

Background Controversy on the Gospel of Judas Translation



PHOTO: Kenneth Garrett/NGS

In 2006 The National Geographic Society released the first English translation of the Gospel of Judas, a second-century text discovered in Egypt in the 1970s. The translation caused a sensation because it seemed to overturn the popular image of Judas the betrayer and instead presented a benevolent Judas who was a friend of Jesus.

In *The Thirteenth Apostle*, April DeConick offers a new translation of the Gospel of Judas that seriously challenges The National Geographic interpretation. Inspired by The National Geographic Society's efforts to piece together this ancient manuscript, DeConick sought out the original Coptic text and began her own translation. She said: "I didn't find the sublime Judas, at least not in Coptic. What I found were a series of English translation choices made by the National Geographic team, choices that permitted a different Judas to emerge in the English translation than in the Coptic original. Judas was not only not sublime, he was far more demonic than any Judas I know in any other piece of early Christian

literature, Gnostic or otherwise.”

Read what April D. DeConick has to say about the original translation of the Gospel of Judas in [the New York Times Op-Ed page on December 1, 2007: “Gospel Truth”](#)

Read what the translators of the Gospel of Judas have to say about the comments on their work made by April D. DeConick in [the New York Times Op-Ed page on December 7, 2007: “The Gospel of Judas: A Word from the Translators.](#)

Read what was written about the debate in [National Geographic News at nationalgeographic.com by Stefan Lovgren : “Judas was a Demon After All, New Gospel Reading Claims.”](#)

Follow [this link to the book *The Thirteenth Gospel: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says* by April D. DeConick](#) at Amazon.com and there *Look Inside* to read the “Preface to the Revised Edition.” You will get a good piece of the story of how the stressful translation schedule of the scholars hired by National Geographic led to important translation errors and a sensational and misguided view of what the original manuscript said.

[Click here to see a PDF of the 2006 translation of the Gospel of Judas at nationalgeographic.com.](#)

[Click here to link to *The Gospel of Judas, Critical Edition* at Amazon.com.](#)

links provided by Robert Petrovich

“UPDATE: The Reaction to Karen King’s Gospel Discovery”



The "Mary" in the controversial text, King says, may be Mary Magdalene, who was present at the Crucifixion. (Sandro Botticelli, *The Mourning of Christ*, c. 1490. Alte Pinakothek, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich/ BPK, Berlin/Art Resouce, NY)

“When the divinity scholar unveiled the papyrus fragment that she says refers to Jesus’ ‘wife,’ our reporter was there in Rome amidst the firestorm of criticism.”

[Read the entire article at smithsonianmag.com](http://smithsonianmag.com) by Ariel Sabar, the only reporter on the scene in Rome when the divinity scholar Karen King made the announcement.

This story is an update of < [the news broken by Smithsonian magazine on September 18, 2012](#) >.

[Read the original *Communique* article on the discovery.](#)

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