

**In Darkness and in Light
The Many Faces of Judas Iscariot**

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ABSTRACT

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Judas Iscariot has been and remains to this day one of the most hated persons in human history. The goal of this project is to examine the evolution Judas as he appears, first within the pages of the Christian canon, then moving over to literature outside the canon, into Apocrypha. Moreover, consulting ancient and modern sources allows for the ability to raise questions regarding the possibility of redemption for Judas as well as an analysis on whether this person was real or simply a literary construct by ancient authors in order to strengthen the core of the Christian belief system. With the inclusion of a clear and present villain in the narrative, the early Christians or proto-Orthodox were able to separate themselves from the initial Jewish community and labelled Judas as the ultimate example of what not to do when it came to being a “true” Christian. The discovery of the Gospel of Judas and its subsequent publication brought mainstream attention to the early years of Christianity, with its many different structures. The exploration of its pages reveal an entirely different message in which Judas Iscariot is a central figure, amidst a more “gnostic” tradition. The character of Judas Iscariot has since travelled through the centuries and it is this project’s mission to demonstrate the evolution of this character, showing how he first appears as merely one of twelve men who follow Jesus to a personification of evil. The project will also demonstrate how a possible misunderstanding of literature could have created a literary scapegoat, resulting in Judas Iscariot’s use as a tool to foster hatred and animosity towards the Jews. The end result leaves the reader with the question of whether Judas deserves absolution for his actions, who may have been an important part of God’s plan for humanity’s salvation.

KEY WORDS: Judas Iscariot, Gospel of Judas, Early Christianity, Gnostics, Gnosticism, Mary Magdalene, Jesus, Jews, Orthodox Christianity, Apocrypha, redemption, salvation.

For Judas and Mary – *SIC LVCEAT LVX* – May it never be extinguished
For family, for friends, for mentors
For those who believed in me
For my rabbit, you are my lobster
There is always hope

*Every night
Before I close my eyes
I say a little prayer
That you'll have mercy on me
Please dear God
To live inside the divine
Not like I want to die
Teach me to forgive myself
Outlive this hell.
Is it really faith if I'm weak?
Can you tell the truth when you live lies?
I'm just looking for the signs
Hold my hand, please sympathize
Hard enough trying to forgive
Hard enough trying to live
Flawed, flawed by design, yeah
Please, please sympathize, yeah
Somebody to teach me to love
Somebody to help me rise above
I need to survive
I'm looking for mercy*

“Looking for Mercy” by M. Ciccone and B. Hazzard,
Madame X (New York: Interscope, 2019)

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Introduction – Who are you Judas Iscariot?

To fully grasp the complex character that is Judas Iscariot, a thorough examination of the writings on the persona across the early years of Christianity must be completed in order to clarify whether the controversial apostle was a living, breathing man or simply the product of a vivid imagination. Through this thesis I will provide a deep exploration of the canonical gospels in order to shed a first light on who Judas was and on his role as an apostle. I will also demonstrate how the political and social events and context of the times these ancient texts were written may have influenced their composers and led them to portray Judas from a negative perspective to reflect their views. The accounts given by the evangelists differ from one another, from the act committed by Judas against Jesus to his apparent demise. Why are there discrepancies between the writings? How can the same story be retold several different times with several different outcomes, if one includes the Acts of the Apostles as well?

Curiously, the fate of Judas grows darker and darker over time but initially, there was no mentioning Judas at all. Already by the time of the Gospels of Luke and John, Judas' fate was sealed and as the Church grew in size and influence, his grave was dug deeper and deeper but it was never unanimous. The struggles experienced by the fledgling "Jesus" movement led to the creation of various apocryphal texts that contended with the apostolic tradition, one of those arguments was the role and ultimate fate of Judas Iscariot. The Gospel of Judas was part of that literature and it was hidden to ensure its survival, only to be found again and examined. By exploring all these different branches: the canonical, apocryphal texts and the Gospel of Judas itself, this thesis will draw up a literary map will demonstrating the historicity of one of the most mysterious figures in Christianity. The intended result: to illustrate how Judas Iscariot not only completed God's request of him but appeared to be scapegoated and later denied salvation.

Furthermore, the hatred provoked by the tales of his actions led to the association of Judas to all the Jews as a band of unworthy deicides, doomed to be shunned and abused across the ages.

From the physical features to the social aspects, Judas and by extension, Jews as a group, would go on to be typecast as untrustworthy, villainous misers. This stereotypical condemnation would, over generations perpetuate baseless received ideas and fuel animosity toward Jews, leading eventually to catastrophic ideologies and beliefs and the persecution and genocide of millions.

By shedding light into the gathered material from across literature, at the very least, a reasonable doubt regarding Judas' culpability will result in a form of rehabilitation. The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries already appear to be more lenient toward the Iscariot not only because of the revelations found in the Gospel of Judas but also because of the aftereffects of the Holocaust. With the power of social media and the all-round accessibility to information, the general public's interest in the apostle has spiked, leading to the creation of a sort of antihero persona. Bearing witness to that, the scholarly community also proceeded to revisit ancient texts and interpretations thus creating separate camps when faced with the idea of sainthood for Judas. The many faces of Judas: the zealot in Mark, the penitent in Matthew, the thief in Luke and the devil in John, have evolved further into some early writings of Church fathers who appear to possess selective memory, disregarding the necessity of the passion, all parts of it, for humanity's salvation. Judas was a pivotal piece of the puzzle. In dealing with the divine, both scholar and faithful must accept the concept of mystery which often does not yield any sort of definite answer. The argument in favour of Judas is clear: without one act there cannot be the other (deliverance and death of Christ on the cross). With that in mind, this analysis will explore the canonical gospel and examine each of its authors to posit why they composed their stories and whether there may

have been any personal, social or political factors influencing their work. Since the Church was not defined officially in the first three centuries of the common era, an examination of both Apostolic and Gnostic texts, while exposing their ongoing conflict over orthodoxy, will reveal how Judas Iscariot went from being scarcely mentioned to being vilified over several centuries. Why did some groups adopt him as a banner holder in their writings (Sethians for example) and how did some prominent figures (Papias, Eusebius, Irenaeus and others) demonstrate so graphically the manner in which Judas lived and died following his appearance and acts in the gospels? These important questions need to be thoroughly researched in order to explain how the Iscariot's reputation deteriorated dramatically into ignominy by the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

The mystery surrounding Judas Iscariot carries over into the twenty-first century and despite the dark halo placed upon his head, the man still fascinates both scholars and the general community as he begins to appear in film and novels as a misunderstood character. The revelations of the Gospel of Judas published in 2006-2007, in which he was first portrayed to be the hero of the story, helped fan the interest in Judas even further, however the case for Judas has yet to be resolved and continues to intrigue. A potential result of this analysis will attempt to show that Judas was in fact a key element in the Jesus narrative. Whether as a deliverer or a traitor, Judas served God in the way he was meant to. If Jesus Christ is the light, then the Iscariot is the catalyst who caused the spark.

In our modern world, there are few who have no knowledge of the story of Jesus of Nazareth and his death on the cross. One of his companions, Judas Iscariot, was said to have delivered his master in exchange for a sum as little as thirty pieces of silver¹, thus committing the dreadful act of treachery. Soon afterwards, Jesus was condemned to die on the cross and carry

¹ Robinson 2007: 162.

through with God's plan to redeem humanity from sin, as the synopsis of the canonical gospels goes. The fate of Judas however, remains up for debate. The four biblical gospels as well as the early Church fathers such as Irenaeus of Lyon, Origen and Athanasius, to name a few, have sparingly addressed the issue regarding his demise. Unanimously it was summarized that Judas' betrayal meant he would be condemned to an eternity of torment, away from the forgiveness of God². An example (or *counter*-example) was made out of him: the one who is not to be imitated. He became a lesson for fellow Christians about the value of fidelity and faith in Jesus as the Saviour.

But what if the story of Judas and Jesus was not entirely as it was written in the Holy Scriptures? The discovery of the Gospel of Judas has led to the scholarly re-examination of his character, with some questioning the viable possibility of rehabilitation. An analysis of the document will show that Judas Iscariot, though not a saint, was scapegoated by the members of the early apostolic Christian movement in order to steer the faithful in the "right" direction. Their "truth" accused Judas of all sorts of wrongs and negative connotations: thief, liar, demon, traitor³. Historical facts show that humans need a villain, a scapegoat, a source to funnel their anger. A sort of "it wasn't me, he did it" situation and Judas Iscariot was caught in the middle of it. In the Gospel of Judas, quite a different story is revealed: a story in which the apostle is an instrumental part of the narrative, in which Judas is portrayed as someone who understands Jesus⁴. To the Gnostics, the ones responsible for its composition, it was a way to express their criticism over the views of the proto-orthodox path, which was still in its embryonic phase⁵. The debate over Judas' soul

² Cane 2005: 132-3.

³ Meyer 2007: 4-5.

⁴ Pagels and King 2007: 8.

⁵ DeConick 2007: 4-6.

stretches to this day, resulting in various depictions and interpretations⁶. A revised interpretation of his life will force the scholarly community to introspect, and to consider that not all is what it seems. Despite his alleged misdeeds and transgressions, he is still a very mysterious character, possibly God's most troubled child.

The Dark Halo

First, it is important to understand who Judas was, where he came from and what became of him after the betrayal. Mk 3:13-14 contains the first list of the Twelve Apostles, starting with Simon, who would later be known as Peter. From the apostolic point of view, Peter was the rock, the foundation of the Church⁷. The list ends with Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. It is written that he was in charge of the purse but his companions accused him of being a thief and robbing them⁸. The story surrounding Judas varies from gospel to gospel. He is not mentioned by name in any of the writings of Saint Paul, but it is implied that someone from within handed Jesus over to the authorities (1 Cor. 11.:23). Judas appears to show remorse and desires to repent in Mt 27:3-5 but is depicted as a traitor, an evil man and possessed by Satan in Lk 22:3 and Jn 13:37. Even the act itself, the betrayal, changed from “handing over” (παραδίδωμι) to “who became a traitor” (προδίδωμι) between the Gospel of Mark (14:21) and that of Luke (22:3) and John (6:70). On the accusation of thievery, the scriptures add that Judas received 30 pieces of silver as payment for his action. This same payment would later provide ammunition to anti-Semitic movements across the centuries, accusing Jews of being greedy villains responsible for the death of the son of God⁹. Adding to this, some critics would round up the entire Jewish population and use Judas as a focal

⁶ Robinson 2007: 163-165.

⁷ Pagels and King 2007: 34-36.

⁸ Gathercole 2007: 35.

⁹ Kasser, Meyer and Wurst: 2006: 9-10.

point to represent them on the notion that he stole, betrayed and plotted¹⁰. The apostle's very name would be used as an adjective, synonymous with being an apostate or a betrayer: to be called a "Judas" meant that you committed some sort of treacherous act toward someone you loved or were associated with¹¹. Regarding his death, the stories also vary. There is mention that he hanged himself to escape the shame of his actions, it was also written that he was thrown off a cliff and his body shattered as a result¹².

A Judas in Apocrypha

The idea of Judas being a character fated for darkness seems to go beyond the canonical gospels. In fact, ancient apocryphal texts spoke of him as well and the pictures they painted were not all so quick to cast him into Hell. One of them, the *Toledoth Yeshu*, a Jewish counter-gospel from Late Antiquity, recounts a story where Judas (Yehuda in this case) works tirelessly in the name of God to unmask the charlatan Jesus (Yeshu) as a sorcerer. He succeeds in his mission, reports him to the Jewish authorities and the wicked Yeshu is sentenced to death by stoning. It was perhaps the most positive depiction of Judas Iscariot seen until the first publications of the *Gospel of Judas* in 2006¹³. On the other side of the spectrum, the Ethiopic *Book of the Rooster* recants the story surrounding the final nights before the Passion of Christ, where Judas is revealed to be a traitor by a magical speaking stone on the Mount of Olives¹⁴. The next day, Jesus and his disciples visit a Pharisee by the name of Simon and his wife Akrosenna and stay for a meal. During the meal, an unnamed woman anoints Jesus with an expensive ointment which infuriates Judas because in his mind, he desires the money expended for this product for his wife. Afterwards,

¹⁰ Stanford 2015: 226-228.

¹¹ Robinson 2007: 162.

¹² Robinson 2007: 161.

¹³ Brunet 2008: 335.

¹⁴ Burke 2013: 187-90.

Jesus, like in the canonical texts, washes the feet of the apostles, including Judas, gives them the bread and the wine and talks about betrayal (the denial of Peter and Judas' departure). The comical part of the story comes after Judas leaves, to "*do what he must do quickly*", Jesus resurrects the rooster that was cooked for supper and orders it to follow Judas and report what it discovers. The bird complies and follows Judas back to his home where his wife counsels him on the best way to hand over his master. Once the rooster returns with the information, its reward is to be sent to Heaven for 1000 years. In the *Arabic Infancy Gospel*, Judas is a boy who befriends a young Jesus while they were living in Bethlehem¹⁵. The story goes: often possessed by Satan, the young Judas constantly causes mischief and is said to bite anyone who comes near him. In absence of a target, he turns the harm upon himself, prompting his mother to seek out Mary and her son Jesus for help. The two boys go out to play by a stream until the Devil decides to continue his torment and force Judas in attempting to bite Jesus, which he cannot do. Being the Son of God, Jesus avoids the bite but is hit on the side instead. That same side, the narrator of the story claims, where the Jews will later strike the Lord at the crucifixion (a possible clue to anti-Semitism to be discussed later). In the story, Satan is cast out of Judas by his touch of Jesus, but the antagonistic boy is again associated with evil and much later, a representation of the Jewish population. To the author of this piece, Judas and the Jews are the enemies of God, the children of darkness¹⁶.

Hatred and Antisemitism?

This concept of Judas—and by extension all Jews—being the enemy of God, did not escape the minds of the Early Church fathers. Since Christianity, in its beginnings, was passed down in oral (and later written) traditions, few like Origen of Alexandria had anything positive to say about Judas. If their belief stemmed from writings circulating shortly after the demise of Jesus, then the

¹⁵ Stanford 2015: 120-1.

¹⁶ Ibid.

apostle Paul's texts were the primal example to follow. However, nowhere in his writings does Paul mention a traitor by name. In fact, his belief was that Jesus was betrayed not because some man committed an act of treason, but rather because God Himself "did not spare" his own son for the benefit of all"¹⁷. Why then did the Early Church Fathers: Augustine, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen... trade in the writings of Paul for those of Mark (appearing at a time of great civil unrest in Judaea), where the name Judas first appears? This is where a scapegoat theory presents itself¹⁸. In wanting to distance themselves from the Jews, with their own set of beliefs, the early Christians needed a scapegoat, in order for the story to be dramatic, tragic and ultimately wondrous¹⁹. Judas was the perfect candidate: a man following Jesus, who ate and slept alongside him, learned from him and practiced what was taught only to deliver him to his untimely demise. In the persona of Judas, the Early Church Fathers rounded up all the non-Christian Jews because to them, they rejected the Saviour, they chose to persecute him and delivered him to die on the cross²⁰. It is part of human nature to fear and hate what is not understood. Often when one intimate member of a group defects without probable cause, in this particular case Judas Iscariot, it is easy to place blame and generalize²¹. In wanting to be faithful to their God, the Christians thought they could "righteously" hate Judas for killing their master (thinking they could score points perhaps?) and since he was a Jew and the Jews mostly rejected his teaching, by property of transitivity they could hate all the Jews, rounding them up to one common fate was, in the vernacular, easy as pie²².

"Judas kissed the Lord... with his lips, this kiss the Jewish people have, and therefore it is said, "This people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." - Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, *Epistles* 1.14-18.

¹⁷ Laeuchli 1953: 266.

¹⁸ Klassen 1996: 82.

¹⁹ Brunet 2008: 57.

²⁰ Krosney 2006: 50.

²¹ Klassen 1996: 11.

²² Stanford 2015: 42.

Salvation of all of God's creation was a major concept Origen of Alexandria debated over in his works which figured, as one would imagine, the fallen apostle and his role in the Jesus narrative²³. Though he did not exonerate Judas for his action due to the existence of free will, he did not have a definitive answer as to what became of him because he was of mind that God, and God alone judges souls and His creation is to be rendered back to its original, pure state, which leaves hope for the redemption of Judas Iscariot²⁴. Also, it can be that Judas, and the Jews he represents, will not likely enter that state of perpetual grace but will not be damned either, more like a state in between²⁵. With the ongoing debate over matters concerning the message passed down through the pages of the *Gospel of Judas*, scholars such as Bart Ehrman, April DeConick and Pierluigi Piovanelli for example, have analyzed and exchanged on where Judas' place is to be.

Salvation Through Γνώσις (gnosis, knowledge)

According to Bishop Irenaeus of Lyon, characters such as Cain, Esau, Korah and obviously Judas are sources of evil, however the Gnostic view of them was quite different²⁶. First, their belief was that this mortal world was an imperfect material construct. Second, the being who created it was not the true God in Heaven, but rather a fallen, lesser divinity who did not even realize what had become of itself. Third, having true knowledge (γνώσις in Greek) was the only way for those chosen (Gnostics) to be able to leave this world and return home in the beyond²⁷. To the Gnostics, players such as Cain and company could have been agents serving the greater good and sabotaging the false god's creation. Jesus was to them the emissary sent by the true God in order for the

²³ Laeuchli 1953: 253-4.

²⁴ von Balthasar 1938: 330.

²⁵ Piovanelli 2008: 237.

²⁶ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.31.

²⁷ Unterbrink 2010: 631.

deserving people to be able to ascend to heaven²⁸. Judas is one of those figures that play an important role in the register because he is close to Jesus and learns the truth. The Gnostics described Judas as another one of those working (albeit without realizing it) in the service of the true God²⁹. The *Gospel of Judas* is the prime example of that, a story where Judas alone understands completely and through his actions, Jesus is released from His mortal shell once He passes on his $\gamma\nu\tilde{\omega}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ³⁰. Like with the canonical Gospels and apocryphal texts, the stories surrounding the Gnostics' dogma and cosmology varied greatly³¹. The *Gospel of Judas*, cleverly responds to the growing apostolic tradition's dismissal of their belief system by using the most villainous persona in their narrative: the apostle Judas Iscariot³².

²⁸ Ehrman 2006: 62.

²⁹ Meyer 2009: 60.

³⁰ Schenke-Robinson 2011: 118.

³¹ DeConick 2007: 6-25.

³² Cane 2005: 120-1.

CHAPTER 1
THE BIRTH OF A MYTH – JUDAS ACROSS THE ORTHODOX CANON

“The Lord is the one to judge me. So stop passing judgment before the time of his return. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness” – *1 Cor 4:3*

“Unless you carry your own cross and come along with me – you’re no disciple of mine. Whoever tries to hang onto life will forfeit it, but whoever forfeits life will preserve it” - *Q*

“For he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him” But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to ask him.” – *Mk. 9:31-32*

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounced you will be judged.” – *Mt. 7:1*

“Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man!” – *Lk. 6:22*

“We should have confidence on the day of judgment” – *1 Jn. 4:17*

“Our saviour God ... intends that all human beings shall be saved and come to full knowledge of the truth.” – *1 Tim. 2: 3-4*

1.1. On the Apostle Paul: A Road Paved with Good Intention

There is no mention of Judas Iscariot in the letters of Paul, who recounts his travels and records his experiences from the moment he embarked on the road to Damascus.³³ What he provides are lessons and teachings on how to properly worship God through Jesus Christ. Paul, a Jew, would at first persecute those who proclaimed that the long-awaited Messiah had come at last. The striking tale revealed how, while on route to his destination, he would be struck as if by lightning and it was then that Jesus appeared to him imploring him to stop persecuting him.³⁴ The once-zealous Saul became Paul, a Jewish man who would take the message to the gentiles as well as any who wish to listen. It appeared as if God, through Jesus expanded His embrace to everyone as His new chosen people.³⁵

³³ Paffenroth 2001: 1.

³⁴ Svartvik 2014: 548.

³⁵ Sim 2014: 598.

« Dieu rend les hommes justes à ses yeux par la foi en Jésus-Christ. Il le fait pour tous ceux qui croient au Christ. Car il n'y a pas de différence entre eux : Tous ont péchés et sont privés de la présence glorieuse de Dieu. Mais Dieu, dans sa bonté, les rend justes à ses yeux, gratuitement, par Jésus-Christ qui les délivre du péché. Dieu l'a offert en sacrifice afin que, par sa mort, le Christ obtienne le pardon des péchés. » - Rom 3:22-26

The passage in *Romans*, with selected underlined elements, clearly explains how God provided humanity's salvation through Jesus who came to deliver his new covenant only to suffer agony and be put to death for it. According to Paul, Jesus's death was beneficial, an act of love but also a voluntary sacrifice.³⁶ His writings established the basis, the essence of Christianity which among other things promoted high moral standards. Although Jesus is perceived as the Messiah to his followers, it is highly probable that Paul was Christianity's second founder. Paul was likely of mind that Jesus would return during his lifetime, hence his desire to ensure his message reached as many people as possible.³⁷ Through his letters Paul recounts how he established contact with some of the apostles, namely Peter and John. The Acts of the Apostles also confirmed these meetings, but both stories differed on the relationship between these men as Peter and Paul did not always agree on matters in the latter's letters (see 1.3).³⁸ Paul's travels took him to one of the cultural centers of the Roman empire, Greece and Anatolia. His writings were said to have been produced around the 50s, which would have been about twenty years after the events relating to Jesus's ministry and death.³⁹ Since there was direct contact between Paul, Peter and John for instance, it is highly probable to surmise that he received first-hand information from the apostles on what transpired during their tenure as Jesus's disciples.⁴⁰ On the issue of the arrest and

³⁶ Cane 2005: 123.

³⁷ Ehrman 2006: 98.

³⁸ Robertson 1927: 45.

³⁹ Talbert 2005: 16.

⁴⁰ Sim 2014: 83.

crucifixion of Jesus however, there is no such person as Judas Iscariot. Surely had there been a betrayal of some sort the apostles who were in contact with Paul at the time would have divulged such an important detail out of their narrative. Based on his passage from his Letter to the Romans as cited above, Paul simply understood that God acted through Jesus, His actions to be viewed as wondrous or, as Origen would put it later on, mysterious.⁴¹ The following passages:

“Creation is awaiting the fulfillment of these things, and all creation is groaning and in travail together.” – *Rom 8:22*

“The fire will test what sort of work each one has done” *1 Cor 3:13*

evoke some grand plan God had put in motion since the dawn of time which would restore all His creation to a state of perpetual perfection, everlasting and for all creation. Paul speaks of a cleansing fire at the end of time which will clear out darkness and restore everything as God had intended it to be. Years later, Church fathers like Origen and Clement of Alexandria would study and expand on this.⁴² But how would this affect Judas exactly? This important question will be further explored below, but the origin of this enigmatic character, how he came about, can only be answered through the exploration of the canonical gospels of the authors who produced their stories decades following Paul’s own. Was he a real, historical person or a literary persona fabricated to further a means to an end?

1.2. One of the Twelve: The Four Evangelists and the Shaping of Judas Iscariot

The following tables lay out an evolution of the appearances by Judas Iscariot within the canonic scriptures, allowing for a clear visual on how the literary character changes between each texts.

⁴¹ Scarborough 2007: 244.

⁴² Scarborough 2007: 239.

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
4: 18-22, 10: 1-4, 16: 17-18	1: 16-20, 3: 13-19, 3: 16-19	5: 1-11, 6: 12-16, 6: 14a	1: 35-51, 6: 67-71
Simon (Peter) Andrew, James and John, Matthew, Thomas, Philip, Bartholomew, James, Thaddeus, Simon and Judas Iscariot Τῶν δὲ δώδεκα ἀποστόλων τὰ ὀνόματά ἐστιν ταῦτα· πρῶτος Σίμων ὁ λεγόμενος Πέτρος καὶ Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ Ἰάκωβος ὁ τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου καὶ Ἰωάννης / Ἰωάννης ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ, Σίμων ὁ Καναναῖος καὶ Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης ὁ καὶ παραδοὺς αὐτόν.	Simon (Peter) Andrew, James and John, Matthew, Thomas, Philip, Bartholomew, James, Thaddeus, Simon and Judas Iscariot Καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς δώδεκα καὶ ἐπέθηκεν ὄνομα τῷ Σίμωνι Πέτρον, καὶ Ἰάκωβον τὸν τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου καὶ Ἰωάννην / Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ Ἰακώβου καὶ ἐπέθηκεν αὐτοῖς ὄνομα / ὀνόματα Βοανηργές, ὃ ἐστὶν Υἱοὶ Βροντῆς, καὶ Ἀνδρέαν καὶ Φίλιππον καὶ Βαρθολομαῖον καὶ Μαθθαῖον καὶ Θωμᾶν καὶ Ἰάκωβον τὸν τοῦ Ἀλφαίου καὶ Θαδδαῖον καὶ Σίμωνα τὸν Καναναῖον καὶ Ἰούδαν Ἰσκαριώθ, ὃς καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτόν.	Simon (Peter) Andrew, James and John, Matthew, Thomas, Philip, Bartholomew, James, Simon, Judas (son of James) and Judas Iscariot Καὶ ὅτε ἐγένετο ἡμέρα, προσεφώνησεν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐκλεξάμενος ἀπ' αὐτῶν δώδεκα, οὓς καὶ ἀποστόλους ὀνόμασεν, Σίμωνα ὃν καὶ ὀνόμασεν Πέτρον καὶ Ἀνδρέαν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ Ἰάκωβον καὶ Ἰωάννην / Ἰωάννην καὶ Φίλιππον καὶ Βαρθολομαῖον καὶ Μαθθαῖον καὶ Θωμᾶν καὶ Ἰάκωβον Ἀλφαίου καὶ Σίμωνα τὸν καλούμενον Ζηλωτὴν καὶ Ἰούδαν Ἰακώβου καὶ Ἰούδαν Ἰσκαριώθ ὃς ἐγένετο προδότης,	John, Andrew, Simon (Peter) Philip, Nathanael and Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, who is a devil Ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς Οὐκ ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς τοὺς δώδεκα ἐξελεξάμην; καὶ ἐξ ὑμῶν εἷς διάβολός ἐστιν. ἔλεγεν δὲ τὸν Ἰούδαν Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτου· οὗτος γὰρ ἔμελλεν παραδιδόναι αὐτόν, εἷς ἐκ τῶν δώδεκα.

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
26: 14-16	14: 10-11	22: 3-6	6: 70-1, 13: 2, 13: 27
Judas, one of the Twelve, delivers Jesus with motive (greed) εἶπεν Τί θέλετέ μοι δοῦναι κἀγὼ ὑμῖν παραδώσω αὐτόν; οἱ δὲ ἔστησαν αὐτῷ τριάκοντα ἀργύρια.	Judas, one of the Twelve, delivers Jesus without motive Καὶ Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριώθ ὁ εἷς τῶν δώδεκα ἀπῆλθεν πρὸς τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς ἵνα αὐτόν παραδοῖ αὐτοῖς. οἱ δὲ ἀκούσαντες ἐχάρησαν καὶ ἐπηγγείλαντο αὐτῷ ἀργύριον δοῦναι. καὶ ἐξήτει πῶς αὐτόν εὐκαίρως παραδοῖ.	Satan enters Judas who then betrays Jesus to the authorities Εἰσηλθεν δὲ Σατανᾶς εἰς Ἰούδαν τὸν καλούμενον Ἰσκαριώτην, ὄντα ἐκ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ τῶν δώδεκα·	The devil put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son to betray the lord "for one of you is a devil" . Ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς Οὐκ ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς τοὺς δώδεκα ἐξελεξάμην; καὶ ἐξ ὑμῶν εἷς διάβολός ἐστιν.

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
26: 21-25	14: 18-21	22: 21-23	13: 21-30

Jesus announces his forthcoming betrayal and demonstrates how all of the twelve disciples are present and appear to be very saddened by this revelation. They begin to question one another and themselves as **they all doubt** their own devotion. “*Is it I?*”

ἤρξαντο λυπεῖσθαι καὶ λέγειν αὐτῷ εἷς κατὰ εἷς Μήτι ἐγώ

ἔβλεπον εἰς ἀλλήλους οἱ μαθηταὶ ἀπορούμενοι περὶ τίνος λέγει.

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
20: 24-28	10: 41-45	22: 24-30	13: 4-5, 12-17
<p>The disciples argue and fight over who among them is the greatest. <i>Mark</i> refers to these passages in order to expose the numerous failures of all the disciples, Judas, Simon Peter, Andrew and the others. Jesus informs them that the first will be the last and those that command will be the ones to serve. Judas Iscariot first appears in Mark simply as one among twelve with no particular function for the order. As the decades pass between the four, the story visibly shifts to single out Judas as a tragic/villainous figure, and last among them. However while Judas figures as the least in the Synoptics, the next chapters will address possibilities explaining how Judas was instead the highest among them, a (the) beloved disciple and above them all (thirteenth).</p> <p>οὐχ οὕτως δέ ἐστιν ἐν ὑμῖν· ἀλλ' ὅς ἂν θέλῃ μέγας γενέσθαι ἐν ὑμῖν, ἔσται ὑμῶν διάκονος, καὶ ὃς ἂν θέλῃ ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι πρῶτος, ἔσται πάντων δοῦλος· καὶ γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἦλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν.</p>			

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
26: 24-29	14: 22-25	22: 15-20	6: 51-58 12: 6
<p>All the disciples partook in the last supper with no exceptions. Although Judas is seen departing from the table at one time during the meal, there is no definite answer in the gospels on whether Judas received the communion along with the others or not. It could very well have been for this reason, his inclusion in the sharing of the Eucharist, that Judas had a piece of Jesus's goodness in him which subsequently led him to repent. In <i>Matthew</i>, <i>Mark</i> and <i>Luke</i> the one who betrays him will wish he had never been born as Jesus declares: “<i>Woe to this man</i>” but it is also stressed that this was foretold in scripture and must proceed as it was written. There is no mention of woe in <i>John</i> but the author did identify Judas (son of Simon) as that particular person and further added to his identity by making him the holder of the money box. An argument in favour of Judas: had there not been a delivery/betrayal of Jesus, there would not have been a resurrection or absolution of sin.</p> <p>ὁ μὲν υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὑπάγει καθὼς γέγραπται περὶ αὐτοῦ, οὐαὶ δὲ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐκείνῳ δι' οὗ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται· καλὸν ἦν αὐτῷ εἰ οὐκ ἐγεννήθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος.</p> <p>λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐ μὴ φάγω αὐτὸ ἕως ὅτου πληρωθῇ ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ.</p> <p>ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ζῶν ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς· ἐάν τις φάγῃ ἐκ τούτου τοῦ ἄρτου ζήσει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, καὶ ὁ ἄρτος δὲ ὃν ἐγὼ δώσω ἡ σὰρξ μου ἐστὶν ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς.</p>			

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
26: 6-13	14: 3-9	7: 36-50	12: 1-8
<p>The disciples are the ones who are unhappy at the unfolding of the events in which a woman anoints Jesus with an expensive ointment.</p> <p>προσηλθεν αὐτῷ γυνὴ ἔχουσα ἀλάβαστρον μύρου βαρυτίμου καὶ κατέχευεν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ ἀνακειμένου. ἰδόντες δὲ οἱ μαθηταὶ ἠγανάκτησαν λέγοντες Εἰς τί ἡ ἀπόλεια αὐτῆ;</p>	<p>It is ambiguous in <i>Mark</i> as those that object to the woman's actions are identified solely as "some" who are indignant.</p> <p>ἦσαν δὲ τινες ἀγανακτοῦντες πρὸς ἑαυτούς Εἰς τί ἡ ἀπόλεια αὐτῆ τοῦ μύρου γέγονεν;</p>	<p>In <i>Luke</i>, it is the Pharisee who invited Jesus into his house who is insulted by what he sees and criticizes Jesus.</p> <p>Ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Φαρισαῖος ὁ καλέσας αὐτὸν εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ λέγων Οὗτος εἰ ἦν (ὁ) προφήτης, ἐγίνωσκεν ἂν τίς καὶ ποταπὴ ἡ γυνὴ ἣτις ἅπτεται αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἁμαρτωλὸς ἐστίν.</p>	<p>Judas is depicted as the one to voice his displeasure at the sight of this. It is explained that he feigned concern for the poor to conceal his greed.</p> <p>εἶπεν δὲ τοῦτο οὐχ ὅτι περὶ τῶν πτωχῶν ἔμελεν αὐτῷ ἀλλ' ὅτι κλέπτης ἦν καὶ τὸ γλωσσόκομον ἔχων τὰ βαλλόμενα ἐβάσταζεν.</p>

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
26: 47-57	14: 43-53	22: 47-53	17: 12 18: 2-12
<p>"Do that for which you have come so the scriptures might be fulfilled". A crowd is sent by the elders. They capture Jesus and them to the High Priest Caiphas. All the disciples forsook him and fled.</p> <p>Τοῦτο δὲ ὅλον γέγονεν ἵνα πληρωθῶσιν αἱ γραφαὶ τῶν προφητῶν. Τότε οἱ μαθηταὶ πάντες ἀφέντες αὐτὸν ἔφυγον. Οἱ δὲ κρατήσαντες τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἀπήγαγον πρὸς Καϊάφαν τὸν ἀρχιερέα, ὅπου οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι συνήχθησαν.</p>	<p>"So the holy scriptures might be fulfilled". A crowd is sent by the high priests and they take Jesus to them. No mention of Caiphas by name. They all forsook him and fled.</p> <p>καθ' ἡμέραν ἤμην πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ διδάσκων καὶ οὐκ ἐκρατήσατέ με· ἀλλ' ἵνα πληρωθῶσιν αἱ γραφαί. Καὶ ἀπήγαγον τὸν Ἰησοῦν πρὸς τὸν ἀρχιερέα, καὶ συνέρχονται πάντες οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς.</p>	<p>The Jewish high priests themselves take Jesus captive with the help of captains and soldiers. "This is your hour, and the power of darkness". No mention of the disciples' flight but one of them strikes with a sword.</p> <p>εἶπεν δὲ Ἰησοῦς πρὸς τοὺς παραγενομένους ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ στρατηγούς τοῦ ἱεροῦ καὶ πρεσβυτέρους Ὡς ἐπὶ ληστήν ἐξήλθατε μετὰ μαχαρῶν καὶ ξύλων; καθ' ἡμέραν ὄντος μου μεθ' ὑμῶν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ οὐκ ἐξετείνετε τὰς χεῖρας ἐπ' ἐμέ· ἀλλ' αὕτη ἐστὶν ὑμῶν ἡ ὥρα καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ σκότους.</p>	<p>The Jews capture Jesus with the help of their captains and soldiers. In <i>John</i> is added "Son of perdition" to Judas and follows with "so the scriptures might be fulfilled". No disciples flee but the one who strikes with a sword is identified as Simon Peter.</p> <p>Ὅτε ἤμην μετ' αὐτῶν ἐγὼ ἐτήρουν αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ὃ δέδωκάς μοι, καὶ ἐφύλαξα, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀπόλετο εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας, ἵνα ἡ γραφὴ πληρωθῇ.</p>

			<p>ἵνα πληρωθῇ ὁ λόγος ὃν εἶπεν ὅτι Οὐς δέδωκάς μοι οὐκ ἀπόλεσα ἐξ αὐτῶν οὐδένα. Σίμων οὖν Πέτρος ἔχων μάχαιραν εἰλκυσεν αὐτήν καὶ ἐπαισεν τὸν τοῦ ἀρχιερέως δούλον καὶ ἀπέκοψεν αὐτοῦ τὸ ἀτάριον τὸ δεξιόν. ἦν δὲ ὄνομα τῷ δούλῳ Μάλχος.</p>
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In Mark and Matthew the authors provide accounts naming Judas as one figure involved in the arrest, trial and sentencing of Jesus. Where Mark illustrated how all the disciples fail (Judas's betrayal, Peter's denial or the abandonment of the rest), Matthew provided a definite motive for Judas's actions.⁴³ It is in Matthew that Judas the Jew accepted money from the high priests and following his betrayal, had repented only to die in remorse. The real culprits in *Matthew* were those scribes and Pharisees who plotted against Jesus, representing the Jewish community (see chapter two) as a whole in rejecting God's envoy and message.⁴⁴ Subsequently, the authors of Luke and John inherited a story that was well advanced in years and the different accounts provided by various communities allowed for these authors to add to or worsen the story of Judas specifically. It was also in Luke and John that Satan was inserted alongside Judas in order to amplify the events of the passion. Furthermore, by completely disgracing the character of the Iscariot, the authors creatively passed on the message that the Jews, with Judas as figurehead and scapegoat, were all children of the devil and that they had rejected Jesus.⁴⁵ As he was cast out of the group, so too were the Jews. This disqualification would lead to the delivery of the Good News to a new body of followers: the gentiles. There was also the matter of the writers' communities,

⁴³ Destro and Pesce 2017: 187.

⁴⁴ Destro and Pesce 2011: 71.

⁴⁵ Boxall 2019: 387.

what they believed in regards to what they had heard and where they stood in their understanding of the story of Jesus.⁴⁶

The Gospel of Mark was the first to be composed, around the early 70s of the common era. The socio-political situation in the holy land was dire as the Jewish revolt took place in Judaea, which resulted with the destruction of Jerusalem and its sacred temple.⁴⁷ The psychological repercussions of this tragic event somehow caused a sort of existential crisis among the members of the “Jesus movement” prompting the author of Mark to find inspiration and expand on the letters of Paul the Apostle.⁴⁸ The purpose of Mark was on one hand, to explain to the faithful that the power of Christ was mightier than any emperor. While the Romans celebrated their greatest achievements through grandiose triumphs characterized by lavish garb and dominion over the conquered, Mark’s Jesus was victorious over his oppressors and vastly more powerful (symbolically), this at his most weakened state.⁴⁹ The laurel crown and purple robes of the emperor were not as glorious as the crown of thorns or crimson shroud worn by the King of kings. To an extent, the story of Jesus found in Mark, could also have been a subtle means for its author to spite the mighty Romans and their finite traditions.⁵⁰ In hopes to strengthen the faith and rally the faithful, the author of Mark had to bring the letters of Paul down to earth so to speak and make them relatable for anyone, hence the story of the apostles.

In Mark the apostles are gifted by Jesus with many abilities such as tending to the needy, healing the sick and casting out demons. In having a strong faith in Jesus His followers can realize great things for the benefit of all and thus be a worthy representative of God. By contrast however,

⁴⁶ Destro and Pesce 2017: 121.

⁴⁷ Mack 1988: 9.

⁴⁸ Winn 2008: 202.

⁴⁹ Winn 2008: 132.

⁵⁰ Winn 2008: 129.

the author of Mark warns his community against what not to do, which is explained through each and every apostle's failures. They are all flawed, just like all humans, and they will all stumble, like all humans, until they get it right.⁵¹ Where the Twelve face shortcomings the smallest, minor characters succeed.⁵² In the case of Judas Iscariot specifically, there was mention how he delivered Jesus to the authorities, expanding on Paul who simply wrote that Jesus was delivered "on that fateful night". How, or why Jesus is delivered is never specified nor is there apparent motive for his actions, a topic that will be further explored in chapter two. For Mark's author it was vital to provide the fragile Christian communities with a body of literature or guidebook they could rely on to stay the course or even welcome back any who would have deserted. It turned Paul's letters into a brilliant story that contained miracles, prophetic powers, a tragic event with catalysts, and consequences for our actions and provides for a way out of trouble for the world should its people follow the rules.⁵³ In short, a legend was born and expanded... in the case of Judas Iscariot.

Now, in Matthew we find essentially a creative reinterpretation of Mark with added elements to provide some answers to certain gaps found in the latter's story.⁵⁴ Scholars agreed that the Matthew was composed around the years 80-90, some twenty years after Mark, and the situation was already different. Politically, the Jews were generally viewed with a negative eye following the Jewish War.⁵⁵ The author of Matthew had used Mark as a source but shifted the message to address a Jewish community that was adherent to the teachings of Christ. The rest of the Jews, those who rejected the message, were instead vilified, hence placing the blame for the death of Jesus not on the Romans but on the Jewish high priests instead.⁵⁶ It is in Matthew that the

⁵¹ Mack 1988: 167-8.

⁵² Winn 2008: 146-8.

⁵³ Winn 2008: 139-40.

⁵⁴ Boxall 2019: 2.

⁵⁵ Winn 2008: 175.

⁵⁶ Carlson 2010: 473.

name Caiphias first appears. Recalling that it was he who declared Jesus to be a blasphemer and it was he who demanded that Christ be put to death.

It is also in Matthew that the character of Judas, the same found in Mark, appeared to deliver Jesus to the chief priests for money thus adding an official motive for his actions: greed. This addition resolved the ambiguity surrounding Judas's act in Mark, also supposing that the term *paradidomi* was perhaps more like "betraying someone" rather than "delivering him to". What became of Judas was also explained in Matthew and would later be exaggerated by authors such as Papias (see 1.3) for further literary provocative ends. In Matthew 27:3-10, it was written that Judas had realized how in betraying Jesus he had betrayed innocent blood and took it upon himself to return the thirty pieces of silver ("blood" money?) allotted to him by the high priests.⁵⁷ The author of Matthew describes Judas as a horrified and penitent man who wished to correct his actions but was met with rejection by the authorities. It was they who had darkness in their hearts and it was they who were responsible for what befell Jesus, Judas was just a means to an end, a pawn, a concept that will be further developed in chapter two.

"When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. He said, 'I have sinned and betrayed innocent blood'. But they said, 'What is that to us? See to it yourself'. Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and went and hanged himself." – *Mt 27:3-5*

In his despair, Judas threw away the "blood" money and went on to hang himself. This specific action would later cause much debate on the validity of his repentance.⁵⁸ Was it true or invalidated on the grounds that his lack of faith in God at the time of his death caused him to sin even more? This and the very issue on suicide would eventually find its way into the writings of authors such

⁵⁷ Carlson 2010: 478.

⁵⁸ Cane 2005: 145.

as Augustine, Irenaeus, John Chrysostom and Epiphanius, all prominent Church fathers.⁵⁹ In Matthew there was no apparent real surprise in Jesus when Judas appeared. He simply tells him to do that for which he has come in order to fulfill the scriptures.⁶⁰ Could it have been that God chose Judas to act through and Jesus simply felt pity for him knowing what would happen next? It could very well explain why in Mark 13:13, Jesus says “you will be hated by all for my namesake”.

By expanding on Mark’s version, the author of Matthew inadvertently provoked ire and hatred toward Judas and as a result, toward all Jews entirely since he would become to so many, the traditional figurehead of that people for centuries onward.⁶¹ For Judas, it didn’t end there. The Jewish authorities responsible, according to Matthew, were also said to have purchased the land on which Judas committed suicide and this so-called “Field of Blood” would tie in perfectly since it was bought with the “blood money” Judas rid himself of after declaring he had betrayed “innocent blood” in the person of Jesus. At this point in time, between Paul’s travels and Matthew some 40-50 years have passed and it appeared as if Judas was more like a sort of tragic character who made a mistake and attempted to repair the damage but ultimately failed and took his own life.⁶²

“It would have been better for him if that man had not been born” - *Mt 26:24*

The author of Matthew must somehow have hoped to pass on a message that would effectively separate the (evil) Jews from the followers of Jesus followed by a merging of those other Jews with the gentiles of Paul’s letters and those in Mark as the proto-Christians, the new

⁵⁹ Cane 2005: 131.

⁶⁰ Ramelli 2013: 235.

⁶¹ Boxall 2019: 390.

⁶² Cane 2005: 51.

chosen people. Simply put, you had to have faith in Jesus, trust in God, hope for the future and remain on your guard against those who wished to harm you, i.e. Romans or Jews.

“You will be hated by all for my name’s sake.” – *Lk 21:17*

With everything that transpired in Mark and Matthew regarding Judas, what did the author of Luke intend for in his composition? His work was said to date between 90 and 100, which is a long way from the original Jesus tales from Judaea.⁶³ As explained previously, the story of Judas Iscariot began with non-existence at first to betrayer of Jesus therefore his character becoming vilified over time. What if Luke’s aforementioned passage applied to Judas specifically? It found its source in Mark predominantly and further stretched the divide between good and bad Jews. On that, the author of Luke referred to the bad seed as simply *Ioudaioi* and declared that God’s judgment was passed upon them therefore they went from being His chosen Israelites to a band of outcasts ruled by the prince of this world (Satan).⁶⁴ It was through the inclusion of Satan that the author of Luke managed to further remove any remaining ambiguities related to Judas. A defiled soul from the beginning was a perfect door for the devil to come in and influence Judas to betray Jesus. At this point also, it was clear that the author believed in a betrayal and not any sort of vague delivery as found in Mark.

“Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do.” – *Lk 23:34*

This arguably can serve as defense for Judas since Satan was at work in Luke albeit through the person of Judas, which again suggests how the Iscariot was a tool or a vehicle for the scriptures to be fulfilled. The author of Luke further added to the narrative by the now-infamous kiss Judas

⁶³ Perkins 2009: 250.

⁶⁴ Schnelle and Boring 2009: 663.

delivered onto Jesus in order to identify him. In the addition of this simple scene the author of Luke provided what was not found in Mark for example: a symbol, an image of betrayal that would be imprinted in everyone's mind, never to be forgotten.

“Judas, you would betray the Son of man with a kiss?” – *Lk 22:48*

There is no telling whether this came to pass in Luke as opposed in Mark or Matthew, the author having left it to the imagination of his readers. In relation to the significance of the “kiss of perdition”, chapter two will explore this avenue.

However what was intended in Luke was to portray Judas as an improper disciple, a symbol of adversity.⁶⁵ In adding the presence of Satan near Jesus, the author of Luke also repackaged the narrative into an ages-long battle between the forces of the light and darkness.⁶⁶ An impressionable human, a member of the Lukan community in this instance, would further condemn Judas for his heinous betrayal but since Judas was under the control of Satan, was Jesus speaking to his friend or directly to the devil? He further added that this was “allowed” at the moment because it was the (Satan's?) hour of darkness.⁶⁷ This powerful scene described Judas Iscariot on one hand as a friend of Jesus, one of the Twelve, but also as a betrayer who was tainted enough to fall victim to the power of evil. Though still a villain, Judas can still be viewed as a tragic character because the true enemy in this version is Satan. This message was intended to be heard by a Christian community, those new elect devoid of “nefarious” Jews and their authorities.⁶⁸ Since the author had expanded on Markan literature, he was most likely aware that the disciples in Mark all stumbled and failed, each in the own right, which was also addressed in Matthew.

⁶⁵ Boxall 2019: 388.

⁶⁶ Saari 2006: 123.

⁶⁷ Saari 2007: .

⁶⁸ Robertson 1927: 89.

“You will all fall away.” – *Mk 14:27*

“You will all stumble because of me this night.” – *Mt 26:31*

To rectify this and avoid ambiguities, Luke significantly downplayed the faults of the apostles except for Judas.⁶⁹ The foundation of the Church stood upon the legacy of these apostles, the ones who remained with Jesus. There had to be twelve just as with the founding tribes of Israel, which also numbered twelve.⁷⁰ By expanding his story into what would become known as the Acts of the Apostles, the author of Luke began his story with Peter addressing the fate of Judas, what became of him after his betrayal of Jesus. The purpose was to demonstrate how God punished those who transgressed against Him, delivering a just reward for the sullied souls who chose not to listen.⁷¹ Furthermore, the apostles were left with a vacant slot within their number after the departure of Judas. With Matthias being selected to succeed Judas the number was brought back up to twelve and the circle was complete. There would no longer be any need for Judas going forward with the narrative and he simply disappeared from the literature.⁷²

It would seem at this point that the fictional Judas had served its purpose up to this point, having enabled Jesus to triumph over the power of darkness and death. Luke-Acts was an author’s way of summing up all of Israel’s history into one large narrative, more Hellenistic (polished) and with a clear visual of the ongoing conflict between good and evil.⁷³ The letters of Paul explored the apostle’s travels and encounters ultimately leading him to Rome. The story of Luke-Acts was about the formation of what came to be known as the Church, under Peter’s leadership, following an apostolic model contrasting from Mark who introduced Judas, always followed by the

⁶⁹ Johnson 2010: 48.

⁷⁰ Robertson 1927: 81.

⁷¹ Saari 2007: 114.

⁷² Cane 2005: 52.

⁷³ Saari 2007: 100.

expression “One of the Twelve” in order to show that all of them were improper.⁷⁴ Luke-Acts which drew from Mark could not erase this entire corpus but could mold it in order to reflect his community’s Christology as it was done in Matthew as well.

Judas the literary character was singled out, transformed and became the sole inheritor of all the improprieties the disciples possessed in previous tales.⁷⁵ In the direct address from Jesus to Judas and/or Satan, Luke demonstrated the superior power of Christ over his enemy. Judas was clearly identified as a traitor, intending to betray his friend with a kiss while being possessed by the devil. Jesus’s character, as a result, became a fantastically more powerful protagonist symbol in contrast to that of Judas, who was no longer an ambiguous figure.⁷⁶ The element of reasonable doubt was effectively eliminated in Luke-Acts.

The backlash to this, which later found fervour, would be that these new Twelve (with Matthias instead of Judas) would represent the new Christian group comprised of Jews and Gentiles. These “new” elect, the worthy under God’s watch, left the rest of the Jews who rejected Jesus subject to the wrath of God.⁷⁷ This fear would lead to hatred of the Jewish community as a whole and place the blame for Jesus’s death upon them who would be represented by Judas Iscariot.

“You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth...for he is a liar and the father of lies. He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear me is that you are not of God”. – *Jn 8:44-47*

In John, Judas is the one accused as well as prophesized to betray Jesus. Adding to that, Judas is further identified as a thief holding the money purse of the group and a man who feigned

⁷⁴ Schelle and Boring 2007: 512-13.

⁷⁵ Stanford 2015: 47.

⁷⁶ Robertson 2012: 88-9.

⁷⁷ Ehrman 2006: 40-1.

concern for the poor in order to conceal his greed.⁷⁸ The Jesus in John reminds Judas, and the others in attendance, that Jesus will not always be with them. His words foretold the truth as Jesus would soon be delivered to his fate. From his perspective, it appeared as if the author of John desired to vilify Judas or at the very least show how the light of Jesus had departed from Judas personally, leaving only the innate darkness (void) within. Jesus may have spoken words only to validate a fact: simply that his time on Earth was nearing its end. One particular passage, the foot washing during the last supper is striking and depending on the interpretation of its reader, could at present time symbolize quite the difference from what the author of John had intended:

“He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said to him, ‘Lord, do you wash my feet?’ Jesus answered him, ‘What I am doing you do not know now, but afterwards you will understand.’ Peter replied, ‘You shall never wash my feet.’ Jesus answered him, ‘If I do not wash you, you have no part in me. He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over; and you (plural) are clean, but not everyone of you.’ For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, ‘You are not all clean.’” – *Jn 13:6-11*

According to the commentaries written by the likes of Origen and Thomas Aquinas, the episode of the foot washing was paramount for three reasons. First it was a testament to Jesus’s power and presence, it demonstrated that the apostles, in this case Simon Peter, did not fully understand the purpose of the act and finally, it exposed the presence of a traitor within the group who probably was not meant to receive the blessings provided by Jesus’s washing.⁷⁹ There was no specific order to who had been washed and indeed not all the apostles were clean... yet. However did this mean that Judas did not have his feet washed? Why was the repentance of Judas as found in Matthew not included in John? Simply because for its author, Judas’s role was to contrast that of Jesus. It served to show that all who opposed the Logos, no matter how powerful, would have

⁷⁸ Judd 2006: 35.

⁷⁹ Origen, *Commentary on John* 32.23.

no power over him as God cannot be defeated.⁸⁰ There is no doubt in Jesus. He controls the situation and whatever befalls him is a result of Jesus's allowance of it because it is God's will. The salvific plan must take place; the scriptures must be fulfilled. Satan, the prince of this world who acts through Judas, is nothing more than darkness or an ill will resistant to the message brought about by Jesus.⁸¹

The act of betrayal in John occurred at night which meant in darkness, in absence of light. Jesus was the light of the world and as long as he was in this world, the forces of loss and perdition could not prevent the realization of the work of God. When Jesus told his oppressors (Satan, Judas, the Jewish authorities) "this hour is darkness" and "this is your hour" it simply solidified the ineffable might of Jesus, since these powers were permitted to work against him.⁸²

As for the matter of the foot washing, the consensus was that Judas was present, but he may or may not have received it personally, hence the statement that not all of them are clean. According to Aquinas, Judas did receive the blessings but with his looming betrayal and Jesus's foreknowledge of it would appear as if nothing could be done to save Judas despite all the gifts directed at him. He was a representation of evil, yet an intimate companion of Jesus.⁸³ If it is to be interpreted as such, Aquinas's commentary of John stated that Judas may have very well been the first person to receive the foot washing because of his arrogance, his desire to go ahead of Simon Peter who did not want it at first. From that, along with the resistance met in the anointing at Bethany, the author of John molded the Judas character into a hypocrite, a wolf in sheep's clothing who was able to partake in all the privileges and blessings of Jesus but ultimately rejected them.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Ramelli 2019: 143.

⁸¹ Brodie 1997: 346.

⁸² Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on John* 1814.

⁸³ Robertson 2012: 87.

⁸⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on John* 1754.

“The devil already had put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him.” – *Jn 13:27*

If Judas was susceptible to Satan’s power and influence, the same could have been said about any of the apostles, Simon Peter foremost among them. None of them were untainted and all would eventually betray the Lord in their own way. Peter denied Jesus, Thomas doubted him, Andrew and James fled during the arrest on Gethsemane.⁸⁵ In the commentary by St. Thomas Aquinas, it is highlighted how Peter may have killed Judas out of righteous anger had he known the Iscariot intended to betray Jesus and secede from the group. There is evidence in John that affirmed the fiery nature of the supposed leader of the group: Peter struck a man (Malchus) with a sword and cut off his ear perhaps intending to do worse had Jesus not intervened to stop him.⁸⁶ A righteous man fighting evil with weapons of the world, whose master is the devil, will be met with failure. Hatred was at work then for it was night and for John this particular night symbolically represented the power of Satan who had his hour to do what was in his nature to do: cause strife and instill fear in the hearts of men. Judas and the Jews in John are instruments of the devil and a representation of the world that rejects God’s revelation through the figure of Jesus.⁸⁷ For the faithful followers of the Johannine community, this story of good versus evil is one of many parallels. First, by making Judas into a thief who stole from the poor and voiced his opposition to Jesus, the author ensured that this Church built on a strong foundation (rock) would be patient when those from within the ranks stole from them. It was a lesson to expose the destructive nature of greed and the dependence on material things. Like Judas and his money, they are finite whereas the blessings of Jesus are abundant and eternal.⁸⁸ The figure of Judas in John was a powerful one,

⁸⁵ von Balthasar 1988: 246.

⁸⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on John* 1817.

⁸⁷ Brodie 1997: 39.

⁸⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on John* 1605.

serving its purpose only to elevate Jesus to an unchallenged level. After the passion and the events occurring at Gethsemane, Judas the character no longer resurfaces as there was no further need of him.⁸⁹ There is no repentance nor death as recounted in Matthew. The ambiguities of Mark have long since been dispelled and while Judas is possessed by Satan in Luke, potentially allowing some sympathy for him, there is no denying that in John he is outright evil, an agent of, but not from this world. What would become of him would be far worse than ever seen previously. And as the years rolled on, so too would the perceptions of Judas Iscariot. The liberties subsequently taken by authors would reveal more gruesome and visually appalling tales and expand the legend of Judas Iscariot in all manner of shapes. Judas's fate was sealed.

1.3. On the Acts and Papias: A Fitting End to the Betrayer?

« Avec l'argent qu'on lui paya pour son crime, cet homme s'acheta un champ ; il y tomba la tête la première, son corps s'éclata par le milieu et tous ses intestins se répandirent au-dehors. » - Actes 1:18

« Seigneur, toi qui connais le cœur de tous, montre-nous lequel tu as choisi pour occuper la place de Judas dans cette fonction d'apôtre qu'il a quitté pour occuper la place qui est la sienne. » - Actes 1:24-25

Simon Peter gathered the remaining apostles and explained to them what befell Judas Iscariot following his defection for the group. The leader also called upon the Lord in order to guide them into making the right choice in order to fill the position left vacant and restore their number to twelve as it was. Evidently this attested to the fact that there were twelve tribes of Israel and each of the apostles represented one of them. Judas, having defected from the group, relinquished his share and so, a new member had to take his place. What Acts provided was the final solution on how to deal with the Judas dilemma, given that he had already been a part of the

⁸⁹ Saari 2006: 113.

story since the time of Mark, erasing him from the narrative would not be an easy task to accomplish.

Acts served to highlight the formation of the Church, confirming the leadership role of Peter and attest to the wondrous works performed by the apostles. The message for the faithful was clear: choose the devil and there will be dire consequences, look at what happened to Judas Iscariot. He is no longer one of the Twelve, God laid down his judgment upon him and punished him adequately. An element of fear was now part of the narrative, a fear that would fester and grow until it spiralled out of control causing future atrocities defended by some as acts of duty or even justice.⁹⁰ Judas was rewarded with both the scorn of humanity and the wrath of God himself. In Acts there was now an established Church with its heroes (the apostles), a redeeming figure (Jesus) whose enemies (Judas, Satan, the Jews) cannot defeat him (Jesus) and a complete story overall that ends with Paul, working alongside the apostles, carrying this message of divine triumph to the gentiles (representing the entire world). Cleverly, the author of Luke-Acts dealt with the Judas problem right away with Peter telling the gruesome story.

The irony here was that Peter also betrayed Jesus (denying him three times) but found his way back whereas Judas (who delivered him to the authorities) did not.⁹¹ In Acts, Peter rises to the top, becoming the head of the Church while Judas falls headlong into ruin. Another comparison would also come in the person of Saul who fell to the ground after being struck by God only to be turned into Paul the Apostle.⁹² Judas was elevated to the rank of apostle and then fell beyond all hope (in Acts) by the same divine power. Jesus is the risen lord of all light and forgiveness, Judas is the symbol of darkness and perdition.⁹³ Where in Matthew Judas repents and passes judgment

⁹⁰ Trigg 1998: 119.

⁹¹ Robertson 1927: 40.

⁹² Trigg 1998: 117.

⁹³ von Balthasar 2018: 341.

on himself by committing suicide in remorse, in *Acts* there is no such redemption and it is the Lord that delivers judgment. Literally and figuratively Judas is cast out once and for all, taking with him all darkness, death and ruin. Again, his fate is sealed. Jesus is the glorious king who died for humanity as part of divine will contrasted by a Judas figure whose antagonism was met with divine retribution.

With the author of Luke-Acts recreating a history of Israel which includes the whole world as the new “chosen” people, various ancient Old Testament passages were used in new, reworded forms that would explain how the Jesus narrative followed what was “foretold in the scriptures”, an expression that occurs several times throughout the four canonical gospels. In doing so, this affected the literary character of Judas Iscariot and so, passages that once addressed a selected number of people instead single out the apostle who would betray (not deliver) the Son of man to his fate.

OLD TESTAMENT FRAGMENTS (PROPHECY)	NEW TESTAMENT FRAGMENTS (REALIZATION)
<p>Mon meilleur ami lui-même, celui en qui j’avais confiance, avec qui je partageais mon pain, s’est tourné contre moi. – <i>Psaumes 41 :9</i></p> <p>עקב: עלי הגדיל לחמי אוכל בו אשר־בטחתי שלומי גם־איש</p>	<p>Frères, il fallait que se réalise ce que le Saint-Esprit a annoncé dans l’Écriture : s’exprimant par la bouche de David, il avait parlé d’avance de Judas. – <i>Actes 1:16</i></p> <p>Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, ἔδει πληρωθῆναι τὴν γραφὴν ἣν προεῖπε / προεῖπεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον διὰ στόματος Δαυεὶδ / Δαυὶδ περὶ Ἰούδα τοῦ γενομένου ὁδηγοῦ τοῖς συλλαβοῦσιν Ἰησοῦν</p>
<p>Ils seront couverts de honte pour toujours. Dieu les arrachera de leur place et les jettera à terre la tête la première. Ils seront plongés dans la douleur et plus personne ne se souviendra d’eux. – <i>Sagesse 4:18-19</i></p> <p>הם יראו וייתעלמו מזה; האנשים האלה, לאדון לא אכפת: אחרי החיים האלה הם לא יהיו יותר מאשר גופה ידועה לשמצה, מושא ללעג בקרב המתים, לנצח; הוא יפיל אותם, אולם, ראש ראשון, הוא ינענע אותם לעומק; עד הסוף הם ישכבו, הם יכאבו, וזיכרונם ייגוע.</p>	<p>Cet homme s’acheta un champ; il y tomba la tête la première. Que sa maison soit abandonnée et que personne n’y habite. – <i>Actes 1:18-20</i></p> <p>Οὗτος μὲν οὖν ἐκτήσατο χωρίον ἐκ μισθοῦ τῆς ἀδικίας, καὶ πρηνῆς γενόμενος ἐλάκησεν μέσος, καὶ ἐξεχύθη πάντα τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ. καὶ γνωστὸν ἐγένετο πᾶσι τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν Ἱερουσαλὴμ, ὥστε κληθῆναι τὸ χωρίον ἐκεῖνο τῇ [ιδίᾳ] διαλέκτῳ αὐτῶν Ἀκελδαμάχ, τοῦτ' ἔστιν Χωρίον Αἵματος</p>

<p>Let their farm be deserted, let there be no inhabitant in their tents. - <i>Psalms 69:25</i></p> <p>תהי' ירתם נשמה באהליהם אל-יהי ישב:</p>	<p>Let his farm become deserted, let there be no inhabitant in it.- <i>Acts 1:20</i></p> <p>Γέγραπται γὰρ ἐν Βίβλῳ Ψαλμῶν Γενηθήτω ἡ ἔπαυλις αὐτοῦ ἔρημος καὶ μὴ ἔστω ὁ κατοικῶν ἐν αὐτῇ, καὶ τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν αὐτοῦ λαβέτω ἕτερος.</p>
<p>Let another take his position as overseer. – <i>Psalms 109:8</i></p> <p>יהי' ימיו מעטים פקדתו יקה אחר:</p>	<p>So one of the men who have accompanied us – one of these must become a witness with us of the resurrection. – <i>Acts 1:21-22</i></p> <p>δεῖ οὖν τῶν συνελθόντων ἡμῖν ἀνδρῶν ἐν παντὶ χρόνῳ ᾧ εἰσῆλθεν καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς, ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τοῦ βαπτίσματος Ἰωάννου / Ἰωάννου ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ἧς ἀνελήμφθη ἀφ' ἡμῶν, μάρτυρα τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ σὺν ἡμῖν γενέσθαι ἕνα τούτων.</p>
<p>L'homme ainsi pendu attire la malédiction sur son pays. - <i>Deutéronome 21:23</i></p> <p>תלוי אלהים כייקללת ההוא ביום תקברנו כייקבור עליהעץ נבלתו לאתלין ס נחלה: לך נתן אלהיך יהוה אשר את-אדמתך תטמא ולא</p>	<p>You will be hated by all for my namesake. - <i>Luke 21:17</i></p> <p>καὶ ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι ὑπὸ πάντων διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου.</p>
<p>C'est là qu'on enterrera les morts, par manque de place ailleurs. - <i>Jérémie 7:32</i></p> <p>ההרגה אפי' היא כי ביהגם וגיא התפת עוד ולא יאמר נאמ' יהוה באים הנהימים לכן מקום: מאין בתפת וקברו</p> <p>Je vais faire venir sur ce lieu un malheur...En effet les gens de Juda m'ont abandonné, ils ont rendu ce lieu méconnaissable. Ils ont rempli ce lieu du sang d'êtres innocents. En cet endroit...les passants en auront le frisson, ils siffleront d'horreur en voyant les dégâts. - <i>Jérémie 19:3-8</i></p> <p>צבאות יהוה כה-אמר ירושלם וישבי יהודה מלכי דבר-יהוה שמעו ואמרת אזניו: תצלנה כל-שמעה אשר הזה עליהמקום רעה מביא הנני ישראל אלהי</p> <p>אשר אחרים לאלהים ויקטרו-בו הזה את-המקום וינכרו עזבני אשר יען נקים: דם הזה את-המקום ומלאו יהודה ומלכי ואבותיהם המה לא-ידעום עלי-כלי וישרק ישם עליה עבר כל ולשרקה לשמה הזאת את-העיר ושמתי מכתה:</p>	<p>Now this man acquired a field with the reward for his wickedness. It was called Hakeldama, the field of blood. - <i>Acts 1:18-19</i></p> <p>Οὗτος μὲν οὖν ἐκτήσατο χωρίον ἐκ μισθοῦ τῆς ἀδικίας, καὶ πρηνῆς γενόμενος ἐλάκησεν μέσος, καὶ ἐξεχύθη πάντα τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ. καὶ γνωστὸν ἐγένετο πᾶσι τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν Ἱερουσαλήμ, ὥστε κληθῆναι τὸ χωρίον ἐκεῖνο τῇ [ιδίᾳ] διαλέκτῳ αὐτῶν Ἀκελδαμάχ, τοῦτ' ἔστιν Χωρίον Αἵματος</p> <p>This ministry and apostleship Judas turned away from to go to that place which is his own. - <i>Acts 1:25</i></p> <p>λαβεῖν τὸν τόπον τῆς διακονίας ταύτης καὶ ἀποστολῆς, ἀφ' ἧς παρέβη Ἰούδας πορευθῆναι εἰς τὸν τόπον τὸν ἴδιον.</p> <p>I have sinned by betraying innocent blood. – <i>Matthew 27:4</i></p> <p>λέγων Ἠμαρτον παραδοῦς αἷμα δίκαιον / ἄθῳον. οἱ δὲ εἶπαν Τί πρὸς ἡμᾶς; σὺ ὄψη.</p>

<p>Si vous le jugez bon, donnez-moi mon salaire ; sinon tant pis ! Ils comptèrent alors trente pièces d'argent, qu'ils me donnèrent comme salaire. - <i>Zacharie 11:12</i></p>	<p>And they took the thirty pieces of silver and, the price of the one on whom a price had been set, on whom some of the people of Israel had set a price. – <i>Matthew 27:9</i></p>
<p>את־שכרי וישקלו חדלו ואם־לא שכרי הבו בעיניכם אם־טוב אליהם ואמר כסף: שלשים</p>	<p>Καὶ ἔλαβον τὰ τριάκοντα ἀργύρια, τὴν τιμὴν τοῦ τετιμημένου ὄν ἐτιμήσαντο ἀπὸ υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ,</p>
<p>Then the Lord said to me, “throw it into the treasury” – this lordly price at which I was valued by them. So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them into the treasury in the house of the Lord. – <i>Zechariah 11:13</i></p>	<p>Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed... “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money.” – <i>Matthew 27:5-6</i></p>
<p>ויאמר יהוה אלי השליכהו אל־היוצר אדר היקר אשר יקרתי מעליהם ואקחה שלשים הכסף ואשליך אתו בית יהוה אל־היוצר:</p>	<p>καὶ ρίψας τὰ ἀργύρια εἰς τὸν ναὸν ἀνεχώρησεν, καὶ ἀπελθὼν ἀπήγγατο. Οἱ δὲ ἀρχιερεῖς λαβόντες τὰ ἀργύρια εἶπαν Οὐκ ἔξεστιν βαλεῖν αὐτὰ εἰς τὸν κορβανᾶν, ἐπεὶ τιμὴ αἱματός ἐστιν·</p>

“But Judas went about in this world as a great model of impiety. He became so bloated in the flesh that he could not pass through a place that was easily wide enough for a wagon – not even his swollen head could fit. They say that his eyelids swelled to such an extent that he could not see the light at all...And his genitals became more disgusting and larger than anyone’s; simply by relieving himself, to his wanton shame, he emitted pus and worms flowing through his entire body. And they say that after he suffered numerous torments and punishments he died on his own land, and that land has been... desolate and uninhabited because of the stench. No one can pass through that place without holding his nose. – Papias, Frag. 4.2-3

The gruesome end met by Judas in the writings of Papias show that an author could take several liberties, as underlined above, when recounting events that were thought to be historical at the time. Who are the ones Papias referred to as “they”? To what “place” was he referring to exactly? In his analysis of Judas, Papias wasted no time associating the Iscariot with a worldly negative connotation and expanded on it with his exaggerations.⁹⁴ His vivid imagination created a visually grotesque monster that wanders the land while being devoid of goodness and hope. His representation of Judas stems from the passage found in Acts but in its amplification, Papias reveals his true feelings on Judas and what he perceives as God’s divine justice.⁹⁵ The purpose

⁹⁴ Robertson 2012: 120.

⁹⁵ Moss 2019: 391.

here is not to discuss how reputable Papias or his works were according to his contemporaries but rather to expose how the Judas Iscariot character and concept had evolved since its first appearance in Mark. The case against Papias's fragment is one of reliability. Who are the "they" he referred to in his passage? With the recounting of Judas's death in Matthew existent during Papias's period, did the author write his fragment in direct contrast based on his belief that there was no hope for Judas at all or was it to demonstrate how God struck down those who betrayed him?⁹⁶

First, it is important to note the time period in which Papias's writings came to be. The consensus agrees that Papias composed at the turn of the second century, which meant that the evangelical authors had also composed their gospels by that point. Whether it would come to his attention as an oral or written tradition, Papias may have already established his set of beliefs and was determined to counter that with which he disagreed in regards to Judas Iscariot.⁹⁷ It was already explored previously how Judas was potentially a literary construct, fashioned to clear out any ambiguities left by the evangelists. The author of Matthew was the only one to address the death of Judas in his work, until Acts which, also alluded to a demise by hanging, and both mention the presence of a field or plot of land. However, what Papias did was remove the penitent aspects of Matthew and amplify the consequence aspects in Acts: a cursed man living in his cursed land by the righteous judgment of God. These modifications, reflect the separation of good and evil found in Luke and John but also add an element of fear to the narrative. Papias simply borrows material from what he had come to hear, from what was available during his time. It simply was a matter of what one believed over what another believed.

“Judas put his neck into the halter and hanged himself on a certain tree, but the tree bent down and he continued to live, since it was God's will that he either be preserved for repentance or public disgrace, and shame. For they say that due to dropsy he could not pass where a wagon passed with ease; then he fell on his face

⁹⁶ Burke 2016: 311.

⁹⁷ Burke 2016: 310.

and burst asunder, that is, was rent apart, as Luke says in Acts.” – Theophylact, *Commentary on Matthew 27: 3-5*

As time went by, some early Christians were groomed to pass judgment and hatred upon Judas just as they claimed that God Himself did not spare the Iscariot from retribution, as shown with the underlined parts of the citation above.⁹⁸ However, this sentence was delivered through human actions, not from the divine, suggesting some sort of hypocrisy as Jesus the Logos (Word of God) came to deliver love and not condemnation. It is as if Christians unbecomingly limit God’s love and forgiveness, which are to this day both mysterious and misunderstood, to all that is finite. Since Papias’s rendition of Judas’s death was so extreme, it captivated the imagination and interest of his contemporaries and those who came after; its originality allowed for it to be preserved. Others speak of Papias and his works albeit not all in his favour.⁹⁹ For example, Eusebius claimed that he was “a man of little intelligence” while Irenaeus praised him and associated him with the likes of Polycarp, potentially one of those that helped safeguard Papias’s works.¹⁰⁰ With fear came threat and so, Papias may have started a chain reaction that spiralled out of control. He claimed he had first-hand knowledge of the events: Judas was a doubter and a traitor → doubt or disagree with him (Papias) and you are like Judas → if you disbelieve him then you cannot by any means be one of those that may enter Heaven at the great table of the Lord.¹⁰¹ In dissecting Papias’s account on Judas, some comparisons can be made:

⇒ Judas is a great model of impiety: Piety serves God. It pleases God who rewards the pious with immortality through Jesus’s resurrection. Impiety displeases God and the just reward for Judas and those like him are perdition and damnation.

⁹⁸ Saari 2006: 126.

⁹⁹ Robertson 2012: 126.

¹⁰⁰ Robertson 2012: 119.

¹⁰¹ Robertson 2012: 127.

- ⇒ The mention of incredible swelling: Humanity's pride, greed, stupidity and ignorance.
- ⇒ On the loss of sight: Spiritual blindness or an inability to see God.
- ⇒ On terrible suffering: A life without God.
- ⇒ Worms and disease: Corruption, poor leadership and inner darkness.

Yet not all was without hope for Judas. While Papias expanded on and exaggerated the death of Judas as was written in Matthew and Acts, thus serving as a stern warning to all enemies of God that justice would be served post-mortem, others took another route, a more ponderous path that would explore and debate over the multifaceted bounty of God's clemency. What is just and terrifying can also be unimaginably merciful and cleansing.

1.4. Church Fathers, Origenism and the Secret Fire: Pleading the Case for Judas

The writings of the Early Church Fathers are ripe with discussions and analysis on the various themes explored in Christianity. The concepts of fate, fear, predestination along with damnation and salvation, all find interpretation and validation according to the likes of Irenaeus, Augustine and Epiphanius. The one to be further discussed in this work is none other than Origen of Alexandria for the simple reason that, unlike the Early Church fathers mentioned beforehand, Origen sought to explore and address issues that would seem too taboo or forbidden to discuss.¹⁰² Among those was the persona and role of Judas in the grand plan unveiled by God through Jesus Christ. It is very clear to Origen that God's foreknowledge on what was to come did not overrule the gift of free will and, as such, Judas went through with his actions because he was a human being.¹⁰³ However, the key elements Origen further added to the Christian movement was hope or in the form of "possibility" and a peculiar phrase somehow explaining Judas, and as it turned out,

¹⁰² Laeuchli 1953: 254.

¹⁰³ Greggs 2009: 79.

God's actions: the execution of what Origen called "the mystery of the betrayal".¹⁰⁴ This simple passage not only proposed a possible reason the passion came to be but also undeniably allowed for the consideration that the Iscariot will not be exempt from the universal salvation God, through Jesus, will deliver in the end. Not all agreed with such a rather bold statement however, as many early Christian leaders went on to adopt a sterner view on redemption and who was worthy of it.¹⁰⁵ Like in the writings of the New Testament, the story differed, evolved and resulted in the basic biblical structure found after the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE.

Although authors like Irenaeus and Augustine were bishops and wise in their own way, the pardon of Judas was outrightly denied on the grounds that the fallen apostle knew exactly what he was doing or that Satan was allowed in. Despite their differences, the common purpose of apostolic and gnostic Christianity was to provide humanity with redemption, whether it comes through revelation or resurrection. So when Origen presented his views on salvation, the restoration of all creation to its original state of grace (ἀποκατάστασις), while it did not go unnoticed, it was certainly not acclaimed by all, since it proposed that even Lucifer would be redeemed. For some, the idea of that possibility was outrageous and perhaps even wounding as it would have been beyond their understanding and acceptance that Jesus the Saviour would have died for the sake of Judas or the devil.¹⁰⁶ But is that not what Christianity is significant for? Forgiveness and hope provided by an all-seeing, ever-present benevolent Father who loved his creation so much that he sent his only son to save it? Could it have been that Jesus Christ made a mistake in choosing Judas Iscariot? Thomas Aquinas pondered on this very question and suggested that in making use of evil, good was able to triumph.¹⁰⁷ Adding to that, he referenced Augustine and the number of twelve, a

¹⁰⁴ Trigg 1998: 225.

¹⁰⁵ von Balthasar 1986: 249.

¹⁰⁶ Scott 2015: 93.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on John* 1007.

fixed number of apostles that would be immutable (Matthias replacing Judas). Here it was believed that the Holy Trinity (III) would spread to the four corners of the world (IV) by means of twelve apostles. Three times four is twelve (XII).¹⁰⁸

Coincidentally, while discussing the darkness of Judas Iscariot, the traitor, Aquinas compared the Church of God and those within it as the hours of the day stating that they are the light of the world. Judas, who was a devil as written in John, was no longer part of that light, it had departed and Jesus affirmed that the time had come – “*this is your hour, the hour of darkness*”. If one walks with the Lord, he is in the light and therefore can see. When one chooses evil he is devoid of light and walks in the night: the world of darkness and its ruler the devil. Judas’s mind was clouded in darkness, his eyes could no longer see God and he stumbled, betrayed his closest friend and teacher.¹⁰⁹ While theories of this genre push the limits of imagination, it is worth noting that before Nicaea nothing about Christianity was essentially official but centuries later by the time of Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1275), the religion, its concepts and mission were vehemently imprinted on its adherents with little room for change. Judas Iscariot was a greedy Jewish traitor who, under the influence of Satan, sold Jesus Christ the Saviour for money and then committed suicide, thus condemned to suffer eternal damnation in the flames of Hell.¹¹⁰ What if these flames were to serve another purpose? One of cleansing and purification reflective of the words spoken by Jesus himself:

“I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!” – *Lk 12:49*.

Origen knew of this passage and it wasn’t until much later that certain issues such as suicide were condemned by the Church. The concept of universal salvation as defined by Origenism

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Judd 2006: 38.

¹¹⁰ Burnet 2015: 129-30.

stemmed from the belief that once the seed of good was planted in someone's soul, damnation could no longer proceed and could be averted.¹¹¹ Where it concerned Judas is quite simple – the apostle knew Jesus, received from him teachings that allowed him to work miracles and so on, as the scriptures wrote. After the events at Gethsemane, Judas still had enough good in him to acknowledge his error and repented. He threw the thirty silver pieces in the temple and took his own life in remorse. Overthinking the validity of one's sacrifice or remorse is overstepping the limitations of knowledge and power attributed to human beings. Christian theology stresses firmly that only God can judge, as the Church teaches. It also teaches that pointing the finger in judgment to those deemed infidels, traitors, sinful and the like would only bring more woe to that one who does the judging.¹¹²

“Why do you pass judgment upon your brother? Each of us shall give account of himself to God”. Do you have the right to refuse to your brother the hope that you have invested for yourself, through your living faith, in your judge?” – *Rom. 14:10-13*

In his analysis of scripture and the aforementioned passage from Luke, Origen asked what sort of fire Jesus spoke of. How can God punish eternally if Jesus took all sins upon him when he died and was resurrected? Perhaps the concept of Hell or Hades, the Underworld changed as well while Jesus ventured forth to rescue the righteous souls and broke death's power.¹¹³ The mere presence of the Saviour may have, in a sort of ripple effect, turned what was preconceived as a place of torment into a place of repentance. Taking Dante's *Divina Comedia* for example, it was built in three volumes: *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. The one that is of interest here is the second one, Purgatory or the concept of tireless effort to redeem souls from sin until they can reach

¹¹¹ McGuckin 2004: 75.

¹¹² von Balthasar 1984: 127.

¹¹³ Trigg 1998: 335.

a state of grace. Based on this passage spoken by Origen in reference to Lk. 12:49, it could very well be applicable to Judas Iscariot, if only for the mention of gold and silver (see 1.5).

“What is, O Apostle, this fire which tests our works? What is this fire so wise that it guards my ‘gold’ and shows forth my ‘silver’ more brilliantly, that it leaves undamaged that ‘precious stone’ in me and ‘burns up’ only the evil I have done?”

In his writings, Origen spoke of a God-Fire, a source of purification that could come only from God himself. God, through Jesus and the new covenant, arrived in the Underworld and transformed it. One theory Ramelli suggested based on Origen’s writings would be that the burning fire of torment and anguish would be altered to one of sanctity and purification.¹¹⁴ To be clear, it would still be immeasurably painful, but not in a manner that would suggest any kind of absence of mercy. The suffering endured by those within it would be meant to eradicate all manner of darkness to reveal only the purest spark of existence in any being under God, like a diamond for example. The darker the soul, the more radiant the fire appears next to it.¹¹⁵

So when the Revelation of John (20:10-14) describes a lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels, this place no matter how long, in this case purification, would take, it would serve to restore grace to even the worst of the worst because nothing exists under God that has no part in God.¹¹⁶ Even in rejection of His love and in support of free will and self-determination, God will tirelessly work to provide hope and a chance to return home so to speak. This is what Origen pondered and wrote extensively on and this could also clarify what Paul meant when he wrote that God will be “all in all”.¹¹⁷

With this concept, a cleansing fire, there is no absence of hope for Judas, there would be justice served for his sins and the amount of time would take would be determined only by God whose

¹¹⁴ Ramelli 2019: 349.

¹¹⁵ Scott 2015: 83.

¹¹⁶ Trigg 1998: 95.

¹¹⁷ Greggs 2009: 92.

will and grace cannot be defined and flows outside the human definitions of time and space.¹¹⁸ According to Origen, no one will be spared the process of cleansing through the fire. The holy will be drawn closer to God and the sinful will be judged and punished, burned out in righteous judgment until only light remains.¹¹⁹

In short, there seems to be a more hopeful solution in dealing with Judas, his acts in life and ambiguous fate in death, based on these theories. While Origenism and some aspects of universal salvation were refuted by the Church or deemed inapplicable for Judas on the grounds that despair and suicide invalidated his remorse, some early theologians took a different stance and considered the possibility that everything made by God, good or evil, worked in unison in order to complete the design of the Almighty which is and had always been the supreme mystery.¹²⁰

“The end of the world . . . will come when every soul shall be visited with the penalties due (the Secret Fire?) for its sins... the goodness of God... will restore his entire creation to one end, even his enemies being conquered and subdued” – Origen, *Peri Archon* 1.6.1

“Then, according to the capabilities of their nature, each one was and is made, advancing (Purgatory through the Secret Fire?) to that which is better” – Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 6.17

“When, over long periods of time, evil has been removed and those (Lucifer? Judas?) now lying in sin have been restored to their original state (ἀρχαίον ἀποκατάστασις), all creation will join in united thanksgiving, both whose purification has involved punishment and those who needed no purification at all” – Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Catechetica Magna* 26.73-77

The Bible does not explicitly say that Judas Iscariot is condemned to an eternity of torment in Hell nor does it have clear details on his past and the exact manner of his death.¹²¹ The stories about these issues vary and were left ambiguous, in complete mystery. As the authors of the

¹¹⁸ Moore 2005: 119.

¹¹⁹ Trigg 1998: 328.

¹²⁰ Scott 2015: 81.

¹²¹ Drodge and Tabor 1992: 242.

canonical gospels formed the nucleus of Christianity, communities with various traditions and backgrounds each adapted the writings in accordance to their beliefs.¹²² As the years went by, the stories evolved and so too would the Judas Iscariot character. The rising Church needed to stand in unison over what truly happened during Jesus's teaching and so, his enemies were thrust into the light if only to strengthen the goodness of the Christ. Papias, as a later writer for example, worked his own opinions through his writings as would be the case for writers and theologians who would follow him. As Judas became *the traitor, the betrayer*, the personification of greed and cowardice for some, it served also to bind him to Jesus and the Church forever.¹²³ What Judas did, was necessary in order for Jesus to do what he needed to do subsequently: suffer through the passion, die on the cross and absolve all humanity of its sins. The case of Judas served a purpose but the person of Judas was and is still fascinating because he is a mystery and a frightful reminder of our own shortcomings or ability to falter.¹²⁴

1.5. The Polarizing Figure of Judas Iscariot – A Muse of Poets and Storytellers

“His life has been blotted out. Even by the believers of the God-man the name of Judas should have been revered as the name of the man by whose hand God's sacrifice was made possible. For a believer in the man-God Judas stands next to Jesus himself in the great story. For he, when all were without understanding, must have understood. Perhaps not all, but something... The man who betrayed Jesus and hanged himself in sorrow was a man, and perhaps more a man than the disciples who left their master and fled, or than Peter who denied him thrice. From the bare facts of the synoptic story we are forced to conclude an understanding between Jesus and Judas” – Middleton Murray, *The Life of Jesus* (1926)

« Seigneur, je crois profondément que Judas est le plus ancien et le plus fidèle de tes disciples, qu'il a pris sur lui le fardeau de tous les péchés et la honte du monde, que lorsque Tu reviendras juger la terre, et que le soleil s'obscurcira sous Ta colère, et que les étoiles effrayées se détacheront du ciel, il se lèvera de l'abîme, comme un charbon fumant, brûlé par toute la lèpre du monde, et il siègera à côté de Toi. Donne-moi un signe qu'il en sera ainsi » – Maximilian Voloshin

¹²² Burnet 2015: 94.

¹²³ von Balthasar 1984: 170.

¹²⁴ Bulgakov and Pares 1931: 533.

« Fondamentalement, il est clair qu'il ne peut s'agir ici de perdition et de rejet éternel, mais du triomphe de l'amour... rejeté et méprisé, condamné par tous et incompris de tous, le « voleur » restera ?... mais avec lui, comme le premier des apôtres dans l'enfer qui, avec le Christ, deviendra paradis pour lui, et Lui dira : - Ce que Tu m'as ordonné, permis, béni, dit de « faire bien vite », je l'ai fait vite, sans l'ajourner... Méprisé et rejeté, je suis devenu irremplaçable pour Toi. Tu m'as inclus dans Ta propre cause, qui est une cause d'amour expiatoire et de rachat » – Rev. Sergius Bulgakov

“And the Mother of God went from the cross, carried the star into the world, passed by the ditch where Peter wept: and Peter saw the star and came out of the ditch; she walked through trackless wilderness, where even a beast will not pass, Judas saw the star – and the light showed him the way... She came into this world – no one waited or hoped for anything! – and with the star she lit our darkness” – Alexei Remizov, *Stella Maria Maris* (1928)

While numerous Church fathers have been quick to render judgment on Judas, thus voiding the validity of his remorse, it didn't stop others from reflecting on the mysteries of the word and wisdom of God and how finite a human mind can be in reference to eternity. As the story of Christianity expanded and evolved, so did that of Judas Iscariot. It wouldn't be long before he went from “One of the Twelve” to “Son of Perdition” but there were many important gaps in the canonical gospels that left the fallen apostle's fate an open-ended question to which authors and writers of all genres to fill in the blanks left by these gaps.¹²⁵

In fact, as Jesus and Judas became forever linked together in the Passion narrative, other elements gained a history of their own and helped to elevate Judas to legendary status. Taking the thirty silver pieces given to him by the high priest for example. Not only did these appear in the Old Testament book of Zechariah (see table in 1.3) in one incarnation, medieval authors such as Godefroy de Viterbe found inspiration in ancient writings (the *Gospel of Bartholomew*) and skilfully inserted them in apocryphal stories (the *Pantheon*) linking them to Abraham, the Virgin Mary and even the Queen of Sheba.¹²⁶ As the story went, the coins were handed down from Terah,

¹²⁵ Brodie 1997: 408.

¹²⁶ Hill 1905: 6.

Abraham's father, and travelled the land from hand to hand until they found their way to Jesus himself, who gave them to the high priests of the temple in Jerusalem. From there, as recalled in Matthew, the high priests paid Judas to deliver his master to them. It appeared as if it became a necessity out of desire for authors and composers to be "the" one to solve the unsolvable: the secret of Judas Iscariot. According to Viterbe's translation, the coins were in fact made of gold, not silver, and both metals were occasionally referred to by other names, or so deduced the medieval author.¹²⁷ This same gold, as told by Solomon, Bishop of Basra (c. 1222), in his work the *Book of the Bee*, came from Paradise and taken by Adam along with the myrrh and frankincense associated with the biblical three magi, who placed them in a cave. This addition would tie in with the previous story of the coins, which further bound Judas to Jesus, but not only that, to Heaven itself.¹²⁸ An astrological parallel can be attempted here since chapters two and three will explore the significance of stars and the zodiac based on Gnostic theories and thought. This previously cited passage:

“What is, O Apostle, this fire which tests our works? What is this fire so wise that it guards my ‘gold’ and shows forth my ‘silver’ more brilliantly, that it leaves undamaged that ‘precious stone’ in me and ‘burns up’ only the evil I have done?”

The underlined words are the terms to be examined here. First there is ‘gold’. This metal is rare on earth and a valuable commodity. It was and still is represented by the sun. In astrology or tarot specifically, the sun card represents all manners of positivity such as success, vitality, happiness and is a trump card, a major arcana in a set which upon being drawn, is considered to be very auspicious. Then there is ‘silver’. Silver is associated with the moon. In astrology the moon represents things that are hidden, mysterious and if pulled in reverse, can also translate to danger,

¹²⁷ Cherchi 1984: 215.

¹²⁸ Hill 1905: 3-4.

deception and error. It is also a trump card and major arcana.¹²⁹ As ancient societies venerated the sun as the source of life and power, Christianity would eventually depict Jesus Christ as the light of all light in various mosaics and forms of art, taking even the Roman pagan deity Sol and superseding him with the Saviour, the source of happiness, renewal and the end of suffering.¹³⁰ In terms of storyline or eschatology, Judas's role in the ministry of Jesus will be revealed, shown forth more brilliantly like shining silver... hence the silver pieces. The third underlined term, 'precious stone', could lead to another major arcana in tarot and astrology: the star. A diamond shines like a star when light strikes it. The star card is representative of hope, of wish fulfillment.¹³¹ Finally, the fourth underlined concept is perhaps what Origen had in mind in his theoretical purifying fire certainly could be applied to Judas Iscariot, a man who will pass through fire, his secret revealed and his soul would be rid of all darkness and allowed to take his rightful (?), hopeful (?) place at the side of Christ after serving his part in the unfathomable and ineffable plan of God.

Theologically, Christianity promises to deliver the world from the powers of darkness and the natures of sin and evil, but literally it contains elements that recall ancient Greek-Roman tragedies like the tales of Oedipus and Euripides. There is a hero who sets out on a mission of divine influence, world travels and roadblocks that lead to sorrow and even death, but like several fairy tales, it ends with the crushing victory of good versus evil and the end of oppression. Judas Iscariot has evolved into such a polarizing figure that no matter how he is perceived, the truth is that he fascinates and inspires writers as if he were some sort of muse while still being marginalized and maligned by millions.¹³² As Christianity expanded it became a powerful movement and Jesus himself was viewed as a complex character imbued with both divine and human qualities . Judas

¹²⁹ Waite 1973: 46.

¹³⁰ Taylor 2018: 122.

¹³¹ Waite 1973: 27.

¹³² Burnet 2015: 110.

the apostle was one part of the experience, a symbol and the themes covered in this wondrous religious experience address all levels of humanity. In Judas Iscariot, the apostles and others, like the three Marys, we find examples of the best and the worst qualities.¹³³ They are all symbolic, a way for us to confront and defeat or succumb to our own inner enemies. Authors like Papias contributed to turn the Judas character into a legend by augmenting the elements surrounding his death. In his embellishment of the story Papias, like others after him, did no different than the great Greek poets and storytellers of the ancient world.¹³⁴ As some darkened and singled out Judas as the bane of this world, others catered to the public in a different way. The *Ballad of Judas Iscariot* by Robert Buchanan and the *Ballad of the Judas Tree* by Ruth Etchells are two separate examples of poetry that recall elements from biblical scripture, yet also invoke a sense of mercy and forgiveness by none other than Jesus himself, who is characterized as the divine bridegroom holding off on consuming a great feast until Judas arrives.¹³⁵

In Hell there grew a Judas Tree
 Where Judas hanged and died
 Because he could not bear to see
 His master crucified
 Our Lord descended into Hell
 And found his Judas there
 For ever hanging on the tree
 Grown from his own despair
 So Jesus cut his Judas down
 And took him in his arms
 “It was for this I came” he said
 “and not to do you harm
 My Father gave me twelve good men
 And all of them I kept
 Though one betrayed and one denied
 Some fled and others slept
 In three days’ time I must return
 To make the others glad
 But first I had to come to Hell

¹³³ Greggs 2009: 92.

¹³⁴ Burnet 2015: 108

¹³⁵ Buchanan 2010: 494-5

And share the death you had
My tree will grow in place of yours
Its roots lie here as well
There is no final victory
Without this soul from Hell”
So when we all condemned him
As of every traitor worst
Remember that of all his men
Our Lord forgave him first

– Ruth Etchells

In the end, while the canonical scriptures gave birth to the Judas character and myth, they have since left several blanks that have since sparked an endless debate on several issues like his historical existence and the true motives of his actions. The next chapter will explore Judas’s life beyond the canon. There are several different outcomes and themes that have not always been well received by the growing political Church factions and as such, groups like the Gnostics were marginalized and vehemently hated just as Judas would be. The seeds of that hatred would later grow to out-of-control proportions and result in actions whose harm has yet to be fully healed. Judas Iscariot the apostle may have started off simply as one of the elements of a story but has since evolved into a character that has attained “legend” status, albeit a notorious one. The fascination continued into the second and third centuries and his literary deeds have been used to fuel debates on matters such as suicide, damnation and repentance, who were worthy of it and who would be excluded from mercy. The Judas character evolved into several different, yet apocryphal identities, but as the light of the sun and the moon both shine brightly, so does Judas Iscariot’s personage in all manners of Christian texts and manuscripts in which he is featured.

CHAPTER 2
LIFE BEYOND THE CANON – AN APOCRYPHAL JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES

2.1. Judas the Tool, the Pawn: Giving a Soul an Identity

The notoriety of Judas within the pages of the Bible as well as the statements claimed by the early Church fathers have only proven one thing: that the Iscariot is a confusing yet sensational figure¹³⁶. The mystery surrounding his persona continued to intrigue religious and artistic figures across the centuries, leading to so many declaring that their version of the story was the “official” one. The idea was simple: since no one knew for certain who this enigmatic figure was historically, there was no way of knowing whether he was real or not. Therefore, fabricating a story and giving Judas an identity would prove quite the fascination¹³⁷. From the contradictory tales within the gospels were woven numerous strings leading to the most outlandish yet provocative versions of the life of Judas¹³⁸.

Whether it be told orally or expressed within art or the pages of a book, the apostle remained on the lips of humanity for centuries. It seemed that, no matter where one turned, different accounts from different origins all seemed to know “for sure” that this was *the* authentic truth when it came to Judas. On one hand, you have the revolutionary zealot who believed Jesus came to deliver Judaea from the grip of the Romans, only to realize this mortal man was in fact, just that, mortal, and could never be that hero since all he preached were ways to free one’s self from riches and the shackles of sin.¹³⁹ From that point of view, the figure of Jesus, to Judas, was no longer useful and with the mentality of the times, tossing him aside in disappointment or anger would have been the literary way of understanding why the wayward apostle would have handed his mentor to the authorities. In Judas’s mind, according to the author’s conception of the events, he did the right

¹³⁶ Renger 2013: 2.

¹³⁷ Paffenroth 2001: 15.

¹³⁸ Pagels and King 2007: 3-5.

¹³⁹ Paffenroth 2001: 86-89.

thing because this man “Jesus” was a fraud, a failure, weak... evolving into other sorts of negative connotations.¹⁴⁰

In taking a more religious approach, Paul acknowledged that in “handing over” Jesus to his fate, God himself was responsible for the demise of Jesus.¹⁴¹ Adding the name Judas to the story afterwards only expands the positive aspect of that “necessary” act, that vital part to be played out in order for things to be accomplished as they were foretold in scripture or conceived in the mind of God.¹⁴² Further to that point, had Judas *not* carried out his actions, say because he had a sudden change of mind or conscious break, he may have betrayed God himself.¹⁴³ If God had intended for Judas to play his part while still letting him have free will, and Judas chose to “spare” Jesus, would that not count as betrayal? Taking the expression “handing over” as beneficial for an instant, Judas could have done so as part of God’s plan.¹⁴⁴ God, working through Jesus on one hand, delivered a gift to the world: salvation. On the other hand, He needed a catalyst, a chosen tool or pawn or instrument (minimizing the reductive nature of the human versus the divine) to carry out certain details on how this gift would be implemented. Judas delivered Jesus as a gift.¹⁴⁵

The theme of closeness between the two will be explored further later in this chapter but in this version of the story, this lone soul, Judas Iscariot was given the possible identity of a vital means to a salvific end. Instead, the canonical gospels, whose stories differ from one another, would rather depict Judas as the representative of eternal darkness and irreparable damnation.¹⁴⁶ Since Paul did not single out Judas specifically, he did write several passages indicating that Jesus was

¹⁴⁰ Renger 2013: 13.

¹⁴¹ Paffenroth 2001: 1-2.

¹⁴² Laeuchli 1953: 260-261.

¹⁴³ Renger 2013: 5.

¹⁴⁴ Kasser, Meyer, Wurst 2006: 109-10.

¹⁴⁵ Dauzat 2006: 38.

¹⁴⁶ Renger 2013: 6.

handed over to his fate.¹⁴⁷ Afterwards, Mark though remaining somewhat neutral, neither good nor bad, inserted Judas in the story but with no definitive motive as to why.¹⁴⁸ Matthew followed by adding greed and the 30 silver pieces while also stating that Judas felt remorse and repented for his actions by committing suicide, which in ancient times (prior to St. Augustine) did not bear the damning consequence it carries in today's Christianity.¹⁴⁹

Luke and John went even further in their attempts to give Judas a valid identity. If one of the Twelve was to be the representation of evil, changing "handing over" to "betray" was a start. By worsening the fate and actions of Judas, the two gospel authors cleared out some ambiguity and presented an official villain to the story. If Jesus was the beacon of hope and a herald of light, Judas was his counterpart.¹⁵⁰ If in some versions, Judas was the co-instrument of God alongside Jesus, a mortal participant in a mission for redemption, the introduction of Satan in Luke and John's versions was the flipside. It reminded the early Christians that Judas was the culprit, a villain and a vessel of evil because his heart was dark and lost to the light of God.¹⁵¹ Since neither God nor his opposer, the Devil were tangible, visible creatures, having a mortal man play out his role in the story would have made it more believable, more real.

Ultimately, everything surrounding Judas Iscariot should be considered a worthy challenge to all writers, whether historic or fictional, because no one knows for sure. As troubling as that appears to be, it is also exciting and mysterious. So many have desired to paint Judas in a certain way to give him a definite identity and coincidentally, to validate their own point of views on the matter.¹⁵² The truth is, humanity doesn't quite have all the answers when it comes to its own

¹⁴⁷ Meyer 2006: 31.

¹⁴⁸ Paffenroth 2001: 7.

¹⁴⁹ Saari 2006: 16, 66-67.

¹⁵⁰ Oropeza 2010: 353-4.

¹⁵¹ Meyer 2006: 39-40.

definite identity or origin and Judas Iscariot is a powerful reminder of our own struggles, our own good and bad nature. He is above all other things: one of us.

2.2. The Gnostic Side of Things

As is well documented, Christianity did not originally have a fixed set of rules and guidelines in the early centuries, which gave rise to large amounts of groups, sects and communities all seeking to know and spread their version of the truth.¹⁵³ As the canon took shape and expanded, another tale was spun out of the old Judaic texts of the Torah.¹⁵⁴ A story woven to cast aside the seemingly angry and vengeful Jewish God. To the Gnostics, knowledge and wisdom would be of superior importance while the laws that govern humankind were but a means by which a false divine power or “Demiurge” could enslave the world.¹⁵⁵ They viewed themselves as carriers of a special spark which lay dormant within most humans who could only be awoken through heavenly wisdom.

Looking at it from a bird’s eye view, it could seem quite clear how the Gnostics could gain strength in favour of the old Jewish tales. But were they voicing a different perspective when it came to the nature of things like the cosmos, wisdom, heavenly emissaries, and others? Or was it simply a creative case of breathing some new life or “spark”, to put it adequately, to the strict tales of the Midrash and the Torah? The arrival of Jesus of Nazareth changed the course of history as he preached a new way of living which also took its base from the Jewish scriptures. Conveniently, the Gnostics found in Jesus the living embodiment of their beliefs.¹⁵⁶

Later on Christians, like the Gnostics, adopted much of what they discovered in Judaism i.e. the essential myth of creation, a divine power overseeing the world, but their truth differed

¹⁵³ Ehrman 1993: 35-6.

¹⁵⁴ Pearson 2006: 129.

¹⁵⁵ Dunderberg 2015: 79.

¹⁵⁶ Pearson 2006: 9.

very much from that of their peers and, as Christianity diversified, the Gnostics somehow just melded themselves, hence the term “Gnostic Christians”.¹⁵⁷ The two fledgling movements may have seemed simple to grasp but they were both complex and contained several similarities with paganism, its rituals and myths.¹⁵⁸ The central authority was God. He spoke commandments, unleashed punishments to the sullied and unworthy and would eventually send a messiah to deliver the world from the torments of darkness. That much is clear and all three beliefs whether it be Jewish, Christian or Gnostic had these factors in common.¹⁵⁹ The figure of Jesus was where a problem found root. To the Jews, he was an acclaimed prophet who wore out his welcome when he dared to speak a truth they were not ready for or willing to accept. To the Christians, he was the realization of the Jewish prophesized deliverer. He came and delivered a message of peace and reform but also, by his condemnation, death, and subsequent resurrection, he was able to become a symbol of new life and redemption. However, to the Gnostics, both other camps were in complete error.¹⁶⁰ To them, no true benevolent God would ask for a sacrifice, only a connivingly wicked one would. The God of the Hebrews was a liar. This Jesus who came and spoke of a kingdom within, he was sent by Love itself, the One, the Great God from beyond.¹⁶¹ The messiah’s gift was knowledge and wisdom without a price in order to awaken the true elect, those that carried a hidden spark, which once revealed, would expose the awful truth about this material prison (the world). The old tales of Abraham, Noah, Moses, though containing merit and wisdom in their own right, were rigged with anger, death and fear. The same applied to Christianity.¹⁶² To the Gnostics, Jesus was the way but not by the means proclaimed by its followers. A suffering passion? Death by

¹⁵⁷ Pearson 2006: 134.

¹⁵⁸ Renger 2006: 8-9.

¹⁵⁹ Gathercole 2007: 158-9.

¹⁶⁰ Ehrman 2006: 371.

¹⁶¹ Ehrman 2006: 373.

¹⁶² Dunderberg 2015: 90.

Crucifixion? Final Judgement? All these were matters of the flesh, also quite parallel to the death and fear themes invoked by the Jews.¹⁶³ The way of Jesus was beyond the flesh, beyond the confines of the mortal world. Where Jews and Christians called out to a heavenly king sitting on a throne of glory, the Gnostics declared themselves kingless, free from rulership and dominance.¹⁶⁴ Only those who possessed true wisdom, gnosis, could become that elect, special generation.¹⁶⁵ Enter Judas Iscariot.

Where did this mysterious and controversial figure fit in the belief system of the three movements? Recalling the aforementioned argument of a need to give him an identity, Judas was a sort of malleable character that would prove essential in defending a group's view on the grand design of the universe. To the Gnostics, Judas was part of the solution. He would help foil the Demiurge's plan and as the verb *paradidomi* was used to mean "betrayal" and "handing over" for some, it can also mean "to commend", "to allow", in which case Judas is a gift-giving, vital component for Jesus's message to break through.¹⁶⁶ To Christians, the reviled apostle became the anti-hero of Gnosticism to the point where he figured in the literary compositions of groups (invented or real) such as Cainites, Valentinians and Sethians.¹⁶⁷ Even the kiss associated with Judas can be seen as a gift. Jesus was delivered to his mission with admiration and to the entire world, meant to be and necessary.¹⁶⁸

The Gnostics were opposed to how apostolic Christians venerated the death and resurrection of Jesus. It was wrong. Death and suffering were not what mattered.¹⁶⁹ In the celebration of the Eucharist, the Gnostic viewed a sacrifice to the false god, the other eleven

¹⁶³ Pearson 2001: 129.

¹⁶⁴ Gathercole 2007: 103.

¹⁶⁵ Kasser, Meyer, Wurst 2006: 84-5.

¹⁶⁶ Klassen 1996: 47.

¹⁶⁷ Kasser, Meyer, Wurst 2006: 89.

¹⁶⁸ Cane 2005: 43.

¹⁶⁹ Ehrman 2006: 57.

(twelve with Matthias) spread the incorrect message. This was the imperfect material world, the rebirth of the flesh was of no consequence.¹⁷⁰ Only through the secret teachings Jesus taught was the way opened for those with a clear vision, to go beyond the flesh and the physical world. Gnosticism came to be a thorn in the side of the growing apostolic Orthodoxy. To those proto-Orthodox Christians, the Gnostics were simply a group of misinformed fanatics bent on confusing the faithful by deliberately appropriating material from the canon and reversing its blessed message into heresy.¹⁷¹

The place of Judas confounded the various adherents. His lack of identity allowed for him to assume many different mantles. Friend or foe, he remained attractive to scholars and intellectuals, whether they be Gnostic, Christian or Jewish.¹⁷² Just as Christians expanded on Judaism into its own faith, Gnosticism adopted features from Christianity, which to them filled some gaps within the apostolic core. Judas was one of those features.¹⁷³ For example, some passages from the *Testimony of Truth*, a text found in Codex IX of the Nag-Hammadi library, though difficult to grasp in their entirety, could have been used to associate Judas as a positive addition to the Gnostic side while remaining detrimental to the proto-Orthodox Christians.¹⁷⁴

“The foolish, thinking in their heart that if they confess ‘We are Christians’, in word only but not with power, while giving themselves over to a human death, not knowing where they are going or who Christ is, thinking that they will live while they are really in error, hasten toward the principalities and the authorities.” (*NHC IX, 31: 22-34. 26*)

“But when they are ‘perfected’ with a (martyr's) death, this is the thought that they have within them: ‘If we deliver ourselves over to death for the sake of the Name we will be saved.’ These matters are not settled in this way. But through the agency of the wandering stars they say they have ‘completed’ their futile ‘course’, and [...] say, [...]. But these [...] they have delivered themselves ...” (*NHC IX, 31: 22-34. 26*)

¹⁷⁰ Gathercole 2007: 82.

¹⁷¹ Ehrman 1993: 50-53.

¹⁷² Paffenroth 2001: 14-5.

¹⁷³ Ibid: 64-5.

¹⁷⁴ Dauzat 2006: 317.

“No one knows the God of Truth except solely the man who will forsake all of the things of the world, having renounced the whole place, (and) having grasped the fringe of his garment.” (*NHC IX, 41: 4-44. 30*)

“This, therefore, is the true testimony. When man comes to know himself and God who is over the truth, he will be saved, and he will be crowned with the crown unfading.” (*NHC IX, 44: 30-45. 6*)

These passages do not implicate Judas Iscariot directly, but instead indicate how Gnostics viewed the apostolic path as erroneous.

The author of the *Gospel of Judas*, which will be explored in chapter three, fashioned a story in which all these passages resonate. In short, he discussed how Judas saw Jesus for who he truly was, did not participate in the warped celebrations of his brethren and was chosen to receive teachings and revelations exclusively by Jesus. Then, he set him free, “delivered” him in order to transcend the limitations of the flesh.¹⁷⁵ The first two passages above seemed to be relegated to the apostles and those like them, lost in the folly of their sacrificial ways. The last two could have simultaneously represented Jesus and Judas as men who knew, men with vision. It is not surprising then, how mainstream Christianity later declared Gnosticism as heretical and sought to destroy the writings it produced.¹⁷⁶ To mainstream Christianity Judas was a villain and he betrayed his master for money, while Jesus was the Saviour because he died to absolve all humankind from sin. His resurrection meant that he had conquered Death itself, promulgating a new path in which many died in order to efficiently spread. After some time, men in power adopted this way of life and Orthodoxy was formed out of its flexible origins.¹⁷⁷

As Christianity expanded, stories were either rewritten or exaggerated. Judas Iscariot went from non-existence to scion of the Devil while the other apostles, with Simon Peter chief among

¹⁷⁵ Williams 2008: 392.

¹⁷⁶ Williams 2008: 400-2.

¹⁷⁷ Ehrman 2006: 191-2.

them, rose to sainthood.¹⁷⁸ Jesus the Logos became Jesus the Martyr, as a result early apostolic Christians followed in his footsteps. With the right people in the right places, Christianity overwhelmed both Judaism and Gnosticism.¹⁷⁹ Their interpretation of text and tradition became the absolute. It slowly became a religion brought forth by men, for men while gradually casting aside the role of women in the narrative. Certain elements and ambiguous characters were given a villainous or scandalous role in order to validate certain views and people.¹⁸⁰

2.3. The Logos, The Rock, The Whore and The Betrayer

The story of Judas Iscariot became one linked with betrayal, greed and sacrifice. Instead of exploring the many possibilities coming out of the “mystery of the betrayal” proto-orthodox Christians labeled the apostle as a villain who carelessly turned on his master, his friends and all the good work they had done.¹⁸¹ In contrast, as already witnessed in the writing of Paul and Mark, they elected another one as the natural leader of the group: the fisherman Simon, later known as Peter. What can be said about this man? He was a fisherman from Galilee, his brother was named Andrew, Jesus dubbed him Peter in reference to *petros* (*kephas* in Aramaic), the Greek word for rock which symbolically meant he would be the rock on which the future Church would be built on.¹⁸² Despite that honour, there have been many other attributes bestowed upon Peter in ancient Christian texts. In fact, authors from a wide range of places and backgrounds took it upon themselves to give their version of what happened among Jesus’s inner circle. Again with the flexible nature of the early Christian movement, various depictions of Simon Peter saw the light of day, which would strengthen the views of counter-canonical parties or even defend Judas

¹⁷⁸ Dunderberg 2015:95.

¹⁷⁹ Ehrman 2006: 230.

¹⁸⁰ Ehrman 2006: 252.

¹⁸¹ Meyer 2007: 45.

¹⁸² Ehrman 2006: 15.

himself.¹⁸³ In an attempt to demonstrate this, the insertion and examination of a very special character must proceed in order to understand. Her name was Mary Magdalene.

Only thirteen times did this woman, Mary Magdalene or Myriam of Magdala, appear across the entire New Testament.¹⁸⁴ Each time, her role served a purpose whether it be to demonstrate the power Jesus had over sin (the concept of) or to simply present her as the sole member of Jesus's circle not to cower in fear over his death. In fact, across all four canonical gospels, she appears as one of the few (if not the first) to witness the resurrection of the master on that faithful Sunday.¹⁸⁵ But why this person instead of another? Who was this woman who, according to Luke 8:1-3, was plagued with the presence of seven demons and accused of adultery? Could have she been so special that her very presence, like that of Judas and the mystery of his actions, was so threatening that it would eventually lead the head of the orthodox Church, Pope Gregory I the Great to declare her to be a reformed prostitute in 591?¹⁸⁶ Because of the following passage, the image of this initially brave woman was tarnished by the projections and assumptions of one man who was said to have been the spiritual heir to Peter himself:

“She whom Luke calls the sinful woman, whom John calls Mary, we believe to be the Mary from whom seven devils were ejected according to Mark (16:9). And what did these seven devils signify, if not all the vices? . . . It is clear, brothers, that the woman previously used the unguent to perfume her flesh in forbidden acts. What she therefore displayed more scandalously, she was now offering to God in a more praiseworthy manner. She had coveted with earthly eyes, but now through penitence these are consumed with tears. She displayed her hair to set off her face, but now her hair dries her tears. She had spoken proud things with her mouth, but in kissing the Lord's feet, she now planted her mouth on the Redeemer's feet. For every delight, therefore, she had had in herself, she now immolated herself. She turned the mass of her crimes to virtues, in order to serve God entirely in penance, for as much as she had wrongly held God in contempt” – Pope Gregory I, *Homily 33*

¹⁸³ Pearson 2006: 98.

¹⁸⁴ Ehrman 2006: 185.

¹⁸⁵ King 2003: 88.

¹⁸⁶ King 2003: 151.

What could possess a man of so high a ranking to suddenly declare such a thing that would follow this woman across the ages? The novelty of Christianity, whether orthodox or gnostic was that it was available to anyone, rich or poor, Jewish or Gentile and most importantly, to men and women.¹⁸⁷ In the early stages of Christianity, women appeared all across the tales of Jesus's journey, from the virgin birth to the resurrection. Characters such as Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, and Mary of Bethany joined Mary the mother as part of a group of women associated with the wondrous mission of Jesus Christ.¹⁸⁸ Mary Magdalene may have been even more important because she could have very well been closely tied to the man Jesus and not in the manner necessarily discussed in fictitious novels such as *Da Vinci Code* but more so as a spiritual equal or counterpart.¹⁸⁹ Much has been debated over whether Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married or not but in the end, whether or not they were married has no importance to the grand story of redemption.¹⁹⁰ Why is she made out to be such a scandalous character and why are men so threatened by her? The answers may have been hidden in the sands of Egypt for centuries within the pages of the Gospel of Mary. By exploring some features and details contained inside this ancient text, it will be possible to make some noteworthy parallels between Mary Magdalene and Judas Iscariot while contrasting them to Peter, thus perhaps better understanding the conflict that pitted orthodoxy to Gnosticism in the early centuries.¹⁹¹

“To Those Who have Ears Let Them Hear.”

So was written one of the first lessons contained within the pages of the Gospel of Mary¹⁹². It would be important to take note that going further in this chapter, Jesus will be referred to as *Logos*,

¹⁸⁷ Ehrman 2006: 59.

¹⁸⁸ Tervahauta 2017: 159.

¹⁸⁹ Haag 2016: 445

¹⁹⁰ King 2003: 153.

¹⁹¹ Ehrman 2006: 239-40.

¹⁹² Parkhouse 2019: 246

the Word because it was through knowledge and wisdom that Gnostics believed salvation would come.¹⁹³ Like Judas, Mary Magdalene was given an identity to cure some ambiguities surrounding her life and character as alluded to in Pope Gregory's declaration. She was turned into a sinful woman, a possessed woman and a prostitute in order to bridge together conflicting stories. She was made out to be an image of sexuality and a representation of lust while Judas was turned into a symbol of greed and betrayal.¹⁹⁴ Interpreting the character of Mary Magdalene from the perspective of the Gospel of Mary reveals quite a different, more positive face. Mary Magdalene is shown throughout its pages as prepared, gentle and as a person who, through some introspection, has proven her ability to transform and adapt, to be sensitive and feeling.¹⁹⁵

Chapter three will explore how a literary Judas similarly demonstrated that he was curious by nature, smart and intuitive.¹⁹⁶ Like with Mary, the Logos saw this in Judas and knew that he understood better than the other disciples.¹⁹⁷ Both Judas and Mary Magdalene have a special role to play in this narrative, since both understood the nature of who Jesus the Logos was.¹⁹⁸ They were of mind to better understand the nature of his teachings while the others, Peter the Rock foremost among them, failed to grasp the simplicity of the mission.¹⁹⁹ In fact, they were so confused that toward both Mary and Judas, the apostles express anger and extreme condescendence.²⁰⁰ It is important to note how in canonical, apocryphal and gnostic literature, Peter also carried with him certain labels that he couldn't escape: angry, arrogant, impetuous, skeptical, stubborn and worst of all, misogynistic.²⁰¹ Not so remarkable if one believed this man

¹⁹³ Petersen 2017: 190.

¹⁹⁴ King 2003: 146.

¹⁹⁵ Haag 2016: 89.

¹⁹⁶ Krosney 2006: 277-8.

¹⁹⁷ Krosney 2006: 287.

¹⁹⁸ Ehrman 2006: 90.

¹⁹⁹ Ehrman 2006: 243.

²⁰⁰ King 2003: 84.

²⁰¹ Miroshnikov 2017: 180.

to be the rock on which a Church was to be built. Still, despite these negative connotations and subsequent other ones, denial and all, Peter was written as a steadfast follower of Jesus and died like his master on a cross. Martyrdom however was not what the Logos preached about.²⁰²

Through the pages of the Gospel of Mary, this sort of fate would ultimately result in ignorance, a sickness leading only to suffering.²⁰³ In Mary, the Logos came to help humanity see clearly, to sow in it the seed of knowledge and remind his followers that the saviour (or salvation for that matter) is within them, not elsewhere.²⁰⁴ Chapter three will explore how Judas appears to be an intimate companion of the Logos, sharing a unique bond with the master which allows him to receive divine wisdom.²⁰⁵ In creating similarities between Mary and Judas, orthodoxy could have simultaneously dealt with both characters negatively in favour of Peter whom it had chosen as the leading representative of its Church. Examples of similarities are as follows:

- Mary Magdalene and Judas both have been portrayed as people with red hair.²⁰⁶
- Both appear scarcely in the four canonical gospels (Mary thirteen times, Judas sixteen times).²⁰⁷
- With both Mary Magdalene (ἀμαρτωλός) and Judas (παραδίδωμι) one word was used to represent them which was taken out of context.²⁰⁸
- Both would be scorned and have their image tarnished over the years.
- Judas as the betrayer and Mary Magdalene as the whore are synonymous with evil or the Devil.²⁰⁹

²⁰² King 2003: 166.

²⁰³ Parkhouse 2019: 246.

²⁰⁴ Ehrman 2006: 241.

²⁰⁵ Krosney, Meyer, Wurst 2011: 287.

²⁰⁶ Leloup 2002: XV.

²⁰⁷ Dauzat 2006: 29.

²⁰⁸ Leloup 2002: XVI-XVII.

²⁰⁹ Renger 2013: 11.

It would be wise to remember that many of the truths people held on to depended greatly on their own point of views. To the writers of the canonical gospels, Peter was the elect, while in the Gospel written in her name, Mary Magdalene was the chosen one, even as far as being his divine counterpart: Sophia (Wisdom) to the Logos (Word) such as with the Gospel of Philip.²¹⁰ Judas, in turn, was the one to rise above the other twelve, the star beyond, the Thirteenth Aeon, which will be further explained in chapter three.²¹¹ Because of their special yet mysterious roles, they would both be branded with negative labels and even hated in the case of Judas. Since the early stages of Christian evolution were malleable and flexible, the Church opted to downplay Mary because she was a woman and destroy Judas because his act led to the death of Jesus.²¹² In doing so early Church fathers may have dismissed them in favour of Peter, but they failed to realize that without either Judas or Mary, there was no Christianity at all. No Judas meant no passion, no death on the cross.²¹³ No Mary meant no witness to the resurrection and with no witness meant that the story died with Jesus because until she was able to make them see, the remaining apostles cowered away in fear.²¹⁴ To make matters worse, Peter and his companions did not even believe Mary when she attempted to reveal what she saw. The Gospel of Mary gave a detailed account on how Peter and his brother Andrew reacted to the news. At first they feigned interest, and asked Mary what it was that the Logos taught her:

Peter said to Mary: “Sister, we know that the teacher loved you differently from other women. Tell us whatever you remember of any words he told you which we have not yet heard.” (*Mary 10: 1-6*)

Mary said to them: “I will now speak to you of that which has not been given to you to hear.” (*Mary 10: 8-9*)

²¹⁰ King 2003: 145.

²¹¹ King and Pagels 2007: 133.

²¹² Tervahauta 2017: 169.

²¹³ Paffenroth 2007: 135-6.

²¹⁴ Lehtipuu and Dunderberg 2017: 10-11.

Once she revealed her vision, Andrew stepped in and voiced his discontent followed by Peter, whose misogyny and condescendence are finally unveiled:

Then Andrew began to speak, and said to his brothers: “Tell me, what do you think of these things she has been telling us? As for me, I do not believe that the teacher would speak like this. These ideas are too different from those we have known.”
(*Mary 17: 9-13*)

And Peter added: “How is this possible that the teacher talked in this manner with a woman about secrets of which we ourselves are ignorant? Must we change our customs and listen to this woman? Did he really choose her, and prefer her to us?”
(*Mary 17: 14-20*)

In feeling themselves excluded from secret wisdom, Peter and Andrew discriminated against Mary Magdalene, and their failure to ponder what they had been told was further proof of their ignorance, which was the reason they had been left out of the teachings in the first place. Their jealousy was inserted within the circle of disciples thus causing seeds of animosity and discord to grow.²¹⁵ Instead of appearing as a universally unifying force, Peter acted more as an adversary and was his own worst enemy. The proverbial Rock was throwing stones at someone who did him no harm, who was simply sharing what she had learned with her brothers.²¹⁶

In her defence, another disciple, Levi, rose up and protested against the harsh treatment of Mary, reminding all the males that it was the master who had delivered such teachings to her because she had demonstrated her capacity to grasp the magnitude of what it was to truly see.²¹⁷ As Levi put it bluntly, who were they to question the Logos on who was worthy? Peter most definitely had failed in acting as any sort of leader. Jesus did not love him any less than Mary, or Judas for that matter, but only differently.²¹⁸ A passage (Mt 21:31) is clearly illustrated here: “last

²¹⁵ King 2003: 86.

²¹⁶ King 2003: 144.

²¹⁷ Ehrman 2006: 243.

²¹⁸ Ehrman 2006: 249.

shall be first...the tax-collectors and prostitutes will enter the kingdom before you”, this perhaps foreshadowing Mary’s eventual sexual portrayal. The Logos was an abundant source of knowledge, like a well open for those who thirsted for more. Those who did not see were doomed to remain in darkness, oblivious to the light that was right in front of them.

Further to this, another text seemed to expand on the idea that Mary Magdalene, and conveniently Judas Iscariot as well, were the ones selected by the Logos. This *Dialogue of the Saviour* came about upon the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library in 1945, its pages containing discussions pertaining to various topics such as life, death and the nature of the elements.²¹⁹ What is significant to note in this case is how ignorance is detrimental to one’s growth, not to mention that in passing through darkness in order to understand one’s self, the light can again be reached. Judas and Mary Magdalene were accused with all sorts of things, from betrayal to perversion but their understanding and subsequent actions ultimately proved to be essential.²²⁰

“Whoever does not know the work of perfection does not know anything. One who does not stand in the darkness cannot see the light. One who does not understand how fire came to be will burn in it, not knowing its origin. One who does not first understand water knows nothing. For what use is there for such a person to be baptized in it? One who does not understand how the wind that blows came to be will blow away with it. One who does not understand how the body that a person wears came to be will perish with it. How will someone who does not know the Son know the Father? All things are hidden from one who does not know the root of all things. Whoever does not know the root of wickedness is no stranger to it. Those who do not understand how they came will not understand how they will go, and they are no strangers to this world, which will exalt itself and be humbled.”
(*Dialogue of the Saviour* 133: 21-134)

Based on this series of sayings, the imperfections Judas and Mary Magdalene are accused of instead reveal them to be very special characters.²²¹ It seemed quite evident that this literary Peter hated Judas and Mary, whether profoundly or not is up to debate, but as a consequence to that,

²¹⁹ Meyer 2007: 67.

²²⁰ Meyer 2007: 77-8.

²²¹ Scorpello and Meyer 2007: 740-1.

orthodoxy was elevated as his legacy.²²² Its effects would imprint on others who had a fixed image in their mind of who Judas and Mary were. Epiphanius was one example. He had even claimed that every heresy was a worthless woman.²²³ Augustine of Hippo claimed that because of his decision to commit suicide rather than appealing to God for mercy, Judas was beyond saving.²²⁴ There lay a part of the conflict: salvation by revelation versus salvation by resurrection. The proto-orthodox way grasped only a part of the truth but somehow at the expense of the whole.²²⁵ Whatever men didn't understand was quickly swept under the rug.²²⁶ Women holding positions of leadership? Absurd! They should remain silent and in the back, not to be interfering in the works of the apostles. This forgery²²⁷ was written in Paul's name:

“Let a woman learn in silence in all submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man but she is to be silent. For Adam was created first and then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and so committed a transgression. But she will be saved through bearing children, if they remain in faith and love and holiness with modesty” – *1 Tim. 2:11–15*

If the authors of later Christian writings could apply this and recategorize Mary Magdalene as a reformed whore instead of a leader, the same treatment could have been extended to Judas to “demonize” him and sweep away the importance of the “mystery of the betrayal.”²²⁸ Jealousy from within the inner circle over their special status would evolve into their casting out. Judas handed over his master for the good of humanity, Mary Magdalene saw Jesus for who he was because she *was* good. Peter denied the Logos because he was human but even he was able to learn. Why treat Judas and Mary any differently?

²²² Stanford 2015: 153.

²²³ Petersen 2017: 199-200.

²²⁴ Saari 2006: 124.

²²⁵ Ehrman 2006: 245.

²²⁶ Tervahauta 2017: 170.

²²⁷ Ehrman 2006: 210.

²²⁸ Klassen 1996: 139-141.

Evidently there were others who recognized their worth: Levi (for Mary Magdalene) and Matthew... the tax collector (for Judas). They spoke on their behalf because they were witnesses to the events or somewhat present when all these stories unfolded.²²⁹ Ambiguity, interest and controversy remain attached to Judas and Mary Magdalene to this day. The Vatican has recanted its stance on Mary's depiction as a prostitute in 1969 but the image lingers on.²³⁰ The same cannot be said for Judas Iscariot at present time. From the instant he entered the narrative, humanity has labeled him the villain and as a result of its ignorance, many injustices and atrocities would be committed.²³¹

2.4. Judas and the Jews: Red with Filth

“We should especially remember the words the Lord Jesus spoke when teaching about gentleness and patience. For he said: ‘Show mercy, that you may be shown mercy; forgive, that it may be forgiven you. As you do, so it will be done to you; as you give, so it will be given to you; as you judge, so you will be judged; as you show kindness, so will kindness be shown to you; the amount you dispense will be the amount you receive’” – *1 Clem. 13:1-2*

It is said that when you point a finger, there are three fingers pointing back at you. So often over the course of human history have generalizations been the source of conflicts that resulted in suffering and death. A prime example of this would be the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Middle-East. Each side accusing the other of injustices and crimes which in truth, most do not even remember the real reasons behind the senseless strife. The case of Judas Iscariot is a prime example of this. From the instant he enters the narrative, his persona has been labeled with all sorts of names and identities in order to serve a purpose: to remind Christians that *this* is what *not* to do.²³² Pushing the envelope further, as the canonical gospel story evolved, Judas became more and

²²⁹ Brown 2007: 51.

²³⁰ Haag 2016: 10

²³¹ Paffenroth 2007: 95.

²³² Gathercole 2007: 138.

more an object of malice and the human face of evil. Even more than Satan himself. According to the writings of John, as we saw in Chapter 1 here, Judas was the worst of the worst. As a result, the redeeming message of orthodox Christianity was stained with a touch of human bitterness that was carried into Europe, empires and colonies, and soon enough the rest of the world.²³³ Even Fathers of the Church weren't immune.

Hence...

“Hear, ye covetous, consider what befell him; how he at the same time lost the money, and committed the sin, and destroyed his own soul. Such is the tyranny of covetousness. He enjoyed not the money, neither the present life, nor that to come, but lost all at once, and having got a bad character even with those very men, so hanged himself” – John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 85.2

“What else do you wish me to tell you? Shall I tell you about their plundering, their covetousness, their abandonment of the poor, their thefts, their cheating in trade? The whole day long will not be enough to give you an account of these things... Listen to the prophets; rather, listen to God and with how strong a statement He turns His back on them... For I am persuaded to call the fasting of the Jews a table of demons because they slew God” – John Chrysostom, *Homilies against the Jews* 1.7.1-5

“It had been good for that man if he had not been born. We may with propriety apply this same to the Jews likewise; for if he who was guide suffered thus, much more they... This desolation was the prelude to that of the Jews... For indeed they destroyed themselves by famine, and killed many...” – John Chrysostom, *Homily on the Acts of the Apostles* 3

These passages reflect on the nature of the act committed by Judas, which later evolved into a deep resentment, if not hatred upon the Jewish people as a whole.²³⁴ At the root of this was the guilt placed upon Jews for their participation in the events leading to the trial and execution of Jesus, the prophet whom Christians believed was the Messiah sent by God to deliver the world.²³⁵

²³³ Paffenroth 2007: 56-7.

²³⁴ Ehrman 2016: 60-1.

²³⁵ Trompf 2010: 556.

Although the Jews were in fact awaiting the arrival of such a saviour, their vision of what he would be greatly differed from what Christians believed.

Instead of a glorious warrior prince brandishing a fiery blade of righteousness to smite the oppressors, Jesus came as a modestly clad man preaching about love and forgiveness. At first glance it is no wonder some Jews may have been thinking: “Who is this charlatan?” However, it is in human nature to fear what is not understood. Passing judgement and making assumptions was and still is an international pastime which unfortunately yields disastrous results.²³⁶ Guilt by association was a great commodity used by the early Church fathers who felt inspired by the writings of Luke and John.

Early Christians drew a proverbial line in the sand in order to separate them from Judaism and its “chosen” people.²³⁷ In their mind, they simply couldn’t understand why *those* people would not see Jesus for who he professed to be: the Saviour everyone had been waiting for. To early Christians, the Jews must have been swayed by evil forces because they were evil themselves.²³⁸ Nothing was left unused in order to promote this view on God’s original chosen people, not even colours of the rainbow. Red, yellow, green, blue... there was always some way to depict a Jew using colours to make a statement or point. Yellow is for jealousy, treachery, green for envy and greed.²³⁹ In order to further add to his identity such as in the canonical gospels, Judas became the carrier of the disciple’s purse, holding it tightly and accused of stealing from it by the others. It is easy to see how Jews as a group were associated with negative connotations, in both the Old and New Testaments: there are several examples of brothers vying for each other’s possessions, kings envying and longing for women who were not theirs to marry and later on, the motivation of

²³⁶ Gregerman 2012: 51.

²³⁷ Gregerman 2012: 49.

²³⁸ Ehrman 2016: 207.

²³⁹ Paffenroth 2001: 51.

Judas's betrayal as solely for greed.²⁴⁰ In the words of Pierre-Emmanuel Dauzat, Judas the Judaeen was the incarnation of the Jewish people.²⁴¹ Supreme among the representations of Judas was undeniably the colour red. This aversion stemmed all the way back to Antiquity as people sporting red hair with pale white skin were labeled as out of the norm. At quick glance, what comes to mind when thinking about the colour red? Barbarians, savages, foxes, the Devil, seduction, lust, prostitutes, Norse gods, Roman gods like Mars which conveniently ended up being given to the planet of the same name. Judas was given red hair because he was mischievous, wily like a fox, untrustworthy.²⁴² His death came off as violent (against himself), brutal (according to Papias) and he would be tormented for all eternity in the burning fires and brimstone of a special Hell, under the watchful gaze of Satan, the Devil, who was himself depicted under the colours red and/or blue in medieval times much later.²⁴³

Judas seemed like the perfect candidate to be selected as the hand of the Devil, from his physical appearance, his name and evidently his actions in the Christian narrative. Not only was he a Jew, but also a close disciple of Jesus, with whom he shared meals and traveled, as easy as that, taking down two birds with one stone.²⁴⁴ As for the name Judas and its association with *Iscariot*, what has baffled scholars for centuries was the fact that not one definite answer could be found on where it came from or what it truly refers to. It is very possible to surmise that in order to separate this particular Judas from the others (Judas Thomas, Judah, Judea etc.) the surname *Iscariot* was promptly given to him.²⁴⁵ Furthermore, there is no evidence that anyone of note or

²⁴⁰ Ehrman and Pleše 2011: 882.

²⁴¹ Dauzat 2006: 19.

²⁴² Paffenroth 2001: 51.

²⁴³ Ehrman and Pleše 2011: 834.

²⁴⁴ Ehrman and Pleše 2011: 972.

²⁴⁵ Taylor 2010: 379.

renown in modern times has since named their offspring Judas. It is clear that carrying such a given name would result in general disgust, distrust and scorn, in Christian communities at the very least.

It is easier to hate than to love. In blaming Judas, and subsequently the Jews as a whole, ancient Christians would have the inspiration necessary to expand their legendarium.²⁴⁶ The Judas character (or concept) would ultimately end up being detrimental to Christianity because it exposed its apparent hypocrisy; to be based on love and forgiveness, not hatred and generalization. It is important to remember that without Judas there was no passion and thus, no salvation but that did not stop the movement to pass judgment on the whole Hebraic population, later declaring that they were all Judases for having killed Christ.²⁴⁷ Being instruments fueled by the power of darkness, Jews and their figurehead Judas were thus not worthy of mercy or compassion.²⁴⁸ As extreme as this claim may be, historical facts have since proven that several injustices were committed. A vicious cycle was in place: the Jews were Judases and Judas was a Jew.

“His blood be upon us and our children” – *Mt. 21:25*

So it came to pass that this very line would appear to be prophetic and would result in the most atrocious acts committed by a human against another: genocide. Hatred is hatred, religious antisemitism would later evolve into racial antisemitism.²⁴⁹ It is as though the world itself would never release them from culpability. In the vernacular, the world was not done with them and there was a bitter need to make Judas and his “Jewry” pay. Unfortunately for Judas, since he could very well have been a pivotal instrument for salvation, he may have lost his own to help save humankind.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Dauzat 2006: 86-87.

²⁴⁷ Trompf 2010: 578.

²⁴⁸ Ehrman and Pleše 2011: 976.

²⁴⁹ Dauzat 2006: 225-6.

²⁵⁰ Dauzat 2006: 161.

The twentieth century of the common era, while being one of advanced scientific and medical discoveries was also the bloodiest and most fearsome one hundred years in human history. In this century, human arrogance and anger gave rise to powerful figures determined to conquer the world by first indoctrinating then enslaving countless millions. Those who were cast in the light of the damned and evil were doomed to be vilified and condemned. As Judas's reputation continued to deteriorate over the course of the millennia, so did that of the Jews.²⁵¹ As a whole he and his kind were labeled, by anti-Semites, as traitors and infidels, murderers, greedy cheaters who would do anything for money while wearing yellow clothes, sporting red hair and crooked noses.²⁵² These children of the Devil were but dogs and their hero Judas was nothing more than a sexual pervert, a traitor to humanity. Their alleged love of money and innate avarice tied all Jews to Judas and the story of the betrayal became one forever linked to anti-Semitism.²⁵³ Tragically, the twentieth century became known as "the Century of Warfare" and even the "Century of Judas" because of certain cases such as the Dreyfus Affair, which saw a French Jewish officer being wrongfully accused of treason in favour of the rival German empire. This story exposed humanity's general hatred of Jews, and though it was later proven that there was no proof of any sort of foul play, Captain Dreyfus never socially recovered from this abuse.²⁵⁴ Furthermore, the hostilities between European nations led to World War I and out of the ashes of the old world soon came a time of fear and depression. As the world struggled to survive the crash of 1929, Adolf Hitler slowly rose to power in Germany. His quest was fuelled with anger over injustices committed against his people by enemies, prominent among them were the Jews. They were seen as wicked and corrupt, their money bought and paid for governments in order for their impurity to

²⁵¹ Renger 2013: 11.

²⁵² Meyer 2007: 109.

²⁵³ Dauzat 2006: 118.

²⁵⁴ Paffenroth 2001: 44-45.

slither in all facets of social and political life. In his mind they were all Judases, traitors and infidels who did not deserve to live side by side with the pure and elect Germans, good Christians with him at the very top as defender of the Lord against all darkness.²⁵⁵ Such profound hatred led to the advent of World War II and soon afterwards the desire to rid the continent of all Jewish population through the Holocaust. Jews were rounded up, branded and identified with the yellow star.²⁵⁶ Their properties, their very identities were robbed to the point of literal erasure from reality. Even a German citizen defending a Jew was called a “Judas”. There was no escaping this dark fate. Jews and Judas would have to pay the ultimate price and be destroyed.²⁵⁷ More than six million lives were lost in the Holocaust and about seventy-five million, if not more, perished in this conflict altogether. The madness of mankind knew no bounds. Did Judas really cause all this dread or did misplaced anger and erroneous judgment scapegoat one of the most faithful servants of God²⁵⁸?

2.5. The Evolution of Judas across the Centuries.

When considering the factors illustrated previously concerning Judas’s position as apostle and his participation in the narrative, the positive aspect of his actions cannot be denied and must be acknowledged. It was not an act of perdition but rather of loyalty.²⁵⁹ The red of Judas was one of love and passion for his Lord. It took great courage to do what he did. The yellow was for wisdom because he, like Mary Magdalene, was a noble soul who saw beyond physical limitations. Green represents the coming of spring, life and vigor, which in this case could have been associated with the refreshing message Jesus brought through his logos. It is a colour representing the Trinity and as convenience would have it, Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Judas form their own.²⁶⁰ While

²⁵⁵ Dauzat 2006: 239.

²⁵⁶ Paffenroth 2001: 95.

²⁵⁷ Dauzat 2006: 60.

²⁵⁸ Anspach 1999: 147-8.

²⁵⁹ Klassen 1996: 106.

²⁶⁰ Baum 1922: 524.

Satan became a blue devil in Medieval art and architecture, the colour blue was symbolic to truth and faith, which can also be attributed to Judas whose faith in Jesus's message led him to accept this mission disguised as a burden.²⁶¹ It was this sort of thought that led countless artists and writers over the centuries to ponder on the whole nature of the Christian narrative as well as the position of the Iscariot.

« Mon Dieu, Dieu de clémence et d'amour, s'il est vrai que tu aies reçu dans ta gloire le plus malheureux de tes disciples ; s'il est vrai, comme je l'espère et le veux croire, que Judas Iscariote est assis à ta droite, ordonne qu'il descende vers moi et qu'il m'annonce lui-même le chef-d'œuvre de ta miséricorde. Et toi qu'on maudit depuis dix-huit siècles et que je vénère parce que tu sembles avoir pris l'enfer pour toi seul afin de nous laisser le ciel, bouc émissaire des traîtres et des infâmes, Ô Judas, viens m'imposer les mains pour le sacerdoce de la miséricorde et de l'amour » – J. G. E. Oegger

From the first insertion of Judas into the narrative, this mysterious yet intriguing character has taken several bullets and carried them with him to this very day. In the thirteenth century, a work known as *Legenda Aurea* was written by Jacobus de Voragine.²⁶² This assortment of tales saw one particular part address the origins of Judas Iscariot as a man born to undesiring parents. Emulating from the mythological story of Oedipus and biblical verse of Moses, Judas is found by a princess and raised in the court of a king. The author evokes the themes of greed and betrayal as Judas killed a man and married a woman who would catastrophically be revealed as his parents. Later, while seeking redemption, he meets Jesus and joins his group as a disciple even becoming the favoured one only to betray him to the Jewish authorities for money. Seeing the nature of his acts as foul, Judas spirals into despair and ultimately takes his own life.²⁶³ Apocryphal works such as the *Gospel of Peter*²⁶⁴ and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*²⁶⁵ (*Acts of Pilate*) use the works of Matthew

²⁶¹ Brown 2007: 78.

²⁶² Ehrman 2006: 48-9.

²⁶³ Jacques de Voragine, *La Légende Dorée* 414-5.

²⁶⁴ Ehrman and Pleše 2011: 641.

²⁶⁵ Ehrman and Pleše 2011: 719.

as a catapult to vilify and condemn Judas (through the Jews), adding further to his identity. This brings back the aforementioned statement that Christians drew a line in the sand to separate themselves from Judaism.²⁶⁶ In Nazi Germany, Goebbels evoked Pilate as a human from a perfect race who washed his hands from the culpability of condemning Christ, instead shifting the blame of the Jews through Judas.²⁶⁷ He, like them, would become a victim of defamation and torment while seemingly being an instrument of compassion.²⁶⁸ Judas, despite his alleged (abundant) shortcomings never ceased to inspire those with a creative mind. More recently, poetry and song called on Judas for inspiration namely artists such as U2 and Lady Gaga.²⁶⁹ Pushing the envelope further, motion pictures attempted to capture the essence of Christianity while exploring some ideas that would cause quite a few controversies. Films such as *Jesus of Nazareth* by Franco Zeffirelli and *The Last Temptation of Christ* by Martin Scorsese shed light of a different Judas, one that is not to be confused with the evil character found within the canonical gospels. In both pictures Judas is a close member of Jesus's circle but as the former sees a zealous Iscariot desiring freedom and is deceived by yet again, an evil Jew, the latter inspired Jesus to carry on and fulfill his mission.²⁷⁰ It is valid to consider that aside from telling a story from an artist's point of view, these singers and directors unintentionally forced the masses to review their initial opinions on Judas Iscariot. Instead of throwing stones and insults, why not remember that he was a human being capable of great inspiration despite his flaws and failures? Origen and Irenaeus were wise to claim that there was mystery in the betrayal.²⁷¹ Much had yet to be revealed. Hidden under the

²⁶⁶ Ehrman and Pleše 2011: 972.

²⁶⁷ Dauzat 2006: 258.

²⁶⁸ Dauzat 2006: 287.

²⁶⁹ Stanford 2015: 13.

²⁷⁰ Paffenroth 2007: 138-9.

²⁷¹ Trompf 2010: 567.

sands of Egypt a new body of information on the literal character would see the light of day in the latter half of the Twentieth century: The *Gospel of Judas*.

CHAPTER 3
DEATH TO THE RUMOURS: THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS

3.1. Authorship and Purpose

The manuscript recalls several key elements associated with Gnostic cosmology. Key elements and terms are evoked in this text as well as several names who are identified as forces of the light and of darkness.²⁷²

The words in question are:

- ⇒ Aeon
- ⇒ Barbelo or Immortal realm
- ⇒ Autogenes
- ⇒ Pleroma
- ⇒ Self-generated or the Great One (the true God)
- ⇒ Blessed or great generation (incorruptible)
- ⇒ Corrupted or fallen generation (flawed corporeal creations)
- ⇒ Luminaries
- ⇒ Demiurge

The names appearing are:

- ⇒ Sophia
- ⇒ Ialdabaoth (the false God or Yahwe)
- ⇒ Saklas
- ⇒ Nebro
- ⇒ Adamas
- ⇒ Zoe
- ⇒ Seth

²⁷² Meyer 2006: 47-8.

The Gospel of Judas's anonymous author was probably affiliated with Sethian Gnostic teachings where the God of the Old Testament (YHWH) was a being known as Demiurge, an offspring of a divine power known as Sophia (Wisdom), who accidentally fell from the Heavens (Pleroma) and whose divine spark (gnosis) resides in human beings created to house it.²⁷³ The Demiurge is the primordial yet unsuspecting adversary of a higher, transcendent divinity known only to Jesus and to the select chosen few (Gnostics) who traced themselves back to their namesake Seth, the third son of Adam (Adamas) and Eve (Zoe).²⁷⁴

“He revealed the Incorruptible Generation of Seth...the twelve Aeons and the twenty-four Luminaries. He revealed seventy-two Luminaries in the Incorruptible Generation...” – *Codex Tchacos*, 49:5-10.

This Seth would be at the forefront of a special, sacred line of humans (the great generation) who would carry that divine spark, thus be elite compared to the rest and so, they would possess the key in order to transcend the limitations of this world and reunite with the Almighty (the One True God).²⁷⁵ Despite their special character, they do not know they possess such a thing because it lay dormant within them.

Jesus, the human vessel of God on Earth (Autogenes), is from that upper realm (Barbelo) and he brings with him the knowledge (γνῶσις) required to “awaken” and leave this imperfect, material world (Perdition).²⁷⁶ The author, like those of his ilk, believed that the views expressed by the proto-orthodox movement were flawed, reprehensible and outright ridiculous.²⁷⁷ The True God did not want sacrifices and death in order to honour Him. Those were the requirements of the

²⁷³ Thomassen 2007: 101-2.

²⁷⁴ Turner 2007: 283-6.

²⁷⁵ Burke 2015: 32.

²⁷⁶ Meyer 2006: 44.

²⁷⁷ King, Pagels 2007: 8-9.

false gods, the archons (Saklas, Nebro) who ruled this world under the Demiurge Ialdabaoth.²⁷⁸ According to the gnostic mythos, this “false” power was whom the Jews had been venerating since the time of Abraham.²⁷⁹

Jesus, the true God’s envoy (Self-Generated), came and chose twelve apostles to aid Him in his mission, but they did not understand him. Only Judas Iscariot managed to figure out that Jesus was not of this world, resulting in being selected to receive special attention and later revelations for the master directly.

“Judas said to him, “I know who you are and from what place you have come. You have come from the immortal realm of Barbelo, and I am not worthy to pronounce the name of the one who sent you (the one true God).” – *Codex Tchacos*, 35: 14-16.

The author penciled this story in order to expose this flaw. His desire was to illustrate how foolish the apostolic path was in reality and that a need to serve the eucharist or venerate death on a cross was not how it was supposed to be done.²⁸⁰

“For it has been said, to the human generations, ‘behold, God (Ialdabaoth) has received your sacrifice (Eucharist) from the hands of priests’ – this one is the Servant of Error.’ For the Lord who commands this is the one who is Lord over *this* universe. On the last day, they will be guilty.” – *Codex Tchacos*, 40: 18-26

The Gospel of Judas was not a gospel *according* to Judas but rather, a fantastic story which borrowed various elements of the Jesus narrative, including Judas Iscariot at a time when nothing was set in stone. At the time of its conception, the canons of the Bible were not decided yet.²⁸¹ It was as if the canons of the Bible could have gone in either direction: the orthodox way or the gnostic one. In the Gospel of Judas, Jesus, and by association Judas, are representatives of the mystical ways God intends to use in order to deliver the world while the Twelve apostles represent

²⁷⁸ DeConick 2007: 5-6.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Krosney 2006: 278.

²⁸¹ Krosney 2006: 196-7.

the apostolic Church, which requires humanity to atone from sin, consume the Eucharist and believe in the resurrection of the body.²⁸²

“When he drew near to his disciples as they were assembled together, seated and giving thanks over the bread, he laughed...Master why are you laughing at our prayer of thanksgiving?...this is what is proper. He answered and said to them, “I’m not laughing at you. You aren’t doing this out of your own will, but because this is the way *your God* (Ialdabaoth) will be praised...Master, you are...the son of *our God* (Yahwe)” – *Codex Tchacos, 34: 7-9*.

Silence and censorship were important features in Early Christianity simply because of man’s quest for power. Knowledge was power, holding on to that allowed for the spread of the more influential version of the story, certainly after Constantine the First converted. For spiritual, and political reasons assuredly, the emperor decreed that Christianity was to be the voice of the Roman empire.²⁸³ The Gospel of Judas, along with other “disturbing” texts were silenced and declared “heresies”. The official canon (Council of Nicaea in 325 CE) made things simple when it came to Jesus, his life and death and subsequent resurrection. In short, a purified “orthodox” story was *the way to go*.²⁸⁴

3.2. Acknowledgment of Existence

The existence of the Gospel of Judas was already known to early Church fathers such as Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 180 CE), and later would inspire Tertullian and Epiphanius to discuss it and those it refers to as well.

“Others again declare that Cain derived his being from the Power above, and acknowledge that Esau, Korah, the Sodomites, and all such persons, are related to themselves. On this account, they add, they have been assailed by the Creator, yet no one of them has suffered injury. For Sophia was in the habit of carrying off that which belonged to her from them to herself. They declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things, and that he alone, knowing the truth as no others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal; by him all things, both earthly

²⁸² Robinson 2007: 223.

²⁸³ Stanford 2015: 34.

²⁸⁴ Stanford 2015: 34-5.

and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. They produce a fictitious history of this kind, which they style the Gospel of Judas.”

– Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies* I.31.1.

“There has broken out another heresy also, which is called that of the Cainites. And the reason is, that they magnify Cain as if he had been conceived of some potent Virtue which operated in him; for Abel had been procreated after being conceived of an inferior Virtue, and accordingly had been found inferior. They who assert this likewise defend the traitor Judas, telling us that he is admirable and great, because of the advantages he is vaunted to have conferred on mankind for some of them think that thanksgiving is to be rendered to Judas on this account: viz., Judas, they say, observing that Christ wished to subvert the truth, betrayed Him, in order that there might be no possibility of truth’s being subverted. And others thus dispute against them, and say: Because the powers of this world were unwilling that Christ should suffer, lest through His death salvation should be prepared for mankind, he, consulting for the salvation of mankind, betrayed Christ, in order that there might be no possibility at all of the salvation being impeded, which was being impeded through the Virtues which were opposing Christ’s passion; and thus, through the passion of Christ, there might be no possibility of the salvation of mankind, being retarded.”

– Tertullian, *Against All Heresies* 2. 5-6.

“Cainites say that Cain is the scion of the stronger power and the authority above; so, moreover, are Esau, Korah and his companions, and the Sodomites. But Abel is the scion of the weaker power. They acknowledge all of these as worthy of their praise and kin to themselves. For take pride in their kinship with Cain, the Sodomites, Esau and Korah. And these, they say, represent the perfect knowledge from on high. Therefore, they say, though the maker of this world made it his business to destroy them, he could do them no harm; they were hidden from him and translated to the aeon on high, from which the stronger power comes. For Wisdom allowed them to approach her because they were her own. And they say that because of this Judas had found out all about them. For they claim him too as kin and regard him as possessed of superior knowledge, so that they even cite a short work in his name which they call a Gospel of Judas. And they likewise forge certain other works against ‘Womb.’ They call this ‘Womb’ the maker of this entire vault of heaven and earth and say, as Carpocrates does, that no one will be saved unless they progress through all (possible) acts.”

– Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 38.1.2-5.

These excerpts were used in part to describe the Cainites, the denomination of Gnostics venerating the first son of Adam who fell to the power of the Demiurge, responsible for the creation

of this world.²⁸⁵ In fact, the “Codex Tchacos”, a collection of the texts which included the Gospel of Judas, are from the Sethian Gnostics who wished to point out the flawed theology of the orthodox Church.²⁸⁶ To them, sacrifices such as the blood and body of Christ, his death on the cross, and the preaching of the (erring) apostles were not why Jesus came to Earth.²⁸⁷ While the orthodox were gaining strength, the Sethian movement was small and concentrated in Egypt, therefore causing it to fade away in obscurity. In fear of having their writings labelled as heresy and destroyed, they hid a number of texts away.²⁸⁸ The manuscript found in Egypt is a Coptic copy of an earlier original and dates to the fourth century. According to April DeConick, all four books were sealed off in a white limestone box within a family crypt.²⁸⁹

3.3. Discovery and Origin

In 1978, local farmers discovered a cave near Al-Minya province in Middle-Egypt. This cave was situated near the town of Maghagha alongside the Jebel Qarara cliffs, approximately 200 km south of Cairo, an area that appeared to have been used as some sort of burial ground or tomb.²⁹⁰ Hoping to find things of value, the discoverers stumbled upon two limestone boxes which lay next to a human skeleton, most likely the original owner.²⁹¹ What they found inside were a series of text bound in codex form. Unfortunately, no one knows the identity of the person whose remains were found. In an attempt to do so, some 20 years after the discovery, explorers found no trace of remains in that location. The mystery of why he was there and why did he have those texts with him will most likely never be solved.²⁹² Nevertheless, the ones who found the items quickly sold

²⁸⁵ Cane 2005: 120-122.

²⁸⁶ Krosney 2006: 287.

²⁸⁷ Krosney 2006: 288-9.

²⁸⁸ Ehrman 2006: 174-5.

²⁸⁹ DeConick 2007: 229.

²⁹⁰ Krosney 2006: 1.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ehrman 2006: 70-1.

them to a local trader who had in turn found a buyer (at a low price) in the man whose pseudonym was Hanna Asabil.²⁹³ This man did not possess any relevant skill in deciphering text, but he did have an eye for rarities that may stumble upon him during his trips.²⁹⁴ Not certain he knew what he had in his hands, Hanna took it upon himself to offer the codex for the modest sum of three million dollars.²⁹⁵ What would ensue afterwards would be a series of seemingly questionable and unfortunate events leading to the theft and deterioration of the two codices found at Al-Minya.

3.4. Ownership

Following his purchase, Hanna desired to make a profit with what he had in his possession, no doubt due to his experience in the matter. He was of mind that ancient looking volumes such as these must be worth a fortune. His efforts would prove fruitless for a time.²⁹⁶ The neglect of the papyri was already in motion as Hanna's luck would run out. Following a failed exchange with a notorious wealthy dealer by the name of Nicolas Koutoulakis, Hanna would lose possession of several priceless items, including the codices containing the Gospel of Judas as a result of a break-in.²⁹⁷ There was suspicion of foul play by Koutoulakis but no evidence could securely point in that direction.²⁹⁸ Some years passed and further exchanges occurred between the two men until finally, Hanna implored the Genevan dealer into helping him recover the missing volumes.

In 1982, fortune favoured Hanna as his property was conveniently returned by Koutoulakis (indirectly) in Geneva.²⁹⁹ In order to avoid another theft, the owner packed up his property carelessly between pages of newspaper and placed them in storage boxes in a bank vault until he

²⁹³ Gathercole 2007: 10.

²⁹⁴ Ehrman 2006: 72-3.

²⁹⁵ Robinson 2007: 115.

²⁹⁶ Robinson 2007: 74-75.

²⁹⁷ Ehrman 2006: 73.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

could find a buyer.³⁰⁰ The condition of the Gospel of Judas was fragile. Due to this primary negligent manhandling, severe deterioration resulted in the loss of large parts of the corpus. Fortunately, Hanna managed to get in contact with Coptic expert and professor at Claremont in California, James. M. Robinson. He, through his PhD candidate Stephen Emmel, agreed to meet the owner in Geneva in hopes to agree on a price in order to acquire these texts.³⁰¹ There was a staggering difference between what Emmel offered and what Hanna expected. Millions in fact, and so, Hanna refused as he felt insulted over such a small offer.³⁰² Not finding success, he then decided to head to the United States in hope that his luck would turn out. Again in 1984, fate was not on his side and so, Hanna locked away his possession in a Long Island safety deposit box and departed back to Cairo for the foreseeable future.³⁰³ The Coptic manuscripts including the Gospel of Judas would continue their deterioration. For sixteen years they would continue their decay as a result of the humid climate of New York state.³⁰⁴

Word of mouth about Hanna's mysterious Coptic treasure reached the ears of Cairo-born Frieda Tchacos-Nussberger (later simply Tchacos). Hanna finally managed to do away with them and Tchacos bought what remained for an undisclosed amount of money on April 3rd, 2000.³⁰⁵ The codices as a whole are now collectively known as the "Codex Tchacos" but in reality, who could officially claim to be the true proprietor of these volumes since they were most likely taken out of Egypt without the government's consent³⁰⁶? When it comes to objects of this kind, found randomly by peasants, it is highly unlikely they decide on telling the authorities of their find, fearing to lose

³⁰⁰ Krosney 2006: 29.

³⁰¹ Ehrman 2006: 74.

³⁰² Krosney 2006: 107.

³⁰³ Robinson 2007: 61-2.

³⁰⁴ Krosney 2006: 152.

³⁰⁵ Krosney 2006: 172-3.

³⁰⁶ Schenke-Robinson 2011: 110.

on what could be a very valuable commodity.³⁰⁷ To her sorrow, the manuscripts she acquired were in poor condition. They weren't even certain to yield anything significant at this point. However, Tchacos was not discouraged. She took her belongings to Bentley Layton of Yale University, an expert in Coptology.³⁰⁸

After careful analysis, Layton concluded that what Tchacos possessed was in fact the long-lost Gospel of Judas. In other words, a very valuable piece of information regarding the early years of Christianity, to put it mildly.³⁰⁹ Wanting to secure a buyer who could pay a suitable price for this valuable text, she stumbled upon an antiquarian dealer, Bruce Ferrini, in order to make a profit. It was agreed that he would pay her the large sum of 2.5M\$ but in her haste, she agreed to leave her pieces with him and did not ask for a receipt.³¹⁰ That colossal mistake would reveal to be disastrous for the Gospel of Judas because the man could not carry out his end of the sale and he would lose possession of the text in personal bankruptcy.³¹¹ While in his possession, he not only failed to keep them safe, he damaged them further. Bad advice saw him place the important manuscripts inside a freezer for preservation but, as tragic as can be, the texts spent years inside a bank vault in the humid climate of New York and as a result, upon exposure to air once more, some parts were lost forever due to condensation.³¹² An estimated 15% of the pages were lost forever.³¹³

Tchacos, hellbent on recovering what was hers, decided to enlist the aid of one Mario Roberty, a lawyer from Geneva who would go on to “establish” the Maecenas Foundation, an

³⁰⁷ Meyer 2006: 61.

³⁰⁸ Robinson 2007: 63-4.

³⁰⁹ Ehrman 2006: 76.

³¹⁰ Gathercole 2007: 14.

³¹¹ Krosney, Meyer, Wurst 2010: 282.

³¹² Kasser, Meyer, Wurst 2006: 60-1.

³¹³ Ehrman 2006: 80.

organization allegedly meant to preserve ancient treasures and if possible, return them to those people or countries they belong to.³¹⁴ That however, cannot be confirmed officially given the red tape and questionable circumstances surrounding the manuscripts' departure from Egypt. Despite her lack of knowledge regarding the true identity of her vied-for texts, Tchacos, alongside Roberty, managed to agree to terms and her property was returned to her on February 15, 2001. Subsequently, in order to finally understand what these Coptic texts were about, Roberty contacted Rodolphe Kasser of the University of Geneva.³¹⁵ At the Paris Congress of the International Association for Coptic Studies in 2004, Kasser announced to the world that a brand-new set of texts concerning a dialogue between Jesus and Judas Iscariot was being translated for publication. Herbert Krosney of the National Geographic Society got word of this discovery through the intermediary of the aforementioned antiquarian dealer, Bruce Ferrini, who had contacted him previously in order to discuss his "purchases". It sparked interest in National Geographic, the prominent publishing house, not to mention Krosney's personal knowledge of the text because of Rodolphe Kasser's announcement. National Geographic soon managed to acquire the rights of translation and organized a private translation of the text with the aid of notable scholars such as Marvin Meyer, Gregor Wurst as well as Kasser himself.³¹⁶ They were under strict orders not to divulge any information to the public and an official version was published in 2006 which caused a media frenzy.³¹⁷

³¹⁴ Ehrman 2006: 78.

³¹⁵ Ehrman 2006: 79.

³¹⁶ Gathercole 2007: 20-21.

³¹⁷ Robinson 2007: 102.

3.5. Translations and the Battle over Interpretation

It was first believed in the writings that Judas was a heroic character who understood Jesus' mission completely and as a result, delivered him to his fate so he could redeem humanity.³¹⁸ Subsequent publications came about shortly afterwards. However, further translations would ultimately reveal that what was previously deciphered had been falsely interpreted.³¹⁹ According to scholars April DeConick and Louis Painchaud, the story was far less heroic than previously recorded.³²⁰ For example, some verbs and sentences were misinterpreted, leaving the reader to believe one thing while it meant the opposite:

Original Translation (Kasser-Meyer-Wurst)

“...and when Jesus heard this, he laughed and said to him, “You thirteenth spirit, why do you try so hard?”

Alternative Translation (DeConick)

“...when Jesus heard this, he laughed. He said to him, “Why do you compete with them, O Thirteenth Demon?”

This example shows two different interpretations, National Geographic and DeConick, revealing completely different outcomes. There was confusion regarding the use of the words underlined above to represent Judas in the gospel. In antiquity, the Greek word *δαίμων* signified spirit and would later evolve to fit a dark, more sinister force such as a demon. At the time of the Gospel of Judas' composition, Christianity was already established with the notion that *daimon* meant a demonic entity, which can eliminate the possibility of Jesus seeing Judas as a benevolent being by default.³²¹ From this point on, the study of the Gospel of Judas has been split into two

³¹⁸ Meyer 2006: 19-20.

³¹⁹ Painchaud 2006: 120-121.

³²⁰ Painchaud 2006: 125.

³²¹ DeConick 2009 : 117.

different camps: the pro-heroic and the still-villainous.³²² In the Gospel of Judas, he was said to voice out a dream he had in which the other apostles stoned him to death because of what he did. Jesus is also seen telling Judas that the other twelve would hate him because his place was above theirs.³²³

The consensus among the specialists appears to point toward a terrible fate regarding Judas. However, the word *daimon* is used in the Gospel of Judas. Jesus identifies Judas as the “thirteenth *daimon*,” and as April DeConick suggests, this is to be understood in the dark, negative sense “demon”. Although many references to *daimon* in Platonic, Neo-Platonic, Hermetic, and magical texts,³²⁴ has the term inspiring a more positive connotation, it could easily mean “spirit,” as was translated by Kasser, Meyer and Wurst or perhaps even “god” as proposed in Pagels and King.³²⁵ These out-of-this-world beings could be intermediary messengers from between the divine and human realms, perhaps even reinforcing Professor Piovanelli’s (and my own) position where all the Jews, including Judas will be saved in the end.³²⁶ The controversial word appears only once in the entire text, so why not exercise caution in its interpretation? Even if it is taken as a negative reference, it should not necessarily mean that it is the end of the road for Judas in the text.

DeConick arrives at her own conclusions, that in the Gospel of Judas the apostle is an evil demon, a servant of, if not *the* demiurge Ialdabaoth, and is destined to reside in the thirteenth aeon where he would rule over all the others.³²⁷ While her translations appear to make sense given her knowledge of Coptic and her own study of the text, DeConick, in *The Thirteenth Apostle* doesn’t dwell on the significance of this word (*daimon*), a word that occurs prominently in another Gnostic

³²² Burke 2013: 190.

³²³ Kasser, Meyer, Wurst 2006: 31-33.

³²⁴ Kelly 2015: 410.

³²⁵ Pagels and King 2007: 115.

³²⁶ DeConick 2008: 241.

³²⁷ DeConick 2007: 121.

text that has been known for a very long time. The “Thirteenth Aeon” appears several times in the *Pistis Sophia*, the Gnostic text which touches on the creation of the universe, the Pleroma and aeons, and of the primal divinity (Sophia) falling from the Heavens and unwittingly creating the material world through the Demiurge.³²⁸ In this myth, what DeConick qualifies as “worst of the worst” is in fact a blessed realm which is located above the twelve aeons and the heavenly home of the twenty-four luminaries which include Sophia, who names it her dwelling place.³²⁹

“Jesus (αυτογενής) said, “Come, that I may teach you about the things...that no person will see. For there is a great and infinite realm (Pleroma), whose dimension no angelic generation could see, in which is the great invisible spirit (the One True God” – *Codex Tchacos*, 47: 70-73.

Could it be that the Twelve mentioned in the *Gospel of Judas* are associated to something other than the apostles? Perhaps the constellations of Zodiac³³⁰? Stars are a prominent feature in this story, and if Judas is to be the thirteenth then it could be that he travels beyond the material world. As a result of his being selected by Jesus to receive knowledge it could explain how he is ultimately fated to rule or be above the twelve. Coincidentally, the Sophia from one story comes from the thirteenth realm above; she is separated from (as Judas is) that realm, and she is destined to return there again, as Judas may be.³³¹ In the *Pistis Sophia*, she does make use of the term *daimon* which resonates with Judas’ portrayal in the *Gospel of Judas*. Not so much a servant of Ialdabaoth (or any demon), as DeConick hints, Judas could be considered as a mirror reflection of Sophia simply because of that divinity’s importance and portrayal in her story.³³²

Gnosticism is mystical and likely to require (as the Bible, for example, should) many read-overs, questioning and reflection to fully grasp its meanings. The tale of Judas discusses many

³²⁸ Montserrat-Torrents 2009: 272.

³²⁹ Meyer 2007: 511-5.

³³⁰ Pagels, King 2007: 152-3.

³³¹ Meyer 2008: 47.

³³² Montserrat-Torrents 2009: 273.

aspects of the world and gives a clear way for any Gnostic longing for transcendence to achieve that goal.³³³ The Gospel of Judas, once fully decoded, could portray Judas as a sort of messenger, good, bad and flawed—as all humans are.³³⁴ The prototype Gnostic, part of a story that claims to describe how Jesus came to Earth and instructed his apostle on how salvation may be realized not through death but through gnosis.³³⁵

“Jesus said to them, “You are those you saw who presented the offerings upon the altar. That one (Ialdabaoth) is the god you worship, and the twelve men you saw are you. And the animals that were brought for sacrifice are those you saw, who are the crowd of people you lead astray.” – *Codex Tchacos*, 39: 18-27.

3.6. Current Status and Whereabouts

After all her expenses and toil, Frieda Tchacos managed to recover most of her property from Ferrini, who secretly kept some of the pages for himself.³³⁶ Still, the bankrupt dealer had sense enough to photograph what was in his possession which he later delivered to Professor Gregor Wurst of the University of Augsburg, Germany. According to his knowledge, what Ferrini held in his possession was the missing pieces of the Gospel of Judas and no one, save Marvin Meyer, was allowed to gaze upon them.³³⁷ The rest of the fragments are in the hands of the Maecenas Foundation in Switzerland.³³⁸ Frieda Tchacos’s intent was to donate her share to the Egyptian government, as per the mandate of the Maecenas Foundation, and have them showcased in the Library of Alexandria, her city of origin.³³⁹ Egypt chose instead to have them at Cairo’s

³³³ Burke 2013: 52-58.

³³⁴ Dunderberg 2009: 218.

³³⁵ Meyer 2009: 65-6.

³³⁶ Krosney, Meyer, Wurst 2010: 283.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ehrman 2006: 69.

³³⁹ Robinson 2007: 69.

Coptic Museum.³⁴⁰ The Gospel of Judas continues to be translated and will eventually be decoded. Little by little the pieces to the puzzle will be reconnected to the rest.³⁴¹

Conclusion – A Synthesis of Judas Iscariot, the Antihero of Christendom

There is no denying that the Gospel of Judas, its origin, interpretation and influence, are of primal importance to the collective history of Christianity as a whole because its body is evidence to a very different Christianity than we know today. However, scholars are still split over the true intent of the work, and interpretations of the text vary. Some, in the case of Bart Ehrman and Marvin Meyer, argue in defense of a more positive outlook of Judas, while others such as April DeConick, Louis Painchaud and Gesine Schenke-Robinson, are simply not convinced of neither Judas' rehabilitation nor of his relevance in the entire text. It is even suggested to put those ideas to rest as nothing new is revealed in the matters of the historical existence of characters such as Judas and Jesus, for that matter. Case in point: in the Gospel of Judas, he (Judas) understands better than most, shows courage, and several secrets are revealed to him. It could have been anyone else to carry out this mission, but Jesus saw in him what he needed and the story ends with Jesus ascending into the cloud of light with Judas gazing in fascination, the leading star ahead of all the others. As tragic as it may seem, Judas is still portrayed as a demon, a traitor, a scoundrel or the Devil himself. Origen said it himself, there is great mystery here.

The author of the Gospel of Judas used the early Church's inconsistencies against it and retaliated with what he believed to be true; that knowledge (γνῶσις) spoke louder than actions (the eucharist, the passion, the resurrection). Jesus (the Word of God, the Λόγος) comes down and does just that: speaks and leaves. Judas listens to him. In today's modern world, with social media at play, this enigmatic text, its characters and the different possible outcomes will continue to attract

³⁴⁰ Krosney, Meyer, Wurst 2010: 283.

³⁴¹ Krosney, Meyer, Wurst 2010: 286.

attention and intrigue and fuel the desire for answers. There is potential for continued revision of Judas's final destiny: perhaps a new truth that will proverbially set Judas free.

In light of the evidence presented here and the analysis that followed, it is quite evident that ancient writers of orthodox Christianity and the mystical Gnostics waged a war of words, each trying to supplant the other with their version of "the truth". Judas Iscariot was put in a position in which there was no escape, no mercy and even his remorse was invalidated on the argument that it was false. For some, Judas met his fate, as would his kin, the Jews. The stories about him differ from source to source, from handing over to betraying to spending eternity in the mouth of Satan. As the misconceptions about Judas grew, so did the generalization of Jews as well. They, Judas included, would be made to suffer and receive scorn for centuries leading up to the exposing of humanity's worst acts against one another.

With modern scholars' views on the Gospel of Judas divided to this day, there remains much deliberation to be had regarding Judas's role and place in Christianity. Judas continues to be a character that fascinates and inspires countless authors, artists, poets and storytellers, across all walks of life and across time. Judas's final destiny remains to be defined, surrounded still by ambiguity resulting from the different tales and interpretations of his life and actions.

Judas's story is both a tragic one and a hopeful one since his story speaks to the very essence of what troubles and motivates humanity most in its search for meaning and origin. At this time, it has not been revealed whether or not Judas Iscariot was a living, breathing person but the literal character is still very much alive and theologically serves as the antihero of the Christian faith, forever bound to Jesus the Saviour.

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