Beyond righteousness and transgression

Introduction
In 2006 National Geographic Society published a Coptic text on their website: The Gospel of Judas, in what follows the GospJud. That a document in which a disciple called Judas seemed to play a central role circulated on the black market had been known since 1982.¹ The codex of which the text is a part suffered immensely by the treatment of people who were not up to the task of handling an ancient document. In 2000 the church historian and coptologist Bentley Layton discovered that the Judas of the codex was Judas Iscariot. Finally, when the text was published the group of scholars who had done a fantastic work reconstructing the seriously damaged text published books in which they claimed that this Christian Gnostic gospel revealed a conversation between Judas and Jesus in which it was evident that they had concluded a pact. According to the initial line of interpretation, Judas’ task was to help Jesus to be released from his fleshly prison in which his spirit was captivated. Moreover, Judas was the favorite disciple, the only one who understood the message of Jesus.² From the beginning the view of sacrifice in the GospJud was related to an evaluation of Judas Iscariot who participated in the sacrificing of Jesus. Soon however, other scholars, including myself, challenged this interpretation. Judas knew Jesus, not because he was the most insightful and good disciple, but because he was a demon. Sacrificing Jesus was of no significance. Rather it was carried through by people who confused Jesus’ spiritual essence with his docetic appearance.³ This short summary shows that minefields of very theologically marked discourses are involved when we analyse the GospJud. In order to take up stand on the view on sacrifice in the GospJud we have to make some preparatory work. First, I have to deal with some myth-theoretical considerations. Second, I will introduce a new perspective on the manner in which so-called Gnostic myths could be used. Our example will be the Gospel of Truth from Nag Hammadi, (in what follows GospTruth. Then, we are able to analyse the GospJud from a new perspective and thereby to draw a conclusion as for what we can say on the view on sacrifice that is represented in that text.

The quandary of deconstruction
As this article is part of a cross-disciplinary conference volume it is appropriate to relate a debate on Gnosticism that has been going on among specialists the last fifty years and in particular the last two decades. Before the discovery of the Nag Hammadi texts in 1945 scholars more or less had to build their understanding of Gnosticism on the polemical reports. The reading of the now available primary texts made it obvious that many of the clichés hitherto connected to Gnosticism were problematic. In 1966, leading scholars gathered in order to formulate definitions that would be up to date with the new available sources. In their final statement a distinction between Gnosticism and gnosis was made:

¹ Krosney, 2006 and Magnusson 2008 for more information about the discovery.
² For early interpretations see Kasser, Meyer & Wurst, 2006 and Pagels & King, 2007.
In order to avoid an undifferentiated use of the terms gnosis and Gnosticism, it seems to be advisable to identify, by the combined use of the historical and the typological methods, a concrete fact, "Gnosticism", beginning methodologically with a certain group of systems of the Second Century A.D. which everyone agrees are to be designated with this term. In distinction from this, gnosis is regarded as "knowledge of the divine mysteries reserved for an elite".  

Then the scholars went about trying to distinguish common characteristics among the Second Century sects.

As a working hypothesis the following formulations are proposed:

I. The Gnosticism of the Second Century sects involves a coherent series of characteristics that can be summarized in the idea of a divine spark in man, deriving from the divine realm, fallen into this world of fate, birth and death, and needing to be awakened by the divine counterpart of the self in order to be finally reintegrated. Compared with other conceptions of a "devolution" of the divine, this idea is based ontologically on the conception of a downward movement of the divine whose periphery (often called Sophia or Ennoia) had to submit to the fate of entering into a crisis and producing—even if only indirectly—this world, upon which it cannot turn its back, since it is necessary for it to recover the pneuma—a dualistic conception on a monistic background, expressed in a double movement of devolution and reintegration.

II. The type of gnosis involved in Gnosticism is conditioned by the ontological, theological and anthropological foundations indicated above. Not every gnosis is Gnosticism, but only that which involves in this perspective the idea of the divine consubstantiality of the spark that is in need of being awakened and reintegrated. This gnosis of Gnosticism involves the divine identity of the knower (the Gnostic), the known (the divine substance of one's transcendent self), and the means by which one knows (gnosis as an implicit divine faculty is to be awakened and actualized. This gnosis is a revelation-tradition of a different type from the Biblical and Islamic revelation-tradition).

Even though the conference report made it clear that Gnosticism had a close relation to Mandaeanism and Manichaemism scholars of Gnosticism with a few exceptions have excluded these traditions. I would say that the definition of 1966 not only was a reaction to the increased available material but at least as much to the brave conclusions that old comparativists drew from sometimes ill-defined parallels. However, scholars of today that deals with "the Second Century sects" have not felt at ease by using the Messina definition from 1966. Their critique, however, to a large extent has been against clichés related to Gnosticism that were not included in the definition. Frequently these clichés are based on a simplified view on the relation between the myth that people believe in and the social behavior that would be the outcome of the belief. For instance, scholars of earlier generations often held that Gnostics, due to the anticosmisity of their myths, would revolt against the cosmic order of the creator god by ignoring ethical norms or revolting against social

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4 Bianchi 1967 XXVI.
5 Bianchi, 1967 XXVI- XXVII.
conventions. Moreover, Gnostics were held to interpret Biblical material in a manner that would reverse the reading of so-called “orthodox” Christians. Another example is the notion that Gnostics would be uninterested in ethics. They saw themselves as beings that due to their spiritual nature did not have to bother themselves with ethics; they would be saved in any case. Ethics was for those who could go astray and thus perish. For the Gnostic the choice stood between libertinism and ascetism. If Gnostics happened to be interested in ethics, it was seen as inconsistent with the views that they were expected to hold.

Today, however, I would say that specialists have stopped repeating such stereotypes. On the contrary, if anyone infers a link between the Gnostic myths and the moral conduct of the Gnostics, the conclusion rather is that Gnostics maintained at least as high ethical standards as other Ancient Christians or Pagans. Sometimes it has been claimed that their belief in their supposed divine spiritual spark rather encouraged them to understand more and to act more ethically than others. But the main tendency has been to cut the connection between Gnostic myths and ethical conduct. Most of the critique of using the term Gnosticism primarily seems to be directed against the clichés that actually were not included in the definition. Michael A. Williams has been very successful in demonstrating the weaknesses in for instance the above mentioned stereotypes. Nevertheless he seems to be pessimistic about the probability of getting rid of the clichés as long as the label Gnosticism is used. For this reason he has coined the term “Biblical Demiurgical traditions” that has a lot in common with the typological characteristics mentioned in the Messina definition. He maintains that such a clearly modern constructed definition would avoid the deeply rooted clichés that many expect to accompany Gnostic texts. Consequently, Williams attempt is to build a category out of typologies deduced from the myths in Biblical Demiurgical traditions. Moreover, he wants to use a category that would not be linked to notions that there was a group that called themselves Gnostics. Layton and Brakke goes the opposite way and want to start from the group that might have called themselves “the Knowers”. Then they describe the myths that the polemical writers were used by the Knowers. As these myths seems very similar to what one finds in for instance the Apocryphon of John they end up with something very similar to what scholars long have called “classical Gnosticism”. Especially for Brakke it is important to stress that the Gnostics were Christians and he sides with Williams as for the critique of the stereotypes that too often were related to the Gnostics. Birger Pearson has been severely criticized by many scholars for claiming that Gnosticism was a religion of its own, not denying that there were Christian Gnostics as well. He starts out as Brakke with the group that designated themselves as “the Knowers”. From this Pearson builds up what he calls classical Gnosticism that he asserts had its origins in Judaism. He then goes on to include for instance Mandaeans and Manichaeans because of structural similarities with the classical Gnostic myth. Influenced by Williams Pearson stresses that the stereotyped view on Gnosticism belongs to a past state.

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6 Jonas, 1963 46. Even pagan moral philosophy should have been discarded by the Gnostics, Jonas, 1963 160.  
7 Jonas, 1963 270-276 who saw libertinism as the core of Gnosticism, whereas Rudolph 1983, 253-255 rather stressed the ascetic side.  
8 Desjardins, 1990 2-3.  
10 Williams, 1996 51-53.  
Karen King is often related to Williams but has a distinctly different approach. She describes the strategies that the polemic writers adopted when they wanted to construct two groups. Their own church descending from Jesus and the apostles, versus the other of heretics. According to King, Gnostics were attached to all kinds of heresies and accused for all sorts of evil things. Then she continues to show that they should not be attached to the stereotypes that often have been connected to them. So far so good, Williams and King have a lot in common. But when King then takes examples of so-called Gnostic texts and shows that they cannot be called Gnostics because they lack the clichés that according to herself should not be linked to Gnostics I have difficulties following the logic. Below I quote her assessment of the Gospel of Truth that we will deal with at length later in this article.

GospTruth, a writing from the mid-second century thought by many scholars to have been written by “the arch-heretic” Valentinus himself, is an excellent example of a work that defies classification as a “Gnostic” text. This remarkable work exhibits none of the typological traits of Gnosticism. That is, it draws no distinction between the true God and the creator, for the Father of Truth is the source of all that exists. It avows only one ultimate principle of existence, the Father of Truth, who encompasses everything that exists. The Christology is not docetic; Jesus appears as a historical figure who taught, suffered, and died. Nor do we find either a strictly ascetic or a strictly libertine ethic; rather, the text reveals a pragmatic morality of compassion and justice.

Taking for granted that King is right in her assessment of the GospTruth she has not proved anything. The only thing we might conclude is that the GospTruth might be a Gnostic text without the clichés that King wants to do away with. We will return to some of the issues as for the GospTruth later in this article. In 2006 she goes further and claims that the only label that would be appropriate to use is Christian. Categorizations as Christian Gnostics, Valentinians etc would only marginalize these groups in relation to the disparate body of churches that in the second century were about to be developed into pre-orthodox Christianities. Thus, on the one hand King is scrupulous about avoiding forcing texts in categories that would conceal the meaning of the individual text. On the other hand this deconstructionist approach leads to reading text in macro categories. The drawback is that Christian is a category that badly needs to be divided into subdivisions if it would be of analytical value. Dunderberg follows King and uses the term Christian, although he still finds Valentinians appropriate for the group he investigates. Recently Jenott has claimed that the Gospel of Judas, the other text that we will focus upon, has been misinterpreted because scholars have read it as a Gnostic text. Referring to Williams and King he calls it Christian.

Conclusion and point of departure
We set out with the definition of Gnosticism from 1966. There, the scholars dissociated themselves from a more comparative position. Mandaeism and Manichaeeism were excluded from Gnosticism, as well as other trends within Hinduism, Buddhism and for instance Pythagorean traditions. Instead the
Second Century Christian sects were the starting point for the historical and typological definition. It is noteworthy that these groups that would form the beginning of a phenomenon also seem to have become the end of it. Rarely scholars detect a continuation of the Ancient Gnostic traditions in later periods. This might be caused by the difficulty to find something that would fit the Messina definition in later sources. Those scholars who go further on in history include Manichaism and Mandaeism in their investigations. Hermetism that earlier was included in the study of Gnosticism and that has a longer history nowadays is excluded. Without having dug deep into the discussions that preceded the conference in 1966, I suggest that a general tendency to distance oneself from earlier trends in the comparative study of religion was of importance for the conference report. When Gnosticism is defined narrowly the discussion naturally focuses on the relation between Gnosticism and other subdivisions of Christianity. The Nag Hammadi texts and the Tchacos codex show nothing of the stereotypes earlier connected to Gnosticism. Although many scholars continue to define Gnosticism, or in William’s case Biblical Demiurgical traditions, on basis of the myths one have stopped asking what function the myths might have had for those who saw them as sacred narratives. Maybe this is due to the risk of being accused of associating oneself with those who constructed the stereotypes and who later upheld them. Thus, the clear-sightedness brought by scholars as Williams is very valuable. But it has to be combined with myth-theoretical investigations as for the function of myth. Otherwise the clear-sightedness that has been achieved the last decades risks to be replaced with a theoretically too undifferentiated view. In this article I will put forward a proposal for the use of myth in the Gospel of Truth and then see if this new perspective could help us analyzing the view on ethics and sacrifice in the Gospel of Judas. By doing this I want to form a hypothesis that could be tested on other material as well. We might be able to use it across religious borders and in this way re-establish the comparative study in this field. It goes without saying that this is my first step on a journey that even if it would show promising results would have to be tested in many investigations. On the theoretical level I am influenced by fairly general insights from the new comparativism in the history of religions. Typological investigations too often have been carried through without taking into account of how the different types were used in the respective texts. This was one of the drawbacks in old comparativism. I also want to challenge the deconstructive tendency that for sure has taught us to be more careful but also have undermined the will of explaining relations between different phenomena. As for the discussion above, we have deconstructed categories down to the level of individual texts, but ended up with an even more fluid category that is hard to use in analytical work: Christianity. Stating that we deal with nothing else than Christianity rather seems to be a theological statement than a methodological one. Presently I see no reason to invent another term for Gnosticism. The awareness of the problems in earlier investigations has grown rapidly among specialists and in time it will spread to non-specialists. Besides, many still use Gnosticism outside of the restricted sense from 1966. Scholars of Mandaeism, Hinduism, and Buddhism and of New Religious Movements have less negative views on what Gnosticism could have been.

Before starting, some words on myth might be appropriate. Many definitions of myth could do for the present purpose, but I have chosen Wendy Doniger’s:

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18 Paden, 2008 provides a good summary of the state of affairs.
... a myth is: a narrative in which a group finds, over an extended period of time, a shared meaning in certain questions about human life, to which the various proposed answers are usually unsatisfactory in one way or another. These would be questions such as, Why are we here? What happens to us when we die? Is there a God?¹⁹

What I especially want to stress here is Doniger’s remark that a myth is a story and not an idea. One could, according to Doniger, start out with a metamyth that ideally would consist of subjects and predicates only. Every time when a myth is told the teller adds something to it. Those additions can tell us something about the context and use of the myth in that specific context. Theoretically we could think of a maximyth that would consist of all those additions to the minimyth, but of course, none of these metamyths have existed. An example of her reasoning is quoted below:

For example, the hypothesis of an unmarked, neutral experience involving a woman, a man, a garden, a tree, a fruit, a snake, and knowledge allows us to understand how the Hebrew Bible could tell that story as it does (an evil snake, forbidden fruit, evil woman, disobedient and destructive knowledge), while other interpretations of that story tell it differently ..... The positive reading of the serpent (though not of the woman) was, however, accepted in the Ophite version of Genesis, in which Yaldabaoth (God) is evil, and the serpent is good. It was further developed by Romantics such as Shelley, who saw a direct parallel between Satan’s gift of the fruit and Prometheus’ gift of fire—a gift that, like the fruit in Eden, provoked the wrath of the jealous gods and the creation of the first, disastrously seductive woman, Pandora.²⁰

According to this reasoning, a myth would not lead to a specific ethical attitude or behavior; on the contrary, the myth could be interpreted in many ways. However, one could not say that anything goes. The interpretation must be meaningful for the interpreter so the context of the interpreter and the ways in which the myth used to be interpreted will delimit the range of additions to and interpretations of the myth. Therefore, we cannot use the simplified view on myth as earlier scholars often did, nor should we overlook the importance of the myth that it seems as modern scholars have tended to do. First, I would say that the myth can be interpreted in many ways, but not in an infinite number. The story has to be intelligible. This level is mostly semantic and syntactic. Second, the variations depend on the rules that determine the discourse. By this I mean the manner in which the myth used to be interpreted in the historical environment. The discourse will normally follow some for the specific context conventional rules. Of course, I am influenced by Foucault in this part of my positioning, but for the present purpose we do not need to go deep into his theories. This second level can be distinguished but probably not isolated from the first level, since semantics and syntactics also is a part of a discursive practice. Third, the myth is colored by a narrower context than that mentioned in my second statement. And here the particularities of the negotiation of power between the teller of the specific version of the myth and the community that decided to preserve it might help us see in what way they used it. It is on this third level that I assert that many analyses of myths have failed. Too often parts of a myth are taken out of the narration and thus changed into dogmatic statements. In the following analysis I will try to avoid this by paying more attention to the

¹⁹ Doniger 1996 112.
²⁰ Doniger 1996 120.
text-surface than normally has been the case. Here I am influenced by text linguistic theories. Often I could say that I use what earlier was called rhetorical analysis in my aim at disclosing the strategies that the authors of the Gospel of Truth and the Gospel of Judas used in order to persuade their audiences.

**Beyond anticosmismity**

The GospTruth, is one of the most studied texts from the Nag Hammadi discovery. It is well-preserved in the First codex. In codex twelve we have a few fragments of what I see as a later version of the text. In this article, however, I will concentrate on parts of the GospTruth that are not preserved in the fragments. Thus GospTruth always refers to codex I. As for the authorship of the GospTruth. Many scholars among whom I am included suggest that it stems from Valentinus of Alexandria\(^{21}\) who led a community in Rome from 138. For us this is of importance as Irenaeus of Lyons reports that Valentinus was building on the Gnostic system when he developed his teaching.\(^{22}\)

In the following analyses I will argue for an interpretation of The GospTruth in which a special interpretation of the Gnostic myth is criticized and modified. Now it is time to turn to the text analysis. The GospTruth starts as follows.

The good news of the truth is a joy for those who have received the grace from the Father of the truth, that they might know him through the power of the Word that came forth from that Fullness that is in the Father's thought and mind, this is what they call “the Redeemer” since that is the name of the work that he was to accomplish for the redemption of those who were ignorant of the Father, and since the name of the good news is the revelation of the hope, since it is the discovery for those who are searching for him.\(^{23}\)

As the vast majority of scholars I assume that the GospTruth is a homily. When the speaker steps forward in order to preach, from a text linguistic point of view this corresponds to a marker on the pragmatic level, i.e. the community knows that a homily will follow. But the attitude on the part of the community to the preacher is less obvious. Harold W. Attridge has suggested that the GospTruth is an exoteric text in which the audience rather consisted of non-Gnostic Christians who gradually were persuaded to adopt a reinterpreted version of the gospel.\(^{24}\) This was an important attempt to analyse the rhetorical context of the GospTruth, and maybe even more importantly, to see in what way the audience is persuaded to change their view. For reasons that will be discussed throughout the following pages I assume that the audience consisted of people who were acquainted with some

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\(^{21}\) For a detailed discussion of authorship, date of composition etc see Magnusson, 2006 13-44.

\(^{22}\) Irenaeus, Against the Heresies 1.11.1.

\(^{23}\) All quotations from the GospTruth are from Nag Hammadi Codex I. In this case from 16.31-17.4a. Unless otherwise is indicated, all translations are my own.

\(^{24}\) “The presupposed theology is concealed so that the author may make an appeal to ordinary Christians, inviting them to share the basic insights of Valentinianism.” Attridge 1986 139-140.
sort of Gnostic myth that gradually became reinterpreted. Granting this, those who call the Word their redeemer is the community. Although ignorance of the Father had made itself painfully felt, now the community is said to be in a state of joy as they know the Father. This initial sentence, I suggest, does not function as a prologue to the following main part of the homily as all other scholars have treated it as. This observation is more than a quibbling with delimitation in a linguistic over-technical jargon. Rather, it means that the following sentence that opens with a causal conjunction “because” is subordinated to the first sentence. Following this logic we expect something that was vaguely emphasised in the first sentence to be developed and explained in the second. Moreover, the joy that one should experience is an instruction to the community. Despite the scaring figure of Error that will evolve, one ought to stick to the antidote of fear: the joy that comes with the knowledge of the Father.

Because the All wandered about searching for the one from whom they had come forth, and yet the All was inside of him, the incomprehensible, inconceivable one who is superior to every thought,

thus ignorance of the Father brought anguish and terror, and the anguish grew dense like a fog, so that no one could see, for this reason, Error found strength, worked on its own matter in emptiness since it had not known the truth.

25 My general critique of Attridge’s argumentation is that it does not carefully enough follow the argumentation of the text. Rather he picks up topics that seem “familiar” and in an interesting manner discusses in what way they become transformed. Such an undertaking must be combined with an analysis of the text-surface and the rhetorical strategies that one might disclose. For earlier studies suggesting a more esoteric setting see Säve-Söderbergh 1958 and Segelberg 1959.

26 Even though Grobel 1960 called the GospTruth a “meditation” the overwhelming majority of scholars have seen it as a homily. Then, the term Ὠ大酒店 preferably should be taken as a proclamation of the good news, rather than as a definition of genre.

27 ὤ大酒店. Generally this conjunction is causal rather than temporal in the Nag Hammadi material. The anaphoric and cataphoric uses of it seem to be quite evenly distributed.

28 ὤ大酒店 means search for but it also has a connotation of wandering about, encircling etc. As the Father is described as the one who encircles or contains everything whereas nothing contains him ὤ大酒店 has influenced my translation. The absurdity in trying to contain the one who contains everything seems to be a background for 17:4a-18a as well.

29 “and yet...” The Coptic conjugation perfect 1 is the main mode of narration in the past tense. Here, however, the straightforward telling of events is interrupted by the conjunction ἀπάξιος followed by the preterit conversion. I assume that it expresses background information, which is the normal use of the preterit, and together with the conjunction, which I treat as emphatic, we reach an expression of surprise. Hence the paradox that the All could come forth from and search for someone that they simultaneously was inside of and who is superior to everything is underlined. This interpretation is a new attempt to reproduce the subtleties of the Coptic carefully construed syntax.

30 “Foolishly”. The Coptic term ὄ大酒店 is equally well could be translated as “in emptiness” or “vainly”. Foolishly, I would say, makes much sense in such a context where it is opposed to truth. However, “in
Probably, the state of searching for the Father had a familiar ring to the community. Once everybody had been searching for what they now had found. The remark that the All was inside of the Father although they had come forth from him expresses a paradoxical state. The Father contains everything whereas nothing contains him. To have come forth from the Father is true as far as the All are his members (18:40), but it is false if one perceives it as a state of real separation from him. The bewildered state seems to be caused by the incomprehensive nature of the Father. Out of this confusion anguish and terror emerge. Finally, the perplexity has developed to such degree that no one can see the Father, and because of this Error finds strength. Although its power is based upon ignorance, Error takes on some kind of real existence. It becomes powerful and works on its own matter. Finally, however, the frightening figure is diminished by the statement that its acts are of no importance since it lacks what the members of the community have: the Truth. The sentence from 17:4a-18a is skilfully designed. It opens with a causal conjunction “because”, but we have to wait until it is caught by a result construction “therefore Error found strength”. The rhetorical function is that when Error finally is introduced it takes up the climactic place of the period. As it also takes on mythological characteristics we have two tendencies in the sentence. On the one hand Error is a psychologically based product. It is caused by ignorance and in that regard lacks independent existence. At the same time, it has many affinities with what we would expect from a demiurge figure in many Gnostic traditions. It works on matter. Its name Error is based on the Coptic word ⲡⲗⲁⲛⲏ that often is related to the demiurge. Moreover, the state of blindness that those in the fog experience reminds of a designation of those holding that the demiurge is the real God. The following quotation serves as an illustration of the two mentioned phenomena.

“It is I who am God, beside me there is no one!” When he said this, he sinned against the All. But this speech got up to Incorruptibility. And behold! A voice came forth from Incorruptibility and said: "You are mistaken, Samael" that means "god of the blind".  

Thus, we encounter a bundle of expressions and themes that would make listeners who were acquainted with Gnostic myth to see Error as the demiurge. Its deeds and power is affirmed but simultaneously its existence is questioned. Error rather seems to be a product of ignorance on the part of the All. I suggest that the preacher has in mind problems that are related to focusing too much on Error rather than on the Father. If a community with such problems should be persuaded to change its view, it has to be done through a gradual process. The emotional experience of the emptiness” would stress the contrast to the Fullness, καταρακτα, that is the quality of the thought and mind of the Father of truth, see 16.31-17.4a.

36 17:4b-18a.  
38 ἔπτηρφ  
39 τόπλαθσος.  
40 παύστε πε ναπλάλε is somewhat tricky. I interpret the initial β in ναπλά as definite article plural. The optional translation would be “blind God”.  
41 The Hypostasis of the Archons 86:30-87:4.
community has to be affirmed but given a new interpretation. Consequently, the preacher first encouraged the community to see themselves as those who just rejoice in the grace of knowing the Father. Then, they are told that Error is powerful, albeit a product of their own ignorance. Let us turn to the next section to see if this line of interpretation would stand the test.

Matter came into being\(^{42}\) in a moulded form,\(^{43}\) as Error by the power of beauty prepared the substitute for the truth. Now, this was not a humiliation for him, the incomprehensible, inconceivable one. For they were nothing, the anguish, and the oblivion and the moulded form\(^{44}\) of deceit, whereas the established truth is immutable, imperturbable and impossible to beautify.\(^{45}\)

First, the work on matter enters actuality and results in a molded form. This language is a commonplace for many creation stories in antiquity. Here we might add that the initial clause could be translated as “It happened in a deluding way”, which would emphasise the power of Error’s deceitful nature, whereas my main translation allows the handicraft on matter and the connection to the creation myths to come into focus. For the listeners, at least to the Coptic but probably to a Greek hypothetical origin as well, both these clusters of meanings could be grasped simultaneously. It is noteworthy that the modifying preceding statements that Error worked foolishly and does not know the truth is confirmed. It can only create a substitute for truth. In the modifying parts, first of all the Father’s superiority to what Error does is emphasised. By no means is Error a threat to the Father. Second, the dyad of the prior sentence, anguish and terror, is replace by the triad anguish, oblivion and the melded form of deceit. Oblivion that now takes the place of terror in the Gospel is synonymous to ignorance. The captive beauty of matter and its deceitful nature is reaffirmed by the third member of the triad. The triad anguish, oblivion and the melded form of deceit well summarises the origin, power and creation of Error. Thus, when we turn to the last part of the sentence all might and power and reality of Error is made to nought. The truth is eternal, firm and impossible to challenge by the most beautiful lie. Once again, the demiurge-myth is not contradicted but reinterpreted. So far the image of Error has been based on a presupposed mythology that the community was acquainted with. Now it is logical that we move from the mythological past to the current situation of the community.

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\(^{42}\) “Matter came into being”. \(\Delta \epsilon \cup \xi \omega \Pi \epsilon\) often serves as an opening marker and could be translated as “It happened”. Such a treatment accompanied by an analysis of other possible interpretations was argued for in Magnusson, 2006, 74-78. “Matter came into being” or “it happened” both work syntactically well and the choice does not seriously change the general analysis of the text.

\(^{43}\) “in a moulded form” \(\Delta \epsilon \nu \iota \pi \lambda \alpha \nu \alpha \nu\). This translation is probably preferable if the prior phrase is translated as in the present text, see the prior note. However, if the choice had been “it happened” I would suggest the rendering “in a deluding way”. Influenced by a suggestion of Attridge & MacRae, 1985, 44-45, which they themselves, however, did not adopt, “in a deluding way” was chosen by Magnusson 2006.

\(^{44}\) “Moulded form” \(\pi \lambda \alpha \nu \alpha \nu\). See the previous note.

\(^{45}\) 17.18b-28a.
For this reason, ignore\textsuperscript{46} Error since it thus \textsuperscript{47} has no root!! It came into being in a fog regarding the Father. It exists since it prepares works, and oblivion, and terrors in order to, by them, seduce those of the middle and capture them.\textsuperscript{48}

We have reached a metacommunicative level, i.e. an explicit instruction on how the receivers should interpret the previous information. The community should not take Error so seriously. It indicates that too much focus could have been laid on Error earlier. At the same time the unreal state of Error is expounded upon, as well as the experience of its presence is affirmed. Error came into being in a fog, probably the one that was mentioned earlier and that basically is a product of ignorance. In this manner, the preacher is able to affirm the reality that people have experienced, and at the same time to explain that this reality is a product of ignorance. But the downplay of Error should not be carried through too fast. If that would happen, the community would be less easy to convince. Thus, the recently quoted passage ends with a description of Error as captivating “‘those of the middle’”.

The fear may actually have very concrete social consequences. In the following passage, we will be informed of that the fear that is the result of ignorance does not come from the Father. On the contrary, the Father is opposed to everything that has to do with Error. Then, the persecution and crucifixion of Jesus is taken as an example of how Error can be executed through people, but more importantly, we are told in what way such a persecution is turned into a victory for those who know.

The oblivion that belonged to Error was not revealed. It is not a [thought]\textsuperscript{49} from the Father. It was not from the Father that oblivion came into being. Now indeed, it was concerning the Father that it came into being. But what comes into being in the Father is the knowledge! The knowledge became revealed in order that oblivion might vanish and the Father be known. Since oblivion came into being because the Father was not known, then, when the Father is known, oblivion will not occur again. This the good news of the one for whom they searched revealed to those who were complete through the mercies of the Father, the hidden mystery, Jesus Christ.

Through the knowledge he enlightened those who through oblivion were in darkness. He enlightened them, provided a way, and the way is the truth, which he taught them. for this reason, Error grew angry with him,

\textsuperscript{46} “Ignore” reproduces καταφρώνι. Normally it has been rendered with “scorn”, “despise” or similar expressions. We have no indications of that the use of this expression differs in Coptic compared with its Greek equivalent, and as the central message of the actual context of the GospTruth is to downplay the danger of Error and to focus on what brings joy “despise” seems to be a choice that is open to critique. In earlier presentations of this analysis I used “disregard”. But as Geoffrey Smith remarked “ignore” is a common rendering of καταφρών in the patristic era, Lampe 726a.

\textsuperscript{47} “since it thus” ταύτα τε ἐκα. I am influenced by Layton 1987 253 and Orlandi 1992 who translate causally with a simultaneously anaphoric and cataphoric meaning: “…..(così) a una pura formula di passaggio, ma come tale é usate in modo scorretto. Infatti il senso richiede qui piuttosto una formula del tipo (perché), se riferita alla frase precedente, o ‘dunque,’ se riferita alla frase seguente.” Orlandi 1992 45.

\textsuperscript{48} 17.28-36.

\textsuperscript{49} The reconstruction is certainly speculative, but, I assert, not unwarranted. First of all we have to reckon with some peculiarities in the Lycopolitan dialect of the GospTruth. The stative of εἰσπε in Sahidic normally is ointment. Furthermore, the compound construction that in Sahidic would be ο + η normally is as οι νοημ in the GospTruth. This rare construction is attested in 19.20, 20.38, 23.23 and 29.2 as well. Thus, the final letters on p. 17 cannot be taken as the beginning of a noun. I have chosen to restore the lacuna on the top of p. 18 with ο μνε (thought) as we have a resembling expression in 35.15-16: “‘and it is not with him that the thought of Error resides,’ The linkage between p. 18 and 35, though without the just described dialectical reasoning, was suggested by Kragerud, 1961 149 already.
persecuted him, became distressed by him, was defeated by him when they nailed him to a tree, because he became a fruit of the knowledge of the Father! Now, it did not perish because it was eaten. On the contrary, to those who ate it, whom he discovered in himself and who discovered him in themselves, it caused them to rejoice in its discovery!

The knowledge takes on the key role. It enters history and thereby causes a hostile reaction from those who are rooted in Error. The assault, however, has the opposite effect than Error probably intended, the tree of knowledge reappears with a fruit that eternally will be at hand, providing insight, reunion and joy for those who eat it. With this I assert that we have reached the end of what I call the first chapter of the GospTruth. The reappearance of terminology from the incipit sentence is obvious and the text then goes on with a reflection on that it had to take some time before knowledge and perfection could come, which is a related but a different topic, and thus rather belongs to another chapter.

For what use was this analysis?
On the basis of the carried through analyses I want to suggest the following. In the GospTruth the preacher had to tackle a situation in which people with a fairly literal interpretation of a Gnostic myth had to be persuaded into a psychological understanding of it. The demiurge on which they probably were too focused turned out to be a product of their own imagination. Even though people really could kill those who proclaimed the good news, such acts would result in a triumph for the truth. The crucifixion of Jesus made it possible for his disciples to eat the fruit of knowledge. Here a positive view on the Eucharist is at hand, as well as a physical view of the crucifixion of Jesus. By stressing this the preacher persuades the community to adopt what I call an acosmic perspective. Neither is it anticosmic, nor is it procosmic. To revolt against the cosmic system would be equally wrong as to follow it. The choice of action had to be based in the knowledge of the will of the Father. It might coincide with worldly norms, or it would not. However, that would be of no importance. The only thing that would matter is the acosmic perspective that is based on the knowledge of the Father. As we saw in the last quotation of the GospTruth, an acosmic perspective does not at all exclude a positive view on the Eucharist. The interpretation of it is a very interesting topic that cannot be dealt

50 18.21b-26a is a long assyndetic construction. The manner of construing the relation between the clauses of course is a matter of general interpretation. That the punch line should be at the end of it is likely as it is a common phenomenon in Greek and Coptic rhetoric and attested on p. 19-27-20.6 as well.
51 Most translators have tried with “It did not bring perishability because it was eaten, or other wordings with basically the same meaning. From the grammatical point of view, however, it requires an emendation of the text as ἦττατο in 18.26b lacks an object and for this reason should be taken ingressively: “It did not enter a state of perishing because it was eaten. My choice of changing my mind and to go against other translations is guided both by an inclination to avoid emendations, and my current opinion that the eternal and unbreakable nature of the Father of Truth and of his messenger, even when entering the cosmic sphere and actually dying, is the dominating theme on the first pages of the GospTruth.
I take ἔχε in 18.29b-30a as a marker of postponed subject ἑιδε, with cataphoric as well as anaphoric meaning.
53 17.28b-18.31.
54 The perspective on ethics in the GospTruth as well as of the view on the Christology of it is taken up in articles that hopefully will be published shortly.
with here, but in the GospTruth the Eucharist is of vital importance for preserving joy and spreading knowledge. Nor does the acosmic perspective exclude the importance of Jesus’ death on the cross:

...for this reason, the merciful, faithful Jesus became compassionate accepting the sufferings even unto taking up that book. Because he knew that his death is life for many, —just as in the case of a will before it is opened, the fortune of the deceased master of the house is concealed; and just as in the case of the All that was concealed, as the Father of the All was invisible, even though the All had come forth from him, the one from whom everything comes forth, —for this reason, Jesus appeared, clothed himself in that book, was nailed to a tree, and published the edict of the Father on the cross.

But what from an acosmic perspective would be hard to argue for is a view on the crucifixion as atonement for sin. Rather it is a kind of Christus Victor motif, well known from the studies of Aulén. In this kind of Christology it is the dramatic perspective in a mythological struggle between good and evil that Jesus takes part in. Such perspective is well in harmony with the description of the revelation of Jesus that led to the defeat of Error. As for the myth-theoretical aspect, I ask myself whether I would have benefited from making distinctions between special kinds of myths? The above quoted texts, the boundary line between creation stories and stories about society is fluid. One might even say that the GospTruth bothers very little with creation. What is at stake seems to be the network of illusions and other kinds of relations that might make life good or bad. This is a topic to which I will try to return in another context. This might have importance for the delimitation of myth versus legend, and also as for what kind of creation-myths might have.

Now we turn our attention to the GospJud in order to see if the above sketched perspective could be of help when we examine that text.

**Beyond Righteousness and Transgression**

The GospJud experienced many hardships on its bumpy journey towards being published in 2006. The text was seriously damaged but the group that worked on its restoration has made a very good job. In 2009 additional fragments show up and those are included in my analysis of the text. Generally scholars have held that Judas handing over of Jesus to be crucified lacks any salvific meaning in the GospJud. Recently this view was challenged by Jenott in his doctoral dissertation on the GospJud. There he draws upon Aulén’s analyses of Christus Victor. Jenott argues that it is this interpretation of the crucifixion that is at hand in the GospJud and that those who over look such perspective do it because they are stuck in the clichés of Gnosticism. Jenott continues claiming that this is linked to a general thought that “Gnostics rejected ritual in exchange for salvation through esoteric knowledge.” In order to take up a stand on these issues we will carry through an analysis of

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55 This will be thoroughly developed in a future article of mine.
56 GospTruth 20:10-27.
57 Aulén, 1956.
58 For interesting viewpoints on this matter see Segal 2003, 1-22 and 127-142.
59 Jenott 10 2011.
60 Jenott 2011 10.
the narrative processes in the GospJud that as far as I know have not been done before. Furthermore, we will see if the acosmic perspective could help us solving hitherto enigmatic parts of the text.

The text tells us about a conversation between Jesus and Judas Iscariot before Easter. But before their dialogue starts we also encounter the other disciples.

*When Jesus appeared on Earth, he made signs and great wonders for the salvation of humanity. Even though some walked on the road of righteousness and others in their transgressions, nevertheless the twelve disciples were called. He began to speak about the mysteries that are above the world, and about what will happen in the end.*

Hitherto the importance of this passage has been neglected. The twelve disciples belong to two groups, those who follow moral codes and those who transgress them. Nevertheless all of them are called. I see this as a remark that the moral and immoral conduct of the twelve did not make any difference. Both kinds of behavior originate from the cosmic sphere. What we have to ask ourselves is, however, if the disciples stand as a symbol for mankind? But as they do not seem to have the chance to be saved, they cannot represent the entire human race. After all, Jesus made signs and miracles to save human being. We will come back to this question on page på sidan 16. Even though they are introduced to the exalted mysteries, they have no capacity to comprehend them. This becomes developed in the following section of the text.

*It happened in Judaea that he one day came to his disciples and found them gathered together, sitting training godliness. When he came upon his disciples gathered together, sitting and offering thanks over the bread, he laughed. The disciples said to him “Master, why do you laugh at our offering thanks when we do what is right.” He said to them, “Neither am I laughing at you. Nor are you doing this by your own will, but this is the manner in which your god is worshiped.” They said to him, “Master, you are Christ the son of our god.” Jesus said to them, “How could you know me? Truly I say to you, no race from the people among you will know me.” When his disciples heard this they began to be displeased and became angry with him and blasphemed against him in their intellects.*

Indirectly the disciples are told about another sphere with another God. But the only reaction it provokes is anger and blasphemy. The theme of anger is something that seems to belong to those of the lower realms. This will be of importance for the interpretation of the latter parts of the GospJud as well. In the following text Jesus continues to provoke the disciples. He challenges them saying that

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61 I render the Coptic ⲡⲃⲉ with even though --- nevertheless. This construal has not been paid enough attention to earlier, and I will argue for its interpretation in the text.
63 33:22-34:22.
the one who has the power should bring forth “the perfect man” and stand up in front of Jesus. Nobody except Judas could do that. However, he could not see Jesus in his eyes, but instead looked down.\(^{64}\) Despite of these failings Judas knows what the other disciples do not. He can tell Jesus from where he has come.

Judas said to him, “I know who you are, and from which place you have come. You have come out of the immortal realm of Barbelo, and the name of the one who sent you it is not fitting for me to utter.”\(^{65}\)

Here we come across a common topic, the favorite disciple. Judas seems to be that disciple who knows what the others do not, and who will be the prototype for the one who wants to be initiated in the deepest mysteries.\(^{66}\) In this perspective it is not surprising that Jesus tells Judas to separate himself from the other disciples in order to receive deeper initiation in the exalted mysteries. But a gradual change of the scenario is introduced.

But Jesus knowing that Judas thought about other exalted things said to him, “Separate yourself from the others. I shall tell you about the mysteries of the kingdom, not in order that you will go there,\(^{67}\) but in order that you will suffer much grief. For someone else will replace you so that the twelve again will be complete in their god.”\(^{68}\)

The common-place of the beloved disciple begins to crack. The aim to separate Judas is not to inform him, but rather that he shall not be able to inform the other disciples. Judas, however, fails to grasp what Jesus says and asks him when he will be instructed about the great race and the final day. But as he does that, Jesus leaves him.\(^{69}\) Moreover, the grief that Judas will suffer presently can be interpreted as a temporal state aimed at developing spiritual skills on the part of the “favorite disciple”. But as we will see at the end of the gospel, it will not be like that.

Now the scenario shifts to the twelve disciples. They have had a vision that they are eager to tell Jesus about.

The disciples said to him, “Master, where did you go and what did you do when you had left us?” Jesus said to them, “I went to another great and holy race.” His disciples said to him, “Lord, what great race is it that is beyond us and holy, as it is not now in this realm?” But when Jesus heard this he laughed and said to them,

\(^{64}\) 35:1-14.  
\(^{65}\) 35:14-21.  
\(^{66}\) For instance the Gospel of John, The Gospel of Mary and The Gospel of Thomas.  
\(^{67}\) Earlier the reading was uncertain, which made it possible to translate as if it was possible for Judas to reach the kingdom. Now, however, ὅτα ἄνω ἐκείνῳ ἐγένετο is established.  
\(^{69}\) GospJud 36:5-10.
"Why do you contemplate on this strong and holy race? Truly, I say to you, no offspring of this realm will see that race, nor will any angelic army of the stars rule over it, nor will any mortal human be able to reach it. Because that race is not from which has come to be. Another power which you rule. When the disciples heard that each one were disturbed in their spirit so that they were unable to talk."

Although the disciples become greatly disturbed by that harsh message, another day they tell Jesus about a great vision they have had.

They told Jesus, "Master, we saw you in a vision. For we saw in a dream the other night." He said, "Why [some letters missing] hidden yours?" They said, "We saw a great building in which there was a great altar. There were twelve men, we would say that they were priests. A name [1 line missing]. There was a crowd persevering tenaciously at that altar until the priests were done and had served. And we were tenaciously persevering as well." Jesus said, "What kind of [priests]? were they?" They said, "Some abstain for two weeks. Others sacrifice their own children, others their wives. As they praise and act humbly towards each other, some sleep with males, others work at slaughtering, and others commit a multitude of sins and injustices. And the men who stand at the altar invoke your name and by all deeds of incompleteness that altar is filled." When they had said this they became silent for they were disturbed. Jesus said, "Why are you disturbed? Truly, I say to you, all the priests who stand at the altar invoke my name. And again I say to you, they have inscribed my name on the [altar] for the race of the stars through the race of mankind. And in my name they shamefully have planted fruitless trees." Jesus said to them, "You are those who receive service at the altar you saw, it is the god you serve, and you are the twelve men that you saw. The domestic animals that are led to be sacrificed is the crowd that you lead astray to that altar."

As was mentioned the first time we encountered the disciples they act indifferent manners. Some act in a way that normally would be related to lust, and some in a manner that rather is related to ascetism. In this way, the characteristics of righteousness and transgression are retold. In the following passage different behaviors among those who were related to the disciples are connected to different epochs. Times of piety are succeeded by times of injustice. But all kinds of behavior are connected to the rulers of the cosmic sphere. Eventually, the disciples ask Jesus to purify them. This is the climax of a tendency that has developed through the narration. At the beginning the disciples became angry when Jesus criticized them. Gradually, they have become more disturbed and silent. Now they repent. However, Jesus tells that he has come for the sake of the strong and great race and that he cannot take care of everybody. Here we leave the disciples for the last time, as Jesus now begins to teach Judas about the great race. Thus, at the outset the twelve disciples are depicted in dark colours. At the end, however, they are rather described as tragic figures than as evil ones. They were told about the cosmic sphere, but still obtained very little information about the upper realm. Now let us see with what kind of information Judas is provided.

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71 About six letters are missing. I have followed the majority and restored with ΝΟΥΝΗΒ = priests. But if crowd was intended instead we might restore with ΠΝΗΜΗΔΕ ΚΡΟΔΩΛΟΥ.
73 GospJud 41:10-42:15.
Judas said to him, “Rabbi, what fruit does this race possess?” Jesus said, “The souls of every human race will die. But when they have completed their time in the kingdom and when their spirit separates from them, their bodies will certainly die but their souls will be alive and they will be lifted up.”

One could say that this passage opens the other part of the GospJud. Thus, probably it is no coincidence that we here meet the same theme as at the end of the text, the spirit leaving the body in order to ascend to the spiritual realm. Now Judas also wants to share a vision that he hopes that Jesus can interpret for him:

Judas said, “Master, just as you have listened to all of them, now listen to me as well, because I have had a great vision!” But when Jesus heard this, he laughed and said to him, “Why do you strive that hard, o thirteenth demon? But talk and I will bear you.” Judas said to him, “I saw myself in a vision. The twelve disciples were stoning me, and persecuting me severely. I also came to the place (some letters missing) after you. I saw a building that was too large for my eyes to measure. Some great men surrounded it and it was roofed with greenery, and in the midst of it there was a crowd.” (Judas said to him], Master, take me into these persons!” Jesus answered and said to him, “Your star has bewildered you. It is not fitting for a mortal human to enter the building that you saw, since it is a place that is reserved for the holy. The sun and moon will not rule there, nor will the day. But they (the holy) will eternally stand in the realm together with the holy angels.” Behold, I have told you the mysteries of the kingdom, and I have instructed you about the error of the stars. (Some letters missing) sent (some letters missing) beyond the twelve realms.” Judas said to him, “Master, never will my seed rule the rulers.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Come! I will (2 lines hard to restore) but you will groan deeply when you see the kingdom with its entire race.” When Judas heard this he said to him, “What is for me in what I have received? Because you have separated me from that race!” Jesus answered and said, “You will become the thirteenth and you will be cursed by the rest of the races. But you will finally rule over them. They will (some letters missing) and you will not ascend to the holy race.”

It is interesting to compare Judas’ vision with that of the other disciples. In both we see a building, but the placement of the great men and the crowd is reversed and in Judas’ vision there is no altar. Judas role as the “favorite” disciple is completely reinterpreted. He is a demon that will rule over the twelve cosmic spheres. He possesses more knowledge than the other disciples, but this is of no help as he cannot enter the eternal realm. In this respect he occupies the same position as the demiurge. Following the acosmic perspective all realms in the cosmos is linked to grief. Ruler and ruled are linked together in a system that will bring no joy. The text continues with a long retelling of a Gnostic cosmogony. Judas really gets to know the mysteries, but he cannot take part in them. Moreover,

75 GospJud 44:15-47:2.
towards the end of the text the focus shifts. Judas’ problem seems to be that he has knowledge but cannot distinguish cosmic matters from spiritual affairs. On the contrary, many will serve the fleshly form of Jesus, confusing matter with spirit.

Truly I say to you, no hand of mortal human can sin against me. Truly I say to you Judas, those who bring offerings to Saklas (2,5 lines impossible to restore) all evil works. You, Judas will do more than they, for you will bring forth the man that bears me. Already your horn is raised, and your anger is full. Your star has risen and your heart has been grasped.76

In a prophetic manner Jesus tells that no mortal can sin against him. This statement is linked to the preceding text that deals with those who confuse Jesus real being with his mortal body. Judas who initially was the “favorite” disciple now is filled with anger, just as the other disciples at the beginning of the text. Only one small detail has to be added before the Gnostic myth is complete, the prototype for spiritual race has to ascend.

Then, the model of the great race of Adam will ascend. Because through the eternal ones the great race came to be before heavens and the Earth and the angels. Behold, I have told you everything. Lift up your eyes and see the cloud and the light which is in it and the stars which surround it. And the star that is the leader of them is your star. And Judas lifted up his eyes and saw the luminous cloud, and he entered into it. Those standing on the ground heard a voice out of the cloud saying, “the great race (some letters missing) image (3,5 lines impossible to restore. And Judas stopped looking at Jesus. And at once a disturbance took place among the Jews.77

Based on this long analysis, we are able to take up stand on some hotly debated questions. Judas has received a lot of information, but he is unable to understand what Jesus has told him. No mortal can sin against him. Now Jesus tells that the model of the great race will ascend. I assume that it is Jesus himself. But as Judas like everyone else it seems confuses the mortal body of Jesus with his spiritual essence he does not recognize that Jesus has ascended. It is hard to determine who it is that enters the cloud. I assume that it is Jesus, but it is also possible that Judas enters and looks down upon the mortal man Jesus. If Jesus spirit has left him, we may assume that this would be hinted at in the final lines of the gospel.

Then their chief priests murmured because he (Jesus) entered into the guest room for his prayer. And some scribes were there watching closely in order to catch him at prayer, for they were afraid of the people because he was held to be a prophet by them all. And they approached Judas. They said to him, "What are you doing here? You are the disciple of Jesus." But as for him, he answered them according to their will. Then Judas received some coins. He handed them over to them.78

As we know that the dialogue between Jesus and Judas was said to take place at Easter, it is not at all far fetch to see Jesus entering the guest house in order to pray as an allusion to the last supper. Here, I would say, we have an inclusio back to the Eucharist at the opening of the gospel. That Jesus prays and celebrates the Eucharist, to me is an indication of that he now acts according to the logic of a cosmic man. Judas, despite all information he has received, is unable to distinguish spirit from flesh and hands over Jesus.

For what use was this analysis?
The above presented analysis differs from others as far as it pays more attention to the narration. As the protagonists often undergo transformations through the text it is not advisable to pick up isolated parts and then try to analyse them. As for Judas, he starts out being the beloved disciple. Turns into a demon, but later on is hinted upon as being a mortal human. A similar shift of perspectives takes place when it comes to the other disciples. Initially, they are depicted in very dark colours, but at the end the tone is milder and most of all expressing a tragic state of affairs. The message of the Gospel of Judas I would say rather is a critique of Gnostics who despite having learned about the mysteries continue to act according to what the author of the GospJud would see as an old and fallen system. Thus, the debate has less to do with a controversy between non-Gnostic Christianities and Gnostic ones. The non-Gnostics are more deplorable than anything else. The handing over of Jesus was of no significance on the cosmic level. But it serves as a demonstration of the foolishness of those who confuse spirit with matter. Even those who know the mysteries can act as those who lack knowledge. From the acosmic perspective the disciples are acting vainly when they engage in ascetism or in lustful life. Neither of these ways can lead to eternal life. This perspective on the GospJud, I would say explains some hitherto enigmatic passages and reveals an earlier neglected aspect of the GospJud.

Putting the pieces together
In this article I have tried to highlight difficulties in the GospTruth and in the GospJud that become intelligible when we infer an acosmic perspective. This perspective is based upon a special usage of the Gnostic myth. Moreover, we have seen that the meaning of crucifixion differs widely between acosmic texts. In the Gospel of Truth the crucifixion is of major importance, and it is linked to the Eucharist that is positive. In the GospJud it is the other way around. The analysis of myth has to be combined with a careful study of the text-surface. The myth does not lead to a specific dogmatic position, but it functions as a frame in which many variations can appear. With these examples I hope to reintroduce the study of Gnostic myth, and maybe even to contribute with some ideas of how it can be applied in comparative studies. And as for the view on sacrifice in the two discussed texts? In the GospTruth it is part of the Christus Victor pattern. In the GospJud, however, it is of no significance besides serving as an example of the foolishness of those who confuse matter and spirit. This discussion is natural in a time when the tendency to spiritualise sacrifice is at hand. The GospJud goes a step farther than the GospTruth. It might be the case that baptism is important in the GospJud that is still a matter for deeper investigation. But the view of Eucharist and the importance of Jesus’ death are strongly put into question.
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