, in fact, only moderately interested in Judas as an individual. The clue to the author's real subject is given in the very opening words of the title: ΠΛΟΓΟ[Σ] ΕΤΞΗΠ' ΝΤΑΠΟΦΑΙΣΙΣ, which I propose to translate as 'the secret doctrine (or, exposition: λόγος) of the ἀπόφασις' (33.1–2). This phrase raises the question about how ΑΠΟΦΑΙΣΙΣ should be understood here.

The word's normal meaning in both Coptic and late antique Egyptian Greek is 'decree, decision, judgement, verdict (both juridical and divine)',⁴ and it is this same meaning that ἀπόφαση still has in Modern Greek. The use of the word in the context of God's 'verdict' of death over Adam (*Gen.* 3:19)

⁴ For non-literary texts, which most directly reflect contemporary sensibilities, see PREISIGKE, *WB*, col. 200: 'Entscheidung, Urteilsspruch'; cf. FÖRSTER, *WB*, p. 92. Obviously, no semantic study of ΑΠΟΦΑΙΣΙΣ in Coptic is attempted here. Rather some representative examples are given.

and, by implication, over individual man is well known.⁵ But it may also be applied to an authoritative judgement from the Holy Scripture⁶ or to God's final verdict over the deceased's soul.⁷ In fact, juridical and eschatological overtones are predominant in a vast majority of the occurrences of the noun ΑΠΟΦΑΣΙΣ in Coptic literary texts.

The case is somewhat different for verbal compounds with ΑΠΟΦΑΣΙΣ. In the *Pistis-Sophia*, for example, it is used in two different verbal compounds, with the 'light verbs' ἄϋ and † respectively. It is clear that both reflect usages of the Greek verb ἀποφαίνω. Since *Pistis-Sophia* is an Egyptian Gnostic text, like *Gosjud*, both usages may be briefly illustrated here. Mary Magdalen, in one instance, wonders 'who will be able to ἄϋ ΕΡΘΟΝ ΝΤΑΠΟΦΑΣΙΣ ΝΗΕΙΩΛΧΕ' (184.16 and 23, Schmidt; cf. 200.1). Obviously, she needs someone 'to explain these words (which she had just heard) to us'. The second usage concerns the heavenly journey, where some souls, entirely made up of the purest light, do not need to fear the powers who might otherwise block their way. They do not need †ΑΠΟΦΑΣΙΣ nor †ΑΠΟΛΟΓΙΑ nor †ΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΟΝ in order to pass these (229.14, Schmidt; cf. 236.1 and 20). A plausible rendering of the verbal compound †ΑΠΟΦΑΣΙΣ in this context would be something such as 'to render account, to produce evidence (for one's right to pass)', and it may render a middle voice of ἀποφαίνω. In *Gosjud*, ΑΠΟΦΑΣΙΣ is not part of a verbal compound, however, but firmly embedded in a nominal group.

The single occurrence of the noun ΑΠΟΦΑΣΙΣ in the Nag Hammadi texts leads us back into the eschatological domain.⁸ In the Gnostic treat-

⁵ In Coptic, it appears already in Athanasius' *Festal letters* (ed. LEFORT, CSCO 150, p. 23.23 = 63.6-8), and frequently in later contracts and funerary stelae as a way of referring to or announcing an individual's death (see J. VAN DER VLIET, *I.Khartoum Copt.*, p. 27, n. 139; FÖRSTER, *WB*, p. 92). In the latter cases, the background is certainly liturgical.

⁶ E.g. Besa, *Letters and sermons*, ed. KUHN, CSCO 157, p. 72.5 (the reference is to 1 Cor. 3:17).

⁷ Ps.-Shenoute, *On Christian behaviour*, ed. KUHN, CSCO 206, p. 41.13-15 (context: God's law court).

⁸ It is true that still another Gnostic text, the so-called *Apophysis Megale*, attributed by Hippolytus to Simon Magus (*CPG* 1120), bears the word in its supposed title, like *Gosjud*. The interpretation of the word in the swollen phrase of *Ref* VI 9.4 (with a variant version in *Ref* V 9.5) is hardly obvious, however, apart from the fact that it qualifies (written or spoken) speech. LAMPE, *GPL*, p. 219 (s.v. ἀπόφασις B 3) properly enters it under 'statement, declaration'.

tise *Interpretation of knowledge* (NH XI 1), which is usually considered Valentinian, an unfortunately rather damaged passage describes the consummation (CΥNTΕΛΕΙΑ) of the material world through the agency of the Saviour. Apparently, this very process is meant when it is said that ΤΑΠΟΦΑΣΙC | ΝΑΧΩΚ ΑΒΛΛ, ‘the verdict will be executed’ (14.15–16, Turner) or, in J. D. Turner’s more neutral translation: ‘the decree will be fulfilled’.

It is precisely this kind of eschatological theme that are dear to the author of *Gosjud*. Judas will have to sacrifice ‘the man who bears’ Jesus, and this separation of the divine and the material signals the end of the reign of Saklas and his host (56.17–57.9). Judas is thereby assigned a decisive role in the gradual and systematic dissolution of an evil world, founded on the cosmological number twelve. Twelve ‘stars’, to whom Judas is thirteenth, mark the stages that lead up to the final destruction of the lower world (40.1–26; 46.18–47.1; 54.16–55.20). The parallel from the *Interpretation of knowledge*, quoted above, suggests that this consummation of the lower world and the Church, which is a central theme in *Gosjud*, is the result of the ΑΠΟΦΑΣΙC meant in the title of the text. Such a divine proclamation of the end can indeed be identified in the text itself of *Gosjud*. Near the climax of the long polemical passage against the Eucharist and the unworthy and erring leaders of the Church, on p. 40, the latter are exposed as the ‘stars who bring everything to fulfillment (ΕΤΧΩΚ | ΕΒΟΛ ΝΖΩΚ ΝΙΜ)’ (40.17–18). But, it is said, ‘the Lord, He who is Lord over the universe, he decrees (ΟΥΕΖCΑΖΝΕ): ‘On the last day they will be put to shame!’ (40.23–26). This is, in my opinion, as close as the preserved text of *Gosjud* brings us to the ΑΠΟΦΑΣΙC that is meant in the title: God’s final ‘verdict’ over the leaders of the Church and the world.

II. 36.3: ‘IN ORDER THAT THE TWELVE [ELEMENTS]
BE COMPLETED IN THEIR GOD’

The editors filled in the lacuna with ΝC[ΒΟΥΓ]. The word ΒΟΥΓΙ denotes an apprentice, however, as opposed to a master, usually a master-craftsman (cf. its characteristic use in the Sahidic version of *Mat.* 10:24 / *Luke* 6:40). It is not a current designation for the twelve disciples of Jesus, who

are called ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ throughout *GosJud* as everywhere else. In the present passage, I would propose to take the following ΟΝ as the ending of the lacunary word and restore: Π|ΜΝ̄|ΓΝΟΟΥΣ Ν̄C[ΤΟΙΧΙ]ΟΝ, ‘the twelve [elements]’, or ‘the twelve [celestial bodies]’.

The number twelve receives a negative cosmological interpretation throughout the preserved text of *GosJud*, whenever it is used in relation to the lower world and its fate, denoting e.g. the twelve aeons and the twelve zodiacal archons. In this negative symbolism the twelve apostles are also included. A cosmological or, alternatively, chronological interpretation of the twelve apostles is not exclusive to *GosJud*, but can be found in various other early Christian sources, both Gnostic and non-Gnostic.⁹ In this passage of *GosJud*, which alludes to *Acts* 1:15–26 (the replacement of Judas by Mattias), their original number, diminished by the defection of Judas, should be restored in order to make them complete ‘in their god (scil. the lower god, Saklas)’. The restoration of their number is a way of restoring the lower cosmic order (or disorder), exemplified by ‘their god’. The word to be filled in in the lacuna should characterize the apostles preferably in their specific relation to the lower, archontic world.

The proposed στοιχείον meets these demands. It not only fits the lacuna, but it also bears the required negative and cosmological connotations. The much debated negative use of the expression στοιχεία τοῦ κόσμου in *Gal.* 4:3 (and 9) and *Col.* 2:8 and 20 strongly marked the use of the term στοιχείον in early Christian demonological and Gnostic literature. As an illustration, I here only quote two examples from Gnostic texts that are closely related to *GosJud*. In the *Second treatise of the great Seth* (NH VII 2), the lower Sophia takes her fellow-workers, the archons, from ΝΙCΤΟΙΧΕΙΟΝ ΕΤCΑΠΕCΗΤ, ‘the lower elements’ (51.5–6). In *Trimorphic protennoia* (NH XIII 1), the descent of Primeval Thought into the lower world strikes this world and its rulers with panic as their end approaches: ‘when the great authorities (scil. the archons) came to know that the time of the consummation had appeared (...), the elements (Ν̄CΤΟΙΧΙΟΝ) trembled all at once and the foundations of the underworld and the ceilings of chaos

⁹ See the classic study by J. DANIELOU, ‘Les douze apôtres et le zodiaque’, *VigChr* 13 (1959), pp. 14–21 (reprinted in *Les symboles chrétiens primitifs*, Paris 1961, pp. 131–142).

shook' (43.4–10). If my restoration can be accepted, this would be the earliest passage in *Gosjud* where the apostles are explicitly associated with the negatively perceived cosmic order of the lower world.

III. 37.21–26: 'WE SAW GREAT DREAMS'

A. In l. 24, the word following $\bar{n}\tau\epsilon\iota\text{]}\text{OY}\omega\text{H}$ should be restored as $\bar{n}\tau\alpha\text{OY-}\epsilon\text{IN}[\epsilon$, '[in this very] night which passed.' The relative perfect $\bar{n}\tau\alpha\text{OY}\epsilon\text{IN}\epsilon$ (for normal $\bar{n}\tau\alpha\text{COY}\epsilon\text{IN}\epsilon$) lacks an overt subject. This is not a scribal error, but an example of 'gapping', the covert expression of the resumptive pronoun in a relative clause.¹⁰ Gapping in the relative perfect is quite frequent in various regions of Upper Egypt and even in Nubia.¹¹ Another example can be found in our text itself, in 44.5–6: $\tau\beta\iota\chi\ \bar{n}\tau\alpha\text{-}\tau\alpha\text{MI}\epsilon\ \rho\omega\text{-}\text{ME} \mid [\bar{n}]\theta\text{NH}\tau\text{OC}$, 'the hand that created mortal man' ('_' marks the gap).

B. Jesus' rebuke in l. 24–26 must obviously react against the disciples' announcement of their 'great dreams' in l. 22–24. I propose to complete l. 22 thus: $\lambda\text{NNAY}\ \epsilon\text{POK}^{\prime}\ \bar{z}\bar{n}\ \text{OY}[\text{OY}\omega\text{N}\bar{z}]$ or possibly $\bar{z}\bar{n}\ \text{OY}[\langle\text{OY}\rangle\omega\text{N}\bar{z}]$, 'we saw you [openly, visibly]', instead of the editors' $\lambda\text{NNAY}\ \epsilon\text{POK}^{\prime}\ \bar{z}\bar{n}\ \text{OY}[\text{NAY}]$. Lines 24–26 should then be restored accordingly, with a form of the same verb $\text{OY}\omega\text{N}\bar{z}$ (for part of l. 26, I follow the correction proposed by the editors):

24 [IC ΔΕ
 ΠΕΧΛΑϞ Ϟ]Ε ΕΤΒΕ ΟΥ $\bar{n}\tau\alpha$ [ΤΕΤ \bar{n}
 26 ΟΥΟΝ \bar{z} Τ Ε]Λ(ΤΕ)Τ \bar{n} ΖΑΠ`ΤΗΥΤ[\bar{n}

[Jesus said:] 'Why have [you revealed me and] hidden yourselves?'

The verbs $\text{OY}\omega\text{N}\bar{z}$ (ΕΒΟΛ), 'to reveal, make / become visible', and $\bar{z}\omega\text{Π}$, 'to

¹⁰ See C. H. REINTGES, 'The "Highest Subject Restriction" in Coptic relative clauses', [in] S. BARBIERS & al., (eds.), *Small Words in the Big Picture: Squibs for Hans Bennis (HIL Occasional Papers 2)*, Leiden 1998, pp. 83–89; IDEM, *Coptic Egyptian (Sahidic dialect): A Learner's Grammar (Afrikawissenschaftliche Lehrbücher 15)*, Cologne 2004, pp. 414–421.

¹¹ See *I.Khartoum Copt.*, p. 23, n. 110.

hide / become hidden', are a common pair of antonyms. Jesus' reply starts to make sense if they are restored here. He at once blames the disciples for (falsely) recognizing Jesus himself in their dream (l. 22: 'we saw you [openly, visibly]') and for not recognizing themselves (in the persons of the twelve evil priests with whom they are identified in 39.23–25).

IV. 38.9: 'A CROWD OF PEOPLE WERE WAITING ...'

In l. 9, the verb $\alpha\omega\kappa \epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$ fits naturally into the context. The entire passage may be translated thus: 'A crowd of people were waiting at that altar till the priests had [finished and had performed the] ceremonies' ($\alpha\iota \epsilon\sigma\omicron\upsilon\eta\eta$, which the editors filled in correctly after 39.19, equals $\pi\rho\omicron\sigma\phi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omega$ here).

V. 43.1–11: 'HE HAS COME TO WATER THE PARADISE OF GOD'

Most likely this much damaged passage concerns the purpose of the mission of the Saviour, who has come for the salvation of the eternal, superior race of Seth, but not for the ephemeral, material man. It consists of two long mirrored phrases: 'He did not come to [water ?] X, but he came to water Y'. The imagery is predominantly horticultural, describing the elect as 'the Paradise of God'.

In l. 1–2 read $\bar{\eta}\tau\alpha\chi\epsilon\iota \lambda\eta\eta \epsilon\tau[co \dots$, 'he did not come to [water ?] ...'

In l. 3–4 read $\pi\kappa\lambda\acute{\iota}\rho\omicron\varsigma \mu\pi\epsilon\epsilon\iota\lambda\iota\omega\eta$, '... the] time of this aeon'.

In l. 7–8, perhaps rather $\bar{\eta}[\kappa\alpha\rho\pi]\omicron\varsigma \mid \epsilon\tau\eta\alpha\mu\omicron\upsilon\eta \epsilon\beta[ο]λ$, 'the [fruit] that will remain', in view of both the horticultural setting and *John* 15: 16.

In l. 10–11, certainly $\lambda\lambda[\lambda\lambda \epsilon\sigma\eta\alpha\omega\omega]\mu\epsilon$, 'but it (the superior race) will exist ...'.

Given this particular context, with a 'source' that is probably mentioned in l. 2, one may wonder whether the emphatic statement that the Saviour 'will not pollute the walk of life (?) of this race' (l. 8–10) does not refer indirectly to some variant of the myth of the poisoning of the waters by the Devil. This myth is probably best known from a passage in the so-called *Quaestiones Bartholomaei* (CANT 63), which explains how by infecting the

source of Paradise, the Devil instilled evil desire in Eve and could thus seduce her (iv 58–60). The same theme occurs in a wide variety of variants and contexts, however.¹² That it was known in Sethian Gnosticism, too, is shown by a passage in the *Apocalypse of Adam* (NH v 5) where the rebellious angels Micheu, Michar and Mnesinous are accused of having polluted the Water of Life (84.5–23).¹³ The accusation of the *Apocalypse of Adam* has its place in a polemic about baptism, a theme that is discussed in *Gosjud* as well, unfortunately in a much damaged passage (55.21–56.3).

VI. 44.9–13: 'NEITHER STARS NOR ANGELS ...'

I reconstruct this entire passage thus:

- 9 ⲭ[Ⲉ ⲐΥΤⲈ Ⲙ]ⲐΥ [ⲐΥΤⲈ ⲀΓ]ΓⲈΛⲐϢ
 [ⲐΥΤⲈ Ⲁ.]ΥΝΑΜΙϢ : ΝΑΦΝΑΥ
 [ⲈΝΑΙΩΝ ⲈΤ]ΜΜΑΥ : ΝΑΪ ⲈΤⲈΡⲈ
 12 [ΤⲈΙΝⲐϢ] ΝΓⲈΝⲈ ⲈΤⲐΥΛΛⲈ
 [ΝΑΝΑΥ Ⲉ]ΡⲐⲐⲐΥ :

Neither stars nor angels nor powers will be able to see those [aeons?] which [this great], holy race will [see].

The word *ⲈΝΑΙΩΝ* in l. 11 seems a bit long for the lacuna. Otherwise, the inability of the lower spirits to behold the higher, divine realities is a recurrent theme in *Gosjud* (most notably in 47.5–13).

VII. 45.6–7: 'ONE SINGLE ROOM'

The emendation proposed by the editors in l. 6, in the passage which describes the vision of Judas, is redundant and mistaken. The phrase

¹² E.g. in Coptic magical texts, see J. VAN DER VLIET, 'Varia magica coptica', *Aegyptus* 71 (1991), pp. 217–242, at 225–228.

¹³ I discussed this passage at length in *L'image du mal en Egypte: démonologie et cosmogonie d'après les textes gnostiques coptes*, thesis Leiden 1996, pp. 362–364 and 379–382.

ΝΕΟΥΣΤΕΓΗ ΝΟΥ|ΟΤΕ ΠΕ is perfectly understandable as it stands: ‘it (*scil.* that house) consisted of one single room (στέγη)’. ΟΥΟΤΕ is a variant spelling of ΟΥΩΤΕ, the rather rare feminine form of ΟΥΩΤ, ‘single, alone’. For the idiom one may compare, for example, the *Mysteries of John* (CANT 333), where in another heavenly vision trees are seen ΕΥΟ ΝΟΥΚΛΛΛΟC ΝΟΥΩΤ ΩΑ ΠΕΥΧΩΚ, ‘that consist of one single branch up to their top’ (Budge, 64.21–22).

VIII. 46.1–4: ‘I INFORMED YOU
ABOUT THE ERROR OF THE STARS’

In this instance, I feel justified to sin against the iron rule not to emend text near a lacuna. Jesus tells Judas: ‘Look, I told you the mysteries of the Kingdom and I informed you about the error of the stars’ and continues:

 ΑΥ[Ω ΜΠΜΗ]Τ(C)ΝΟΟΥC
3 Ḡ[ΑΓΓΕΛΟC ΕΤΑΜΛΣ]ΤΕ ΕΧḠ
 ΠΜ[ḠΤC]ΝΟΥC ΝΗΛΙΩΝ

... and about the twelve [angels] that have power over the twelve aeons.

These twelve ‘angels’ are introduced more formally towards the end of the cosmogonic myth (from 51.3 onwards; see section XII, below)

IX. 46.24–25: ‘IN THE LAST DAYS ...’

The final lines of this page, as rendered by the editors, do not allow a satisfactory interpretation. Apparently, this passage has suffered severe textual corruption. It looks as if the expected verb in l. 24 has been skipped by haplography (dative ΝΑ= mistaken for the demanded future tense marker ΝΑ-), whereas the three-letter group read by the editors after ΝΕΚ in l. 25 (ΚΤΗ) does not make good sense, neither as a verb nor as a noun.

I reconstruct:

24 ḠΣΛΕΟΥ ΝΝΕΞΩΟΥ CΕ(ΝΑ *verb*)
 ΝΑΚ` ΑΥΩ ΝΕΚ . . . ΕΠΩΩḠ

In the last days they will < ... > for you and your ... (plur. noun)? / you will not ... (verb)? upward (ϷϷ).

This instance of haplography provides clear evidence that the present manuscript has been copied after a *Vorlage* in Coptic.

X. 50.4-5 AND 7-8: ANGELIC HOSTS

A. In l. 4-5: instead of ΟΥΜΝΤ|[ΝΟΘ Ν]ϷΤΡΑΤΙΑ, rather read ΟΥΜΝΤ|[ϷΑϷ Ν]ϷΤΡΑΤΙΑ, 'a multitude of hosts'.

B. In l. 7-8, the proposed restoration (in footnote 12) does not give sense. Read instead:

. . ΝΑΪ] ΔΕ ϷΝΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ
[ΝΕ ΜΠ]ΝΑ ΕΥϷ[Ο]ΟΥ . . .

[These are] virginal spirits (destined) to glorify ... (etc.).

XI. 51.1: EL = ELELETH

At first glance, it might seem as if in 50.25-51.1 an angel El (ΗΛ) is introduced. A closer look at the published text shows that the name El may actually not be complete as it stands, even though it is followed by a blank. In fact, all of the first seven lines of this page have a blank after the first two letters. Likewise, the first eight lines of the verso (p. 51), have a similar blank space at their ends. Even without an inspection of the original manuscript this state of affairs reveals the presence of an irregularity in the papyrus, which forced the scribe to observe a blank after the first two letters of each line. The blanks cannot, therefore, be interpreted as an intentional spacing between words. In fact, in l. 4 and 6, the blanks occur in the very middle of a word (e.g. in the preposition ΝϷΑ: ΝϷ *vac* λ). There is no reason, therefore, to suppose that the name of the angel mentioned in l. 1 would stop at a mere El. Also, El would be entirely unparallegled in the present context.

The name that one does expect in this context, however, is that of Eleleth (ΗΛΗΛΗΘ, ΗΛΕΛΗΘ). In fact *GosJud*, however mutilated here, clearly tells the same story as the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (NH III 2: 56.22–57.16) and the *Trimorphic protenoia* (NH XIII 1: 39.13–26). All three texts contain an account of the birth of the first demonic archons which describes not Sophia, but the Great Luminary Eleleth as taking the first step that leads up to this fatal event.¹⁴ Undoubtedly, therefore, the beginning of 51.1 should be read as:

1 Ἡλ̄ vac Ἡ|λ̄ηθ̄ (alternatively: Ἡλ̄ vac Ἡ̄|λ̄ηθ̄).

A detailed comparison of the three accounts mentioned is beyond the scope of the present notes, but is nonetheless essential for a correct understanding of this particular part of the cosmogonic myth of *GosJud*.

XII. 52.4–6: ‘THE FIRST IS SETH,
HE WHO IS CALLED THE CHRIST’

Every reader of *GosJud* will be struck by this strange beginning of the list of the zodiacal archons in 52.4–14. Neither Seth nor Christ are at home among these demonic ‘angels’. The list as given by *GosJud* is a much garbled version of a list that is far better preserved in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (*GosEg*, Böhlig & Wisse, 122–125) and the *Apocryphon of John* (*ApJohn*, Waldstein & Wisse, *synopsis*: 27–28). The most notable other deformation is that only five out of the twelve original positions have been filled in. It can easily be seen why this happened. At some stage of the textual transmission a copyist, after transcribing the first five archons, took these five for the five last and lowermost archons, which are associated with the Underworld, and considered the set as complete. This is clearly shown by the phrase that follows the list:

These are the five that came to rule over the Underworld, and the first ones over Chaos (52.11–14).

¹⁴ Some provisional remarks in my thesis *L'image du mal en Egypte* (cit. n. 13), pp. 35–38.

Unwittingly the scribe admitted his error here.

The asymmetrical division of the list of twelve into a group of seven (positions 1–7: the rulers over Chaos) and a group of five (positions 8–12: the rulers over the Underworld), which underlies this scribal error, has an astrological background. It reflects an ancient division of the twelve signs of the zodiac into a group that is situated above the intersection of the ecliptic and the celestial equator (Aries to Libra) and a second group that is situated below (Scorpio to Pisces).¹⁵ The same division can be found in *ApJohn* (II 11.4–7 and parallels) and, undoubtedly, *GosEg*, although the text is rather damaged here (III 58.1–22).¹⁶ For *GosJud*, this astrological interpretation is confirmed by a later passage (55.14–20), where Jesus again denounces ‘the error of the stars’, as he had already done in 46.1–4 (see our proposed reconstruction above, under no. VIII). This time he divides these stars into a group of six ‘stars’ (conceivably, seven minus Judas) and five ‘aggressors’ (πολεμιστής; 55.14–20). Obviously, the same asymmetrically divided group of the twelve zodiacal signs is intended in both passages.

When we now turn again to the names in the list themselves, it is clear from a comparison with the other two texts mentioned that the list of *GosJud* must have been very similar. The following table, which could be expanded by still further variants, shows both the correspondences and the differences:

<i>GosJud</i>	<i>GosEg</i> (NH III)	<i>ApJohn</i> (NH II)
1. [S]eth	1. Athoth	1. Athoth
2. Harmathoth	2. Harmas	2. Harmas
3. Galila	3. [Galila]	3. Kalila-Oumbri
4. Yobel	4. Yobel	4. Yabel
5. Adonaios	5. Adonaios	5. Adonaiou
6. –	6. [Cain?]	6. Cain
7. –	7. [Abel?]	7. Abel
8. –	8. Akiressina	8. Abrisene
9. –	9. Youbel	9. Yobel

¹⁵ Thus already S. GIVERSEN, *Apocryphon Johannis*, Copenhagen 1963, p. 212.

¹⁶ The distinction Chaos – Underworld as made by *GosJud* (and *GosEg*) in this context is also found in the *Trimorphic protenoia* (NH XIII I: 39.16–17; cf. *GosJud* 51.5–7), but no series of twelve archons is given there.

<i>GosJud</i>	<i>GosEg</i> (NH III)	<i>ApJohn</i> (NH II)
10. –	10. Harm[oupiael]	10. Armoupieel
11. –	11. Arch[eir-Adonein]	11. Melcheir-Adonein
12. –	12. [Belias]	12. Belias

Apart from a number of variants that for the greater part are due to the process of transmission over time, *GosEg* and *ApJohn* present in their various manuscript versions, as far as they survive, a virtually identical list.¹⁷ There can be little doubt that these versions are closer to the prototype than the list of *GosJud*. Indeed, this is shown clearly by *GosJud*'s Harmathoth (no. 2 in the list), which is a secondary composite form, combining Athoth (no. 1 in the other lists) with Harmas (no. 2 in the other lists). The list of *GosJud* must therefore have also begun originally with the name Athoth, which in the course of the manuscript transmission was demoted from its first position and joined to that of Harmas to make up the double name Harmathoth. In order to explain this shift, we have to look at the entries for the initial positions in the respective lists again.

As in the case of *GosEg* and *ApJohn*, *GosJud* provides the names of some archons in the series with explanatory glosses. These offer translations of the secret magical names of the archons into everyday speech. Thus the second name in the series, Harmas (once, Hermas) in *GosEg* and *ApJohn*, is glossed as 'the Eye of Fire', a gloss which should probably be restored in the text of *GosJud* as well (it fits the space in 52.8 exactly).¹⁸ As we saw, the first name, that of Seth, is glossed in *GosJud* as: ΠΕΤΕΩΛΥΜ vac ΟΥ|ΤΕ Ε|ΡΟΑ .x.ε ΠΕΧ̄C, 'he who is called the Christ' (52.5–6). Regrettably, the corresponding glosses in *GosEg* (NH III) and *ApJohn* (NH II; lacking in versions NH III and BG), which should explain the name Athoth, fall partly in a lacuna. They do not appear to be exactly identical to the gloss in *GosJud*, however. In fact, Michel Tardieu already proposed a fully convincing restoration of these lacunae many years ago.¹⁹

¹⁷ Discussed i.a. by BÖHLIG & WISSE in their edition of *GosEg*, pp. 183–184, but best by M. TARDIEU, *Écrits gnostiques: Codex de Berlin* (*Sources gnostiques et manichéennes* 1), Paris 1984, pp. 277–285.

¹⁸ See TARDIEU, *Écrits gnostiques* (cit. n. 17), p. 279, for an explanation.

¹⁹ TARDIEU, *Écrits gnostiques* (cit. n. 17), p. 279.

As was observed above, the list of the zodiacal archons must begin with the sign of Aries, which opens the group of the seven superior signs. Tardieu was able to adduce additional proof for this by linking Athoth etymologically to a common Semitic word *'atûd*, 'he-goat, ram', attested, for example, in Hebrew and Arabic. The damaged glosses in *GosEg* and *ApJohn* quite likely reflected this identification. In fact, the passage in the NH II version of *ApJohn* can be perfectly restored as: $\overline{\lambda\theta\omega\theta}$ ΠΑΪ ΕΤΟΥΜΟΥΤΕ ΕΡΟϚ ἸΒΙ ἸΓΕΙΝΕΑ ΧΕ [ΠΕΚΡΙΟ]Ϛ, 'Athoth, he whom the generations (*GosEg*: the generations of men, i.e. terrestrial men) call Aries' (NH II I: 10.29–30; cf. *GosEg* III 2: 58.8–10). The group ΠΕΚΡΙΟΣ (the Ram, Gr. κριός), the Coptic *terminus technicus* for the zodiacal sign of Aries, fits the length of the gap exactly, both in *ApJohn* and in *GosEg*.²⁰ Tardieu's reconstruction is confirmed, moreover, by an independent source, an astro-demonological passage in the fourth book of the *Pistis-Sophia*, ch. 139. There we find an almost identical gloss which identifies the 'first of the aeons of the sphere' as 'he who is called in the world Aries (ΠΕΚΡΙΟΣ) of Boubasti, that is Aphrodite' (Schmidt, 361.19–21).²¹ In the astro-demonological treatises of various Gnostic sources in Coptic, ΠΕΚΡΙΟΣ is the 'profane' translation of the name of the first of the series of the twelve zodiacal archons. Originally, the same must have been true for *GosJud*.

In order to account for the present text of *GosJud*, we may suppose that at a certain moment in the course of the text's transmission, the rare word ΠΕΚΡΙΟΣ, 'Aries', was erroneously understood by a copyist as the much more familiar name ΠΕΧ(ΡΙΣΤΟ)Ϛ, 'the Christ'.²² Since this was obviously not a proper rendering of Athoth any longer, the latter name was now considered a difficulty and subsequently replaced with Seth by a second

²⁰ Note that the reconstruction proposed by WALDSTEIN & WISSE in their edition of *ApJohn*, p. 65, seems arbitrary, and that the two tiny traces that remain of letters in the lacuna are inconclusive.

²¹ The addition 'of Boubasti, that is Aphrodite' might seem disturbing at first sight, but the sequel of the text shows that, in spite of this recurring epithet, the usual order and nomenclature of the zodiacal signs are observed.

²² It may be added that otherwise the name Christ does not occur in *GosJud*, which makes it more likely that it is a secondary addition here.

copyist. This substitution may have been motivated by an echo of Sethian theology. The partial merging of the figures of Seth and Jesus-Christ is a well known feature of Sethian gnosticism. It is found for example in *GosEg*, a text that is closely related to *GosJud*.²³ The now redundant name Athoth was not entirely abandoned but joined to the name of the second archon Harmas to form Harmathoth. That by ‘correcting’ a minor error, he created a major theological problem apparently did not worry the copyist, whose job was mainly a mechanical one. Admittedly, the explanation offered here is a mere hypothesis but at least one that accounts for both the present form of the text and its relation to its probable *Vorlage* in a coherent way.

XIII. 53.11-16: MAN'S LIFE-SPAN IS CALCULATED

In 53.13, the editors propose to cancel the words $\alpha\bar{\nu}$ $\omicron\gamma\eta\pi\epsilon$, which recur in l. 15. In my opinion, there is no reason whatever to follow them.

The passage in question takes up the dialogue which has been interrupted for many pages by Jesus' lengthy account of the Gnostic cosmogonic and anthropogonic myth. The myth ends with the verdict, probably pronounced by Saklas, that the life of Adam and his children will be only temporary: $\epsilon\rho\epsilon$ $\pi\epsilon\kappa\omega\bar{\nu}\bar{\nu}\bar{\epsilon}$ $\omega\omega\pi[\epsilon$ $\nu\alpha\kappa]$ | $\bar{\nu}\omicron\gamma\omicron\epsilon\iota\omega$ $\mu\bar{\nu}$ $\pi\epsilon\kappa\omega\eta[\rho\epsilon$ (53.6-7). Man, lower man, the creature of the archons, is mortal. Thematically, though not in its phrasing, this verdict echoes *Gen.* 3:19. It provokes a question by Judas, the first after a long interval:

What is the maximum ($\pi\epsilon\alpha\omicron\gamma\omicron$) that man will live ? (8-10).

Jesus' answer seems to blame Judas for his naive curiosity:

Why do you wonder ? For Adam, together with his offspring, received his time measured out ($\alpha\bar{\nu}$ $\omicron\gamma\eta\pi[\epsilon$), in the (same) place where he received his rule measured out ($\alpha\bar{\nu}$ $\omicron\gamma\eta\pi\epsilon$) together with his archon (11-16).

²³ See *GosEg NH* III 2: 63.4-64.9; IV 2: 74.17-75.24 (BÖHLIG & WISSE, pp. 142-147).

Not only material man but also his creator, the archon, and eventually the entire archontic world are subject to a fate that sets them a limit. The expression ἐν οὐρη , ‘calculated, measured out’, is repeated intentionally to stress this point and thereby announces the eschatological interest that is predominant in the final part of the work (Judas’ next question concerns the mortality of the human soul). It may be added that this passage should be studied in the context of other Gnostic discussions of Adam’s life-span and the mechanics of fate.

XIV. 55.10–11: ‘YOUR STAR ...’

Again focussed on eschatology is a long passage that predicts how the stars will bring about the end of Saklas and his world (54.15–55.11). After a long lacuna it concludes by predicting Judas’ decisive role in this process. The editors did not complete the final sentence, where I read:

10 $\Lambda\Upsilon\Omega$ { $\Lambda\Upsilon\Omega$ } $\text{ϥ}\text{N}\text{A}\text{P}\text{E}[\text{P}\text{O } \bar{\text{N}}\text{E}]\text{I}$ $\text{P}\text{E}\text{K}\text{C}\text{I}\text{O}\Upsilon$
 $\text{E}\text{X}\bar{\text{N}}$ $\text{P}\text{M}\bar{\text{E}}\text{Z}\text{M}\bar{\text{N}}\text{T}[\text{O}\text{M}]\text{T}\text{E}$ $\text{N}\text{A}\text{I}\Omega(\text{N})$

And your star will rule over the thirteenth aeon.

Whether the lacuna in l. 10 leaves space for the reconstruction proposed here can only be judged from the manuscript. In any case, Judas is thirteenth again in an evil world dominated by twelve evil stars.

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