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Chapman Professor Has Key Role in Decoding Gospel of Judas

Dr. Marvin Meyer, One of the Worlds Foremost Experts on the Gnostic Gospels, Sheds Light on an Unknown Side of the Bibles Greatest Villain

ORANGE, Calif., April 27, 2006 -- Dr. Marvin Meyer, Griset Professor of Bible and Christian Studies at Chapman University, and director of Chapmans Albert Schweitzer Institute, was a key member of the international National Geographic Society team that recently revealed its translation of the Gospel of Judas, one of the long-lost Gnostic gospels. Dr. Meyer, a renowned Coptologist who is also regarded as one of the world's leading experts on the Gnostic gospels and texts about Jesus outside the New Testament, worked on the translation team that decoded the crumbling papyrus document. The telegenic professor also appeared on the National Geographic TV special that announced the discovery to a worldwide audience, and has been a tireless media spokesman for the Society and the discovery team, quoted in newspapers and magazines all over the globe.

The May 2006 issue of *National Geographic* magazine, a pair of books rapidly climbing the bestseller lists, the TV special, a recently released DVD and a comprehensive official Web site (www.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/gospel) recount the thrilling story of the Gospel of Judas. The ancient papyrus codex lost for more than 1,700 years was discovered in a remote Egyptian cave in 1970, and its history after that involved more twists and turns than any novel Dan Brown could write. After spending a stint on the antiquities market, the codex landed in a safe-deposit box in a bank in Hicksville, New York, where it remained for 16 years. Although the dry Egyptian air had protected it for almost two millennia, its time spent in the bank nearly destroyed the manuscript it crumbled and disintegrated into more than 1,000 pieces.

Finally the document was given over to the National Geographic Society in collaboration with the Maecenas Foundation for Ancient Art and the Waitt Institute for Historical Discovery for authentication, preservation, restoration and translation. The painstaking restoration process took five years, and authentication by carbon-14 dating and examination of the Coptic script proved the manuscript to be the real thing.

As a member of the select National Geographic team of scholars (which included Dr. Rodolphe Kasser of Switzerland; Dr. Bart Ehrman of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Dr. Gregor Wurst of the University of Augsburg, Germany; Dr. Stephen Emmel of the University of Munster, Germany; and Dr. Elaine Pagels of Princeton University; among others), Dr. Meyer was quoted prominently by almost every major world newspaper when the Society announced the news about the Gospel of Judas on April 6, 2006. In fact, his was the Quote of the Day in *The New York Times* on April 7: We will be talking about this gospel for generations to come.

In the Gospel of Judas, the man long reviled as history's most heinous betrayer, Judas Iscariot, is shown to be the best friend of Jesus. Jesus tells Judas that he will exceed all the other apostles, because you will sacrifice the man that clothes me. In other words, says Dr. Meyer, according to

this gospel, Judas was part of the divine plan to liberate the true spiritual being of Jesus. This is a provocative text, and a very interesting and significant text.

He expands on that idea in his statement on the National Geographic site: The publication of the Gospel of Judas represents a significant moment for the study of religion and culture. It is a rare occurrence that a previously unknown gospel manuscript is discovered. This gospel is an early source for our knowledge of an important mystical movement within early Christianity and Judaism, namely the Sethian gnostic school of religious thought. Further, the text provides the opportunity to evaluate and perhaps re-evaluate the historical role of a figure, Judas Iscariot, who has been much maligned within Christianity and has been a prominent figure in the development of anti-Semitism. All in all, the Gospel of Judas sheds important light on the character of developing Christianity, and reminds us again of the rich diversity of the early church.

Viewers can examine a virtual copy of the papyrus codex, read and hear comments by Dr. Meyer and the rest of the team, and find out more about the Gospel of Judas on the National Geographic Web site. Two books have also been published: *The Gospel of Judas*, by Bart D. Ehrman, Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer and Gregor Wurst, which presents the actual translation and comments on the manuscript (at the time of this press release, this book ranked #3 on the *New York Times* nonfiction bestseller list and #20 on the *USA Today* bestseller list); and *The Lost Gospel: The Quest for the Gospel of Judas Iscariot*, by Herbert Krosney, which tells the saga of the codex and how it was lost, found, lost and found again, and finally translated and preserved for posterity. The DVD of the television special is also available through the National Geographic Web site.

Following further study, the Gospel of Judas codex will be returned to its rightful home, Egypt, to be housed in the Coptic Museum. Because of the careful and meticulous work of Dr. Meyer and the rest of the National Geographic team, the manuscript has now been preserved, published and released to the world. Dr. Meyer and the team are currently at work on a critical edition of the Judas codex, including translations into several languages.

What has tickled me the most about all the media interest in the Gospel of Judas, says Dr. Meyer, is seeing the name of Chapman University listed right there alongside the universities of Augsburg, Geneva, Munster and Princeton. I have to admit, that gives me great pleasure.

Among the most recent of Dr. Marvin Meyers many books are *The Gnostic Discoveries: The Impact of the Nag Hammadi Library*; *The Gnostic Gospels of Jesus: The Definitive Collection of Mystical Gospels and Secret Books About Jesus of Nazareth*; *The Gospels of Mary: The Secret Tradition of Mary Magdalene, the Companion of Jesus*; *The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus*; and *The Gnostic Bible*.