The first announcement of the miraculous recovery, restoration, and imminent translation and publication of the *Gospel of Judas* from a Coptic codex found in the Al Minya region (Middle Egypt), around 1978, was made by Rodolphe Kasser at the Eighth Congress of the International Association for Coptic Studies, held in Paris, on July 1st, 2004. A preliminary translation of the text was subsequently released, on April 6th, 2006, by the team of specialists who were also responsible for the publication of the diplomatic edition of the entire codex a year later, on June 19th, 2007. In the wake of the excitement stirred up by this sensational event an impressive number of short monographs have appeared. In spite of their understandably different approaches and conclusions, all of the authors of this first wave of studies on the *Gospel of Judas* share the basic conviction that the text conveys a positive image of the wayward disciple and that, simply put, it serves to rehabilitate him. A closer analysis of the Coptic text, however, has led a few specialists to independently adopt a very different position which considers the protagonist of the *Gospel of Judas*, in April DeConick’s words, to be “as evil as ever.” It is reasonable to assume that, because...
of the poor condition of the Tchacos Codex it will be extremely difficult to reach a firm consensus and that the debate about the exact nature of Judas’s role in the text will go on for a very long time.\(^4\)

Be that as it may, no matter what reading and interpretation we choose to adopt, the *Gospel of Judas* is by no means the only “apocryphal” text to display a highly positive or extremely negative image of the Iscariot. We do not even have to wait for the flourishing of modern scholarship and literature to find characterizations of Judas as the arch-villain or the misunderstood hero of the Jesus movement.\(^5\) Actually, this was already the case in late antique, fifth century Palestine, where at least two opposing narrative cycles of Jesus’ passion were circulating, each with its own specific set of heroes and villains. In what follows, (1) I will begin devoting some space to the figure of Judas in the often overlooked Hebrew and Aramaic *Toledoth Yeshu* and in the little known Ethiopic *Book of the Cock* and Coptic *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus-Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle*; (2) then, I will show how several traditions preserved in these relatively late “apocryphal” texts are, in fact, much earlier and may even have some interesting connections with the *Gospel of Judas*; (3) finally, I will suggest some possibilities about the role of the Sethian (or “Sethianized”) Judas on the basis of the analogy offered by the presence of other New Testament characters in Gnostic literature and the opportunities that an “association” with the Demiurge (similar to the one that is hinted at toward the end of the *Gospel of Judas*) would eventually offer to them.\(^6\)

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\(^4\) For Meyer’s reaction, see Meyer 2007b, 50–2. He also replied to DeConick in his contribution to this volume, and she responded to him in her own contribution.

\(^5\) For the figure of the “historical” Judas—or at least, for the perception of his personage among contemporary theologians—see Klauck 1987; Maccoby 1992; Klassen 1996. On the different pictures of Judas in modern and contemporary culture, see Paffenroth 2001; Dauzat 2006.

\(^6\) *Gos. Jud.* 57:16–58:8. At least, according to the scholars mentioned above, n. 3. See, e.g., DeConick 2007, 112–3, 116–20 and 191. Incidentally, the scribal error at 52:4–6 was also noticed by Van der Vliet 2006a, who proposed to reconstruct, “the first is Athoth, he who is called the Aries (κριός)” (147–51).