

REVIEWS

Fernando Bermejo Rubio. *El evangelio de Judas*. Texto bilingüe y comentario 19. Salamanca 2012, 174 p. ISBN 978-84-301-1796-3.

The modest size of this commentary initially suggests that the editor has a lay audience in mind. The monograph could fit in a pocket, being approximately as large as a travel guide. The edition, however, has a thoroughly scholarly character, and can be credited with recapitulating the most important advances on the subject prior to its publication in 2012. Bermejo Rubio does not here offer any radical new assessment of the gospel of Judas, but rather represents the text and commentary in a format easily accessible to Spanish-language scholars and highly motivated laypersons with an interest in the apocryphal text. Notably, while the author presents a great deal of background information, he assumes a basic knowledge of Coptic Egypt, the Nag Hammadi Library and gnostic thought.

The edition proceeds in three parts: a Spanish translation (p. 9–24), a scholarly introduction (p. 25–76), and a Coptic-Spanish parallel edition (pp. 77–163). The introduction surveys the history of the find, the national Geographic team’s contributions and scholarly reactions from the wider community of Coptic and Nag Hammadi Library specialists. After citing the National Geographic publication’s assessment of the historic value of the gospel of Judas for reassessing Judas as a positive figure, the author describes a new consensus in which the gospel of Judas has no value for reconstructing the historical Jesus or the first Christians. The editor reviews the various interpretations of Judas as protagonist, antagonist or paradoxical betrayer-savior. In the last case, Judas’ betrayal is reconsidered as ironically integral to the crucifixion (p. 62). Additionally, the reader encounters the latest synthesis, that of Lance Jenott, that the Gospel of Judas specifically consists of a gnostic argument against the apostolic church (p. 63).

Several pages discuss the Judas’ status as thirteenth and as demon, weighing the possible interpretative lenses of the Platonic tradition (*daimon* as benevolent intermediary) and likewise of the canonical gospels (*daimon* as Satanic, malevolent spirit). The editor again leaves the matter open; “la prudencia obliga a concluir que aún no se ha dicho sobre él la última palabra” (p. 68). With respect to the use of the numeration “thirteenth (aeon/kingdom),” the editor notes parallels from the Pistis Sophia and Marsanes. Behind these questions lies a somewhat-overlooked issue of Coptic vocabulary. One should ask whether Greek-Coptic loan words like ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΟΝ really have different meanings in different texts, or if they have been borrowed with a particular and consistent niche meaning. ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΟΝ appears frequently in the New Testament and less frequently in the Nag Hammadi library (Gospel of Philip, Authoritative Teaching, The Concept of Our Great Power and The Trimorphic Protennoia), but in neither corpus can one find a reference to a benevolent spirit. The combination with “thirteenth” demonstrably indicates that the term is not in any sense positive.

(N.B. The Greek reference *daimónios* on page 66 should read *daimónion*.) For Bermejo Rubio, the apocryphal gospel chiefly serves to recover the theology of Sethian Christians in the second century.

The Coptic text and Spanish translation incorporate improvements to the text, particularly those of Wurst, Nagel, Brankaer/Bethge, Cherix, Thomassen, Jenott and van der Vliet. Bermejo Rubio's transcription is accurate and accessible, and, at first glance, attractively presented, although a number of minor improvements deserve attention here. The current reader noticed only three minor typographical errors (p. 106 $\overline{\leq N} > \overline{\Gamma E N E \lambda}$, p. 146 $\overline{\text{N P}} _ \overline{\omega \text{M E}}$, p. 160 $[\epsilon] \overline{\text{i}} _ \overline{\text{H C}}$). The editor seems to have vacillated between two annotations for editorial corrections (\square and \diamond), with his *Tabla de signos* only describing the former. Furthermore, his choice of font was not optimal for the Coptic transcription, failing to capitalize on advantages inherent in Unicode. The editor uses the angle bracket for text-critical purposes as well as for the scribal diple, which could be differentiated with the "single right-pointing angle quotation mark" ($>$ versus \succ). With respect to Coptic, the font used does not combine superlinear strokes well, and is not capable of strokes of various lengths (e.g., p. 88 $\overline{\text{Z E P A T Q}}$ for $\overline{\text{Z E P A T Q}}$, $\overline{\text{P N A}}$ for $\overline{\text{P N A}}$ *passim*). Likewise, the editor uses a comma where the Coptic morphological divider would be more apropos ($\overline{\text{E P O K}}' \rightarrow \overline{\text{E P O K}}'$).

Footnotes annotate the Spanish translation thus facilitating access to a scholarly discussion of alternate reconstructions, parallels in biblical and apocryphal sources, relevant patristic references and modern secondary literature. The reader encounters a number of unsolved mysterious with various possible solutions cited from recent literature. GJudas 33 offers the problematic phrase $\overline{\text{N Z P O T}} \succ \overline{\text{W A K Z E E P O Q}}$ which probably must result from some sort of corruption; $\overline{\text{N Z P O T}}$ could be a version of Bohairic $\overline{\text{Z P O T}}$ "child," Bohairic $\overline{\text{Z O R T Q}}$ "ghost," or somehow Sahidic $\overline{\text{W O R T}}$ "veil." In addition to the morphological problems present in these reconstructions, none of these readings fit the context well, especially the prior phrase which began with $\overline{\text{O Y H P E D E N C O P}}$ "often", and contained the negative habitual. This sentence contains the positive habitual and would be expected to have a contrasting prepositional phrase introducing it (e.g. $\overline{\text{N Z A Z N C O P}}$ or $\overline{\text{N O Y C H Y}}$). Although the emendations cited in the commentary are all grammatically plausible, at least as likely, is the possibility that the reading here is corrupt beyond restoration given the current evidence. Likewise, in the angelic list on GJudas 52, the first angel's name is $\overline{\text{P E X C}}$, a title which nowhere else appears in the text. Three alternatives to the expected $\overline{\text{P E X P H I C T O C}}$ are listed ($\overline{\text{P E X P H I C T O C}}$, $\overline{\text{P X O E I C}}$, $\overline{\text{P E K P H I C}}$), although one wonders if $\overline{\text{P E X P H I C T O C}}$ is necessarily impossible, especially as an angelic name? After all, the lack of the terms elsewhere for Jesus might be explained by this association with an angel. These two examples illustrate how the editor has broadly drawn from other scholarly works to create his own commentary, consistently refraining from his own scholarly dogmatism. The downside is that the novice reading may struggle to decide which arguments are tenuous and which are persuasive.

The small page formatting doubtlessly limited Bermejo Rubio's discussion, yet the reader will still encounter a broad and solid historical-critical interaction with the gospel of Judas. The instructor who incorporates this text into a course will appreciate its academic rigor and commitment to an eclectic impartiality.

This monograph does not attempt to replace the more comprehensive works on which it draws. With respect to referencing textual echoes in biblical, Nag Hammadi and patristic sources, the editor has generally omitted referencing the scholar who identified the intertextuality. This can probably be excused by the compact size, as can the lack of indices and a glossary. Given the small size of the book, one would not expect to find as much as indeed is present. This volume will serve the Spanish language population well, especially as its publication builds on the efforts of so many others, avoiding the pitfalls and hype created by National Geographic's exploitation of the Tchacos codex. Rarely, does one find such a scholarly resource available for only 12 €.

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