

I broke off the thread on the Gospel of Judas and the non-disclosure agreement that I had to sign at ... at the point where I had to sign the non-disclosure agreement! Here I resume.

So the deal was this: in order to be allowed to see the manuscript, to examine it, to have access to a translation of it, to study the translation, and to write an essay based on it for the National Geographic's intended book on the Gospel of Judas – all of this before anyone else in the universe (apart from Rodolphe Kasser who had access to the manuscript, and the people that he was working with to restore it) had a chance to see it – I had to agree not to tell anyone about it. The choice was this: I could agree not to tell anyone, and so be given access to the text and its translation; or I could decide not to agree and not be given access. I didn't like the choice, but it was really a no-brainer.

After the entire affair ended and the dust settled, those of us who signed the non-disclosure agreement were attacked by fellow scholars, who felt that non-disclosure agreements were unethical and prohibitive of true scholarship. I couldn't agree more. But none of us was given the choice of signing and having access or not signing and having access. It was sign and get access; don't sign and don't get access. We didn't come up with the idea of the non-disclosure agreement. We were presented with it as the one option we had.

I completely agree that this is not how scholarship ought to be done. Historical scholarship involves open access to information and texts. Everyone needs to be able to see the text that scholarship is based on so that this scholarship can be checked, and critiqued, and evaluated, and refined, and honed, and re-presented. And all of this should happen among scholars who have access to the same information (and text), well BEFORE any discussion of the information or text is presented to the general reading public. Public scholarship should not be published until scholars have had a chance to evaluate, check, and refine claims, views, and interpretations.

But that was not an option in this case. And the reason was that the owner of the text and / or National Geographic (I don't know if this was the owner's view, but it certainly was National Geographic's) did not want information about the find to be widely publicized until they themselves had publicized it.

I don't know all the ins and outs, in part because National Geographic did not want any of us to know them. And let me stress, I am NOT necessarily faulting National Geographic. In some ways, it *too* had its hands tied. This is how I understand the basic situation. If someone reading this has a fuller or better scoop, let me know. But as I understand it, the scoop is this.

National Geographic had...

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