

## **The Stranger's Book (CT,4): A Public Domain Translation**

by Mark M. Mattison

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In the fourth century, Epiphanius of Salamis complained about various “Books of Allogenes (Stranger)” in circulation at that time, and Porphyry of Tyre mentioned a “Revelation of Allogenes.”<sup>1</sup> “Allogenes” or “Stranger” is also the name of the third tractate in Volume XI of the Nag Hammadi Library (NHC XI,3). However, another book featuring this character turned up in the Codex Tchacos (CT,4) alongside the Gospel of Judas. Scholars have dated this Coptic text to the fourth century.

The tract in NHC XI,3 narrates five revelations given to Stranger, followed by a visionary ascent. The lack of any explicit Christian content is notable. By contrast, in the Codex Tchacos, Stranger sounds very much like Jesus.<sup>2</sup> After he and his disciples pray, they ascend Mount Tabor (page 59), a traditional site of the Transfiguration, where Satan tempts Stranger on pages 60 and 61 (as in Matthew 4 and Luke 4). After resisting Satan’s temptations, Stranger prays (page 62). A bright cloud surrounds him, and a voice instructs him about his upward ascent past a number of malevolent “Powers” (starting on page 63) in a passage closely related to the Gospel of Mary in the Berlin Codex (BG 8502,1), pages 15-17.

A transcript and translation of this text was published by National Geographic in 2007.<sup>3</sup> However, additional fragments which had been withheld by an antiquities dealer were recovered in Ohio in 2008.<sup>4</sup> Those fragments (including significant portions of pages 63-66, as well as the end of the text) weren’t transcribed and published until 2012.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, Alin Suciu later discovered a small fragment from pages 59 and 60 at Lafayette College in Pennsylvania.<sup>6</sup> This fragment was not included in the 2012 transcript, but has been included in a more complete, fresh (as yet unpublished) draft recently developed by Lance Jenott.

The translation below includes all pages and fragments reconstructed to date. The following resources were principally consulted for this translation:

Jenott, Lance, “The *Book of the Foreigner* from Codex Tchacos,” *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 57 (2020), pp. 235-276

Kasser, Rodolphe, and Gregor Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas, Critical Edition: Together with the Letter of Peter to Philip, James, and a Book of Allogenes from Codex Tchacos* (National Geographic), 2007

Pearson, Birger A., “The *Book of Allogenes* (CT,4) and Sethian Gnosticism,” in Kevin Corrigan and Tuomas Rasimus, eds., *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honor of John D. Turner* (Brill), 2013, pp. 105-116

Scopello, Madeleine, “The Temptation of Allogenes (Codex Tchacos, Tractate IV),” in Kevin Corrigan and Tuomas Rasimus, eds., *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honor of John D. Turner* (Brill), 2013, pp. 117-137

Wurst, Gregor, “Weitere neue Fragmente aus Codex Tchacos: Zum ‘Buch des Allogenes’ und zu Corpus Hermeticum XIII,” in E. E. Popkes and G. Wurst, eds., *Judasevangelium und Codex Tchacos: Studien zur religionsgeschichtlichen Verortung* (Mohr Siebeck), 2012, pp. 1-12

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Madeleine Scopello, “The Temptation of Allogenes (Codex Tchacos, Tractate IV),” in Kevin Corrigan and Tuomas Rasimus, eds., *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honor of John D. Turner* (Brill), 2013, pp. 118,119.

<sup>2</sup> Scopello writes that the author “tends to superimpose (if not identify) Allogenes’ character onto that of Jesus” (*op. cit.*, p. 129). For a more confident assessment, cf. Birger A. Pearson, “The *Book of Allogenes* (CT,4) and Sethian Gnosticism,” in Kevin Corrigan and Tuomas Rasimus, eds., *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honor of John D. Turner* (Brill), 2013, p. 108: “It is obvious that Allogenes is equated with Jesus in this tractate.” However, in personal conversation on June 29, 2019, Lance Jenott suggested caution about a direct identification.

<sup>3</sup> Rodolphe Kasser, Gregor Wurst, and François Gaudard, eds., *The Gospel of Judas: Together with the Letter of Peter to Philip, James, and a Book of Allogenes, from Codex Tchacos: Critical Edition* (National Geographic), 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Herbert Krosney, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, “Preliminary Report on New Fragments of Codex Tchacos,” *Early Christianity* 1 (2010), pp. 282-294.

<sup>5</sup> Gregor Wurst, “Weitere neue Fragmente aus Codex Tchacos: Zum ‘Buch des Allogenes’ und zu Corpus Hermeticum XIII,” in E. E. Popkes and G. Wurst, eds., *Judasevangelium und Codex Tchacos: Studien zur religionsgeschichtlichen Verortung* (Mohr Siebeck), 2012, pp. 1-12.

<sup>6</sup> “Newly Found Fragments from Codex Tchacos,” <https://alinsuciu.com/2012/10/10/newly-found-fragments-of-codex-tchacos/>, last accessed June 29, 2019.

## Symbols

59 Page Number

[ ] Gap in the text / reconstructed text

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## Introduction

“My [son, let's pray to God ...] to the Father of all the ages, to send us a spirit of knowledge to reveal the mysteries, so that we may know ourselves; specifically, where [we've] come from, where we're going, and what we need to do to live.”

And they left and went up on a mountain called ‘Tabor.’ And they knelt down and prayed, “O Lord God, the One above all the great realms, the One who has no beginning and no end, give us a spirit of knowledge to reveal your mysteries, so that we may know ourselves; specifically, where we've come from, where we're going, and what we need to do to live.”

## The Temptation of Stranger

After Stranger had said these words, [Satan] appeared **60** [on] the earth, since he [binds the world]. He said, “[...] while you're walking up on this mountain, because although you seek, you won't find anything. But come to me, and [take for] yourself what's in my [world]. Eat my good things. Take for yourself silver, gold, and clothes.”

In response Stranger said, “Depart from me, Satan, because I don't seek you but my Father, who is above all the great realms; because I've been called ‘Stranger,’ since I'm from another race. I'm not from your race.”

Then the one who binds the [world] told him, “We **61** ourselves [...] in my [world].”

[Then] Stranger said to him, “Depart from [me], Satan! Go away, because I don't [belong to] you.”

Then Satan [departed] from him, after having angered him many times; and he wasn't able to deceive [him]. And when he had been defeated, he went away to his place in great shame.

## The Transfiguration of Stranger

Then Stranger cried out in a loud voice, “O God, you who are in the great realms, hear my voice, have mercy on me, and save me from every evil! Look on me and hear me in this deserted place. Now [let your] indescribable [light] shine on me **62** [...] your light. Yes, Lord, help me, because [I] don't know [...] forever and ever.”

And while I said these things, look! A bright cloud surrounded me. Because of the way it was shining, I couldn't gaze into the light around it. And I heard something from the cloud and the light. It shone on me and said, “O Stranger, the sound of your prayer has been heard, and I've been sent here to tell you the gospel before you leave [this place], so that **63** you may [know ...] reveal [... body] dissolve [...] the [spirit...]

## The Ascent of Stranger

“[... above. But] when you go, [you’ll] come to the first Power, which is the power of Desire. And it will bind you and [ask] you, ‘Where are [you] going, O Stranger?’ But say, ‘What bound me has been killed, and I’ve been released. I’ll go up to my Father, the One above all the great realms.’ And it will release you.

“Then you’ll come to the second Power, which is the power of Darkness. [And it] will bind [you and] **64** [ask you], ‘Where [are you going, O Stranger?’ But say, ‘What bound me has been killed, and I’ve been released. I’ll go up to my Father, the One above all the great realms.’ Then it will release you.]

“[And you’ll] come to the [third] Power, which is called ‘Ignorance.’ It will bind you and say to you, ‘Where [are you going, O] Stranger?’ But say to it, ‘What bound me has been killed, and I’ve been released. I’ll go up to my Father, the One above all the great realms.’ Then it will release you.

“And you’ll come to the fourth Power, which [... Death. It will say to you, ‘Where are you going, O Stranger?’] **65** [But say, ‘What bound me has been killed, and I’ve been released. I’ll go up to my Father, the One above all the great realms.’ And it will release you.]

“[And you’ll come to the fifth] Power, [which is the] Kingdom [of the] Flesh. [And it will] say to you, ‘[Where are] you [going, O Stranger?’ But say, ‘What bound] me has been [killed], and I’ve [been] released. [Now] then, I’ll go up to my Father, [the One] above [all the great realms.’ And it will] release you.

“[And you’ll come to the sixth Power, which is the Foolish] ‘Wisdom’ [of Flesh. And] it will say to you, ‘Where [are you going,] O [Stranger?’ But say to [it, ‘What] bound me [has been killed, and I’ve been released. I’ll go up to my Father], **66** [the One above all the great realms.’ And it will release you.]

“[...] in [...] and you’ll [go up] over [these] angels [...] myriads of [holy] angels [...] myriads of] angels [...] Don’t be faint of heart [...] Be strong [... O Stranger], because you [...] Don’t be afraid [...] which was said [...]”

*An unknown number of pages are missing.*

## Conclusion

**Last Page** Stranger [...] he sent [...] so that they might [...] the] judgment. [Peace to the one] who wrote them down [and to those who will] preserve them.