

Using Judas: What early depictions of Judas Iscariot can tell us about their authors

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Peter Paul Rubens, *The Last Supper*, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, 1630-1631

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ABSTRACT

Whilst the vast majority of Christian scholarship in antiquity focusses on the historical and the theological person of Jesus, as well as Christian discipleship, it is clear that Judas scholarship is in the minority. This dissertation sets out to study and analyse literary depictions of Judas Iscariot in antiquity – here, meaning from the New Testament writings (Paul and the Gospels), and a selection of texts from the first century through to the thirteenth century CE. As well as examining how Judas is depicted in these texts, and what sort of role he plays within the overarching narrative, I will also consider how he is used by early writers in light of particular themes, such as anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism. Whilst most of these texts are by no means scholarly or academic, the literature provides a basis for understanding the role of Judas, and in turn, the Jews, within early Christian understanding.

The methods used throughout this thesis are primarily historical – that is, looking at these texts from a historical perspective, analysing themes that these texts have in common, how they link together, and how anti-Judaism shows itself in these texts through the writers' uses of Judas Iscariot. My research shows that later writers take aspects of Judas found in earlier texts, such as the Gospels, and exaggerate them in order to push a political agenda against Jews and, subsequently, in favour of Christianity.

Of course, this is just a small selection of texts (not inclusive of early artwork or architecture, for example) from antiquity, and should I research a similar topic in the future, to include such examples of Christian culture, and perhaps some later ones, would develop this research further and perhaps produce new or different findings.

Chapter one: The Judas of the New Testament

Scholarly attention has, perhaps since the Enlightenment period of the nineteenth century, consistently been turned to the study of the historical Jesus, versus his theological self. Less attention, however, is paid to the seemingly more minor characters of the Christian narratives – in particular, Judas Iscariot. Of course, we know Judas to infamously be the person who betrays Jesus in the Gospels, giving details of Jesus' whereabouts to the Roman authorities in exchange for thirty pieces of silver, but few pieces of scholarship really delve into Judas's motives and who he might have been as a person in history. Judas has long held an important, and often overlooked, role in the passion narratives.

William Klassen argues that 'many people are not able to reassess the person of Judas and the role that he played in the life and death of Jesus'¹ – here referring to the common preconception of Judas Iscariot being a traitor, or being someone who committed the greatest evil, thus being destined for eternal damnation and infamy. As this perception is so prevalent in modern Christianity, the very idea of looking at Judas in a more sympathetic or understanding light can be difficult for some to grapple with. On the other hand, however, scholars through the ages have also considered the betrayal of Christ to have been something that was predestined, and therefore necessary for God's plan to fall into place. For example, John Calvin writes in his book, *Harmony of the Gospels*, that God 'expressly intends to prevent [our] future offences'² – thus predetermining each and every human life, whether they are elected for salvation or not. On questioning why God would have Judas chosen as one of the twelve disciples, if the betrayal was predestined, Calvin argues that Judas was used as an example – he was 'raised to an eminence from which he was afterwards to fall,' thus demonstrating to Christians that 'no one may abuse the honour which God has conferred upon him'³. As is already evident, diverse approaches to Judas have shown themselves to be prevalent in a lot of New Testament scholarship, and many questions have been raised regarding the 'hows' and the 'whys' of Judas' actions.

In this thesis, I am going to be looking specifically at ancient sources, such as the New Testament Gospels and texts written and discussed by the early Church Fathers, and considering what these can tell us about the person of Judas and how Judas was perceived by the early Church, or early Jewish communities, in antiquity. My work will be structured chronologically – starting with our earliest source, the epistles of Paul, and will continue all the way through to the Middle Ages. I will analyse each text thoroughly from a historical perspective,

¹ William Klassen, *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), vii

² John Calvin, "Mark 3:13-19, Luke 6:12-19," *Commentary on the Harmony of the Gospels, Volume 1*, accessed online via the Christians Classics Ethereal Library online, accessed 15th September 2019 <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom31.ix.xl.html>

³ Calvin, "Mark 3:13-19, Luke 6:12-19," *Commentary on the Harmony of the Gospels*

considering how Judas is portrayed and used by the writer to put forward their political and theological viewpoints.

Although undoubtedly a prominent figure in the New Testament who is pivotal to the Passion narratives, mentions of Judas are noticeably few and far between. Whenever Judas is mentioned, one can almost hear the snarl and the disdain in the Gospel writers' tone. With such standout quotes as "Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed [Christ]⁴," (Matthew 10:4) and "Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor," (Luke 22:3) it is of no surprise that modern Christianity has such a negative view of the character of Judas Iscariot. Judas is mentioned most frequently in the Gospel of John, however even then this amounts to only 9 mentions in total. Thusly, Judas ends up being portrayed as a marginal character on the outskirts of not only the Jewish and early Christian society but also of Christ's closest followers – furthermore, a traitor, and somebody beyond repentance or hope of forgiveness. In this first chapter of my dissertation, I will be looking in detail at exactly why this might be, how Judas came to be tarred with such negative connotations, and what the Gospel writers and theological or historical scholars have to say on this matter.

Where else to start the search for the Judas than the New Testament? Judas Iscariot is mentioned a mere twenty-two times across the four Gospels. This is where we learn the very basics of his character, and, of course, the role that he plays in the life of Christ. Clues are given as to his role in the wider Jewish society – for example, according to the Gospel of John, it is indicated that he was likely a kind of treasurer or money holder, as seen in John 13:29, where reference is made to the 'common purse,' likely used for financing Christ's mission or for festivities. Scholars have also used the Gospel writings in order to find out where Judas might have come from – it is widely accepted that 'Iscariot' derives from the Hebrew words 'Ish' (meaning 'man') and Qeriyoth ('Kerioth'), thus giving us 'man of Kerioth,' presenting us with a surname originating from Judas' city of birth⁵. Other common conclusions include Iscariot coming from the Hebrew for simply 'from a city' (often referring to Jerusalem), or that it could mean 'one of the Sicarii,' referring to a tribe of Jewish zealots (often even referred to as 'extremists' or 'terrorists') who were active in opposing the Roman Occupation during the time of Jesus' ministry⁶.

⁴ Any and all references made to scripture from here onwards shall be taken from the New Revised Standard translation unless otherwise stated. Source used: The Holy Bible with Apocrypha, NRSV Anglicised edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)

⁵ Hyam Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil*, (London: Peter Halban Publishers Ltd, 1992) 128-129, see also Peter Stanford, *Judas: The Troubling History of the Renegade Apostle* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, 2015), 23-27

⁶ James M. Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas: The Story of the Misunderstood Disciple and His Lost Gospel* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2006), 35

Hyam Maccoby, however, opposes the view that Iscariot could have come from “man of Kerioth.” Maccoby assesses this view from multiple angles, including where exactly Kerioth is, how it is translated to form Judas’ surname, and what implications this would have for Judas. The place name ‘Kerioth’ is found three times in the Hebrew Bible – listed amongst places in Moab by Jeremiah and Amos, but in Judah by Joshua. In the Septuagint translation of Joshua, however, ‘the Hebrew *Qeriyoth* is not translated as a place name, but as meaning “cities” ... i.e. cities connected with Hazor, or Hezron.’⁷ Maccoby also notes that if this theory is correct, then why, when we look at the Hebrew roots of ‘ish’ and ‘Qeriyoth,’ is only half of this translated in the New Testament form ‘Iscariot’? We see Qeriyoth being translated to Kerioth and then again forming the ‘cariot’ part of his name, but the prefix of ‘Ish,’ or in Judas’ case, ‘Is,’ is left untranslated⁸. Thus, we can already see this theory bearing less weight. The idea of the name Iscariot being derived from ‘man of Kerioth’ is also highlighted by Nixon in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, however it is also interestingly noted that, assuming Judas did in fact come from a town in Judea called Kerioth, he would have been ‘the only Judean [as opposed to a Galilean] among the Twelve.’⁹ Maccoby expands on this, commenting that Judas therefore would not have shared with the same Galilean outlook as Jesus did with the rest of his disciples, as he would have been ‘more familiar with the culture and mannerisms of Jerusalem, the metropolis’¹⁰. Therefore as a result of his ‘upper class background’¹¹ and innate lust for political power, Judas would have been the one most likely to betray Jesus out of all of the Twelve. However, of course this is all based on the sole assumption that this is the case.

However, other than these small insights into his life, very little is given away regarding Judas Iscariot. So, what do we, as scholars, know for definite, and what else can we infer from our secondary sources? In this following segment I will consider the role of Judas in a number of different sources. By using this ‘fine-toothed comb’ method I aim to find out who Judas was, and what can be inferred about the character of Judas from these sources, but also consider what could be missing in Judas-based scholarship. Even if the Gospels themselves cannot, ironically, be taken as gospel, then they must at least be taken seriously in what they can reveal to us about such a Biblical Needle in a Haystack.

Judas’ appearances in the Gospels appear to be few and far between, with only twenty-one references being made to him throughout the Gospels. However, each of these mentions is significant and can each reveal something of Judas’

⁷ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 128

⁸ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 129

⁹ R.E. Nixon, “Judas Iscariot,” in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. J.D. Douglas (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1978), 554

¹⁰ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 129-130

¹¹ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 130

character and his role in the New Testament narratives. These references are all follows:

Mark: 3:19, 14:10, 14:43

Matthew: 10:4, 26:14, 26:25, 26:47, 27:3

Luke: 6:16, 22:3, 22:47, 22:48

Acts: 1:12, 1:16

John: 6:71, 12:4, 13:2, 13:26, 13:29, 14:22, 18:2, 18:3, 18:5

In the following paragraphs, using critical and historical analysis of the primary texts, as well as secondary literature such as commentaries and other scholarly works, I will examine and explore Judas' role and portrayal in each of the above sources. For each text, social and historical context will also be taken into consideration, as well as the time period in which a text was written, and the personal views or intentions of the writer. I will conclude this section of my work with a conclusion, wherein I will compare and contrast the different New Testament texts, what they can tell us about Judas, and identify some recurring themes throughout these texts that show how early writers use Judas.

JUDAS IN PAUL

It is not just the Gospels that give us clues in our scholarly quest for Judas Iscariot – in fact, ideas about the betrayal of Christ and its relation to the rest of the Passion narratives are also found in another influential part of the New Testament canon, the Pauline Corpus, or the epistles of Paul. These letters make up roughly a quarter of the New Testament, and, although they come after the Gospels in the canon, the so-called undisputed letters (those undoubtedly written by Paul himself as opposed to his followers) are likely to predate them by a number of years, whilst still coming after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. The earliest of Paul's writing dates back to roughly 50 CE, with other early writings stretching to around 63 CE. Whilst it is worth noting that Paul does not in any way attempt to create an objective chronology of the life of Christ in the same way that the Gospel writers do, he does use the life and teachings of Jesus to evangelise and to encourage churches further afield in the new faith. Moreover, without the established Gospel writings that we know of today, Paul would have used not only his knowledge of Jesus' ministry but also what was already very well established tradition across the first century world – for example, the account of the Passion. Remember, Paul was first and foremost a Roman citizen and a Greek speaker prior to his conversion – worlds away from the Galilean lives of the Jews and the first followers of Jesus. Thusly, this makes Paul an excellent starting point for understanding aspects of Christian belief and doctrine.

One of Paul's earliest letters is that to the Church in Corinth. Here, in chapter 11, he makes a very clear mention to the betrayal of Christ in what have come to be known as the Words of Institution and have since formed a significant part of Christian Eucharistic liturgy – “on the same night that he was betrayed...” (1 Corinthians 11:23). This undoubtedly places a lot of emphasis on the act of betrayal and portrays it as a necessary part of the divine sacrifice narrative, and

makes it arguably the earliest mention of its kind in the New Testament. However, nowhere is the name of our elusive traitor mentioned, neither are anymore references made to Christ's betrayal in the letter to Corinthians. So how, in the New Testament, is the jump made from a single act of betrayal to the blame falling entirely on the shoulders of Judas Iscariot?

The answer unfortunately is not found in Paul's epistles, however it could help to point us in the right direction. In the letter to the Romans, we see the idea of blame for Christ's death referred to again, but strangely in an entirely different light. In Romans 8:32, Paul implies that the blame, if one can truly call it that in this case, is given to God the Father, making a reference to a triune God – "He who did not withhold His own Son, but gave Him up for all of us..." This makes sense in a monotheistic faith – despite God being considered Three in One, He is still responsible for all that happens in the world, both positive and negative, so surely this should be the case even for the death of Jesus, the Son of God? Maybe, but there is also room for scapegoating to be made.

Due consideration should of course be given to what can be revealed to us in the original translations of these texts. The original Greek verb used by Paul is *paradidomi* – usually translated as 'betrayed.' However, this could also be taken to mean 'given up,' or 'handed over.' What if *paradidomi* was incorrectly translated? If there is no true 'betrayal,' then what role does Judas play in the Gospels? Very little, as we have already discovered, other than a purse holder and a follower. Thusly, if we assume the translation of 'given up' or 'handed over' to be correct, then we only have one mention of Jesus being put to death by God the Father, and even then, Stanford argues, to call this 'blame' or 'betrayal' is almost certainly a step too far in thinking for a believer¹².

Ergo, we potentially have room for 2000 years of Scapegoating being made, with thanks to Mark on the writing of his Gospel. To quote Stanford further:

'the ongoing dispute between the factions among very early Christians meant that the advocates of building a church independent of Judaism were naturally keen to emphasise how different they were from the Jews. How tempting, then, for Mark to show that Jesus was betrayed by the Jews, and more specifically for Paul's unnamed betrayer to be Judas Iscariot, the apostle from Judea, seat of Jewish power, the apostle whose common-or-garden name was synonymous with the Jews?'¹³

Moreover, another important aspect to consider is the aim of the Pauline corpus as a group of texts. Whether or not they were written by Paul himself, or by others inspired by his legacy and by the movement he instigated, Paul passionately defends the Christian faith and encourages other Christians in times of crises and diversity to do the same. 1 Corinthians, the primary text with which are concerned, is an excellent example of this. The people of the Church in

¹² Stanford, *Judas*, 40

¹³ Stanford, *Judas*, 42

Corinth are divided by internal disagreements and ‘grievances’ against the people (1 Corinthians 6:1), egregious sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1-2), and the abuse of the institution of the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-22). In response to these issues, Paul proclaims that ‘wrongdoers will not inherit the Kingdom of God’ (1 Corinthians 6:9), and that the true followers of Christ have been ‘washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ’ (1 Corinthians 6:11). Thus, this zeal and certainty that Paul feels in his faith after his conversion can also be extended to how he refers to the more negative aspects of the Christian narrative. As we have seen, Paul uses the betrayal to remind the people of Corinth where the tradition of remembering Jesus’ Last Supper comes from, and in turn continues to vilify the chosen scapegoat who had to betray Christ in order for the rest of the passion narrative to take place.

MARK

Despite not being the first in the New Testament, Mark’s gospel is considered almost unanimously by scholars to have been the first to be written. Thus, making it first in terms of chronology, and therefore being closer to the events of the New Testament – including the Passion. Mark is thought to have been written around 70 CE¹⁴.

Unlike other Gospels such as Matthew, Mark shows the twelve disciples being called forth by Christ – thus showing that Judas, amongst the rest of the Twelve, must have had some electable and desirable qualities about them. This idea is taken further by Tuckett, who discusses the importance of the tradition of the Twelve in his commentary on Mark in the Oxford Bible Commentary, saying that the number 12 is evocative of the twelve tribes of Israel, who took possession of the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua in the Hebrew Bible. Now, here in the time of Jesus’ ministry, twelve are being chosen (as opposed to eleven, which would make Jesus one of the twelve). This puts Christ in even more of a privileged position, making him the ‘creator and inaugurator of the new Israel.’¹⁵

The Twelve play an important role in Mark’s Gospel, and Mark’s portrayal and depiction of them as well as of Christ is just as important as that of Judas – therefore, to understand why Judas is portrayed as he is, it is pivotal to first understand Mark’s depictions of the Twelve. After all, the stories told in any Gospel are reflections of the Gospel writer and of their worldview and understanding. Mark is the shortest Gospel of the New Testament, with just sixteen chapters – whilst early scholars dismissed Mark in favour of the longer,

¹⁴ Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “Gospel of Mark,” in *The Women’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2014), 478

¹⁵ C.M. Tuckett, “Mark,” in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 893

more embellished and descriptive Gospels¹⁶, it is more likely that Mark's successors simply expanded on his original accounts, as well as drawn upon their own knowledge, recollections and sources. However, when one looks beyond the dismissive descriptions and matter-of-fact tone (a good example would be Mark's version of Jesus in the wilderness found in Mark 1:12-13, especially compared with Matthew's retelling, which is much longer and much more detailed with eleven verses (Matthew 4:1-11)), it is clear that Mark has a theology and ideology of Jesus and his relationship with his followers that he never veers from, so much so that it becomes an underlying theme throughout the narrative – the concept of Christ's followers just not quite ever understanding just who Christ is, and what his purpose on Earth is¹⁷.

In chapter 8 of Mark's Gospel we have the famous conversation between Jesus and his followers where his identity is discussed – Jesus asks his followers, 'who do people say that I am?' (Mark 8:27). His followers respond saying that people consider him to be a prophet – even so much as to be on a par with John the Baptist or Elijah (Mark 8:27). However, on asking his followers who *they* think he is, his followers – or rather, Peter, seemingly acting on behalf of the Twelve – responds saying that they believe him to be the Messiah (Mark 8:29). Surely, how can this be considered to be a misunderstanding of Jesus' identity? A more obvious example of such false impressions would be the local people believing him to be a simple carpenter (Mark 6:1-6), his family believing that "he has gone out of his mind" (Mark 3:20-21), and the scribes believing that he is in association with Satan (Mark 3:22). However, this more subtle misunderstanding from the disciples can be understood when taking into account a more Jewish viewpoint¹⁸.

Messianic Expectation within early Judaism, or during the Second Temple period, is exceptionally diverse, with ideas of expected Messiahs ranging from great military leaders, divinely inspired priests¹⁹, or, as prophesied in Isaiah, the coming Messiah will be someone who 'judges the poor with righteousness, decides with equity for the humble of the Earth, strikes the Earth with the rod of his mouth, and slays the wicked with the breath of his lips' (Isaiah 11:1-4, paraphrased). Whilst there is no one typical or archetypal Messianic figure, it would be safe to argue that most literature suggests that they would be strong, determined, and righteous – perhaps not a carpenter born in a stable, an image of the Galilean everyman. Ergo, this presents Mark with the opportunity to use the disciples' misunderstanding of the person of Jesus as a catalyst to emphasise the greatness of who Jesus was.

¹⁶ Bart D. Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot; A New Look at Betrayer and Betrayed* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) 17

¹⁷ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 17-23

¹⁸ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 18

¹⁹ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 19

But what has this to do with Judas? Was he just another follower who never quite understood who Jesus was, or what he was supposed to do? Or, on the contrary, was Judas the one who *did* understand, thus using the act of betrayal to speed up the process of Christ being claimed as a Messiah? Bart D. Ehrman considers both of these approaches. As previously mentioned, Mark places an emphasis on the Twelve being called, or chosen, by Christ. Although Mark names Judas last, and adds the expected caveat of him being ‘the one who betrayed Christ,’ there is nothing else that distinguishes Judas or indeed anyone else from the others apart from this calling from Christ – they are all given the same mission, and that is ‘to preach,’ ‘to have authority over the demons,’ and to all bear the same responsibility in doing so²⁰. Ergo, from this first inference alone, ‘one has to assume that for Mark, Judas was one of Jesus’ closest, most devoted followers.’²¹ Ehrman’s second point is that if the misunderstanding of the Twelve is a key theme throughout Mark’s Gospel, then Judas too must have misunderstood something, and therefore failed as a disciple. Obviously, according to Mark, the Twelve continuously fail to comprehend how Christ can be both a Messiah yet one who must suffer and die, as opposed to be a grand ruler who will overthrow the Roman occupation and liberate the Jewish people. Judas himself gets tied up in this through his own actions – by believing that Jesus was to be the Messiah, a king, a ruler, a leader, it is entirely possible that Judas could likely have been tired of waiting for Jesus to publicly declare who he was and what he was on Earth for, and thus decided to act as a sort of catalyst by ‘putting Jesus in a situation where he was more or less compelled to take action, call for the crowds to rally in his support, and assert himself as their leader.’²² This idea would also fit in with Iscariot’s supposed political views – if we take the assumption that Judas did in fact come from a more metropolitan background, hailing from Judea as opposed to Galilee, then it is entirely possible that his stance regarding politics would have been quite different from those of his Galilean counterparts, and thus resulted in Judas being somewhat ‘alienated... from the rustic disciples²³.’ Maccoby goes on to suggest that when Judas established that Jesus ‘had no desire for political power, he became disillusioned and betrayed him²⁴.’ On the other side of the metaphorical coin, Mark’s Judas could have been the sole disciple to understand precisely who Jesus was and what must happen, and therefore understood himself to be doing Jesus’ will and to be handing Christ over. Whilst both of these are not impossible, neither of them seem to fit with the rest of Mark’s narrative – for example, if Judas was hoping to cause an uprising, why at Gethsemane? Why not at Christ’s trial against the Roman authorities? And similarly if Judas thought he was doing the right thing, why would Mark have made a point of stating that Jesus said that the one

²⁰ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 20

²¹ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 20

²² Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 22

²³ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 130

²⁴ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 130

to hand him over would be condemned (Mark 14:20), not blessed? In true Markan form, it is left to the readers' imagination²⁵.

In an attempt to discern why exactly Jesus chose Judas to be one of the twelve, and of course in further discussion of the possible etymology of Judas Iscariot's name, Maccoby refers to Robinson's theory that Iscariot could be a derivation of Sicarii, implying a relation to the Sicarii tribe. Maccoby argues that this theory is dismissed from common theology for ideological reasons. Not only is this theory plausible linguistically, as the two words are very similar, but Maccoby also notes that another of Jesus's disciples appears to have a similar background – Simon the Zealot. According to Maccoby, 'this shows that Jesus recruited at least one disciple from the Zealot movement, and it is not at all impossible that he recruited another.'²⁶ After much consideration, even going so far as to analyse the phrase 'Judas the Zealot' found in Coptic manuscripts of the Gospel of John, Maccoby concludes that this is indeed the most plausible alternative to the derivation 'man of Kerioth,' despite a few difficulties, such as the idea of Jesus have more than one, if any, disciples recruited from the Zealot movement requiring a shift in thinking too much or too far for some scholars.

Continuing with a pattern that seems to run throughout the four canonical Gospels, Judas again fades into the background and is only seen again as we approach the Passion narrative. Mark's telling of the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane is brief in contrast to other gospels, going into little detail about the events. Tuckett declares that it is highly unlikely that the event as a whole could have been invented by later Christians²⁷, and is of course a pivotal moment in the Passion, and for Christianity, as we know it. All Mark tells us, however, is that Judas goes to the Roman authorities to 'betray Christ to them' (Mark 14:10) – although what exactly did he betray? Christ's location? Christ's ideas and mission? This is left uncertain by Mark – and that Judas then arrives with a crowd of people to witness the infamous betrayal.

Whilst much speculation is required by New Testament scholars to understand why, exactly, Mark chooses to be so brief with his descriptions of such crucial events, more information alluding to Mark's theology could be found in the translation to English from Greek. Tuckett points out that the actions of Judas in Mark 14 are described as 'betraying,' or 'handing over' - 'The same Greek verb is used in the Passion predictions seen in Mark 9:31 and 10:33, where it is implied that God is the subject of the action.' Therefore, it could be argued that 'even in Judas' act of treachery, God's plan is actively being fulfilled²⁸.'

²⁵ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 22-23

²⁶ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 132

²⁷ Tuckett, "Mark," 917

²⁸ Tuckett, "Mark," 915

No more is said or even implied by Mark regarding Judas' remorse, or his potential lack thereof, or his demise. What we have seen, however, is an interesting discourse in the earliest Gospel in the New Testament.

MATTHEW

Of course, in terms of canonical chronology, our first glimpses of Judas come from the Gospel of Matthew, believed to have been written between 85 and 90 CE. The very first mention of Judas does not come without sneer or disgust from Matthew, as he immediately spoils any chance of plot development within the Passion narrative by declaring Judas outright as 'the one who would betray Christ' (Matthew 10:4). Obviously, from the outset, our Gospel writer is informing us that Judas is a character not to be trusted. Moreover, this first glance of Judas comes almost hurriedly, seemingly tagged onto the end of Matthew's list of disciples without much of a second thought. Indeed, after this fleeting mention in Matthew's list of the twelve disciples, we do not hear of Judas again until the Passion narrative in chapter 26.

It is possible that Matthew's consistent lack of regard for Judas could be a literary device used to distinguish Judas Iscariot from any other Judas's seen in the Gospels – for example, in Matthew 13:55, a reference is made to Judas, the alleged brother of Jesus. No description of this Judas is given, and he is never mentioned again, which is a stark contrast to the harsh caveats given when describing Judas Iscariot. However, it is also likely that Matthew, along with the other Gospel writers, had seemingly greater things to be concerned with. This is especially true in the case of Matthew, who elaborates his account of Jesus' ministry with narratives such as the Sermon on the Mount, and the laborious genealogy passage seen in Matthew 1-2. Add this to having to preach about Christ's message and teachings, and there is little room for supporting roles. However, although Judas appears to be mentioned fleetingly and only a small amount of times, what Matthew does say about Judas is significant in its own right and bears a lot of weight in our search for the historical Judas.

Most notably, it is Judas' actions in the Passion narratives that bring him his infamy within the Gospels and Christendom. Matthew 26:14 sees Judas going to the chief priests, the authorities during the Roman occupation, to tell them in advance of Jesus' whereabouts, and how they can make an arrest. However, there is a broader picture to be looked at that is far more interesting than the betrayal to the authorities itself – a picture that portrays Judas not only as a traitor, but also as a negative example of discipleship itself²⁹. Immediately prior to Judas leaving the scene to go and betray Jesus to the Romans, we see a woman – her identity and motives unknown – anoint Christ with oil. Some may see this as simply part of a celebration, others that she was symbolically anointing Christ as a king, as the ancient Kings of the Old Testament were. Looking at it more deeply or more allegorically, it is possible she could also be symbolising Christ being anointed with oil for his burial – a traditional part of death rites in ancient Judaism, often for protecting the body from rapid decomposition in the hot

²⁹ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 26

climate. Unlike in other Gospel accounts, as opposed to solely Judas being upset by this unknown woman anointing Christ with expensive oils, Matthew tells us that it is 'the disciples' as a whole group who object to this, claiming that the money that the oil was worth could have been given to the poor (Matthew 26:8-9). It is this action that could possibly have been a turning point for Judas insofar as him making a decision to inform the Roman authorities of Jesus' whereabouts, although this is not said by Matthew for certain. However, what is for certain, is that there is shown here a clear link between Judas, and money that is spent on Jesus – on the one hand, we have a woman spending her own money to buy expensive oils to anoint Jesus, and on the other, we have Judas earning whatever money he can get for betraying him³⁰ – this is made clearer by the first words Judas speaks being, 'what will you give me if I betray him to you?' (Matthew 26:15). Ehrman notes that this not only highlights a traitorous and greedy personality, but also the motivation for money also fits in well with the rest of Matthew's narrative³¹. Earlier in Matthew's Gospel we read about the famous Sermon on the Mount – a passage not seen again in any of the other three Gospels. Here, Jesus teaches his disciples not to be concerned with earthly matter or material things but with heavenly treasure instead – 'he had told them that it was impossible to serve both God and riches.'³² In Matthew's account of the betrayal in Gethsemane, not only does Judas betray Jesus, 'but in doing so he shows that he stands completely against everything that Jesus stood for. He was more interested in earthly treasure, in material things, in riches.'³³

The last we see of Judas, as far as Matthew is concerned, is the famous repentance and subsequent suicide – a narrative that doesn't feature in any of the other Gospels (although is referred to in Acts). According to Matthew, when Judas saw that Jesus had been condemned and was sentenced to death, he repented, and attempted to take back the thirty pieces of silver that he had been paid by the authorities, and declared that he had sinned by betraying innocent blood (Matthew 27:3-4). When the authorities showed no interest in helping or forgiving Judas, he threw down the thirty pieces of silver that he had been paid, and 'went and hanged himself' (Matthew 27:5). After this, the chief priests agree that the money cannot be returned to the Temple treasury, since it is blood money – money that is associated with the execution of a convicted criminal. So, the money is used to purchase a plot of land, what came to be known as 'the Field of blood' (Matthew 27:8). It has been suggested that this is where Judas met his untimely end, although this has never been verified³⁴. Scholars have long debated the meaning and possible symbolism of the death of Judas – even John Calvin himself remarked that Judas's death is damning, and 'enacts his self-

³⁰ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 25-26

³¹ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 26

³² Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 26

³³ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 26

³⁴ Stanford, *Judas*, 2

exclusion from the salvation promised in Christ³⁵. However, even if you betray the Son of God and are at least partially responsible for putting him to death, are you still beyond repentance, forgiveness or salvation? If each individual event of the Passion narrative was prophesied, or planned and known by God, are you indeed still 'entirely shut out from the grace of God?'³⁶ The answer may not seem simple, but some light could be shed on it when one looks, not just at the death of Judas, but at Matthew's Gospel as a whole - not only as an account of Jesus' life and ministry, but as a Jewish narrative, simultaneously embracing and yet damning the norms and values of the time period. It is often thought that Matthew simply casts the death of Judas into his Gospel as an afterthought, trying to tidy up any loose ends in his narratives - this would explain the differences seen in Matthew's account and in Luke/Acts. However, if this were the case, why have Judas die? And, specifically, why in such a gruesome manner? Let's look a bit deeper.

Matthew's Gospel, as highlighted by Ehrman, is considered to be the most 'Jewish' of the Gospels, placing a lot of emphasis on Jewish law and the fulfilment of prophecy - for example, Matthew shows Jesus making specific reference to fulfilling the law as opposed to overthrowing it in chapter 5:17-19, and certain prophecies are brought to attention such as his birth to a virgin mother (Matthew 1:20-23, as a fulfilment of Isaiah 7:14), specifically in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:6, as a fulfilment of Micah 5:2). Dale Allison in the *Oxford Bible Commentary* similarly points out that it is likely that Matthew was written in a very Jewish setting and community following the First Jewish Revolt of 70CE, where the Pharisees 'emerged dominant.'³⁷ However, early Judaism was vastly diverse in the second temple period and into antiquity, with many different Jewish sects co-existing, such as the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, not to mention the Jesus Movement. All of these groups differed in their approach to Jewish practice and belief, and to what extent they agreed with the teachings and actions of Jesus, but were united in the basic foundational teachings of Judaism (for example, the belief in one God, belief in the covenant made with his people Israel, and belief in the word of the Torah). Ergo, to say that Matthew's Gospel is necessarily 'anti-Jewish,' as claimed by Ehrman, may be something of an exaggeration. It appears that Matthew is not so much anti-Jewish, so much as anti-establishment. Matthew presents us with a harsh portrayal of the Jewish religious authorities, with Jesus describing the Pharisees and Sadducees as a 'brood of vipers' in Matthew 3:7, and the Pharisees as the 'blind guides of the

³⁵ John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*, translated and collated by William Pringle, 3 volumes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), as quoted by Catherine Sider Hamilton, "The Death of Judas in Matthew: Matthew 27:9 Reconsidered," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 137, issue 2 (Atlanta, 2018), 419-437

³⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, as quoted by Sider Hamilton, "the death of Judas," 419

³⁷ Dale C. Allison, Jr., "Matthew," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 845

blind' in Matthew 15:14. Moreover, the Pharisees in particular are shown to be critical and disapproving of Jesus' ministry, reprimanding Jesus for picking grain on the sabbath (Matthew 12:2), and accusing Jesus of being associated with Beelzebub for curing the mute demoniac in Matthew 12:24. Ergo, whilst of course Matthew wrote from an early Jewish perspective, this idea of anti-establishment can also convey underlying anti-Jewish connotations. However, these two ideas can be reconciled when one considers that Matthew writes his narratives very carefully, interweaving the positives and negatives of Jewish life under the Roman occupation. Yes, Christ (according to Matthew) did not come to overthrow the Jewish law but to bring it into a new light, with a renewed emphasis on love and compassion as opposed to putting the law first – a timeless example of this would be Matthew 12:10, when Christ heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath to the shock and dismay of others, who are more concerned with it being unlawful. Thus, to summarise – Matthew is strategically critical of aspects of early Judaism in order to persuade the reader further that Jesus truly is the Messiah, and for the reader to associate Jesus with the idea of Messianic hope and expectation. For Matthew, Judaism as practiced under Jesus is the true, authentic Judaism³⁸. Ergo, to depict Judas – the traitor, the betrayer – as someone who can still find it in them to repent and to show remorse, then this only amplifies this.

Another crucial aspect of the death of Judas according to Matthew is the unusual reference to the prophet Zechariah seen in Matthew 27:9-10 – 'then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah, "and they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one on whom a price had been set, on whom some of the people of Israel had set a price, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me.'" This quotation, actually taken from Zechariah 11:12-13 but famously attributed to the prophet Jeremiah, has caused much scholarly debate, focussing less on how it effects the death of Judas and its significance to the story of Judas as a whole, and instead looking more in detail at its attribution – or, the misattribution, as the case may perhaps be. The context of the use of Jewish prophecy in Matthew could, in theory, change the intended meaning of the death of Judas. As mentioned, it has not gone unnoticed that Matthew 27:9 echoes both Jeremiah and Zechariah – for instance, Raymond E. Brown, in his commentary, *The Death of the Messiah, from Gethsemane to Grave*, argues that this is merely a conflated quotation on Matthews' part – quoting both prophets, but mistakenly only naming one³⁹. However, Catherine Sider Hamilton views this part of Matthew from a different perspective, arguing that the use of the two prophets gives us insight into 'a shared logic and particular history... that informs the story of Judas⁴⁰.' As is the case with any textual source from history, rarely is any literary device chosen by accident – the writer always has a purpose

³⁸ Samuel Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism in the New Testament?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978) 70

³⁹ Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave; A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels, Vol. 1* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 651

⁴⁰ Catherine Sider Hamilton, "The Death of Judas in Matthew: Matthew 27:9 Reconsidered," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137, no. 2 (2018): 421

in mind, be that political, theological, or otherwise. Ergo, Matthew's use of inter-text in this Gospel is clearly instrumental in the context and development of not only the story of Judas but of the Gospel as a whole and completed text.

Sider Hamilton notes several key similarities between all three sources – Matthew, Zechariah, and Jeremiah – mostly in terms of the content, the themes of the writing, and the language used by the writers. For example, Matthew writes in chapter 27 that Judas speaks to the 'chief priests and the elders' of the people (Matthew 27:3), and declares, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood' (Matthew 27:4). The chief priests refuse to listen to Judas, telling him that his declaration of betrayal, guilt, and throwing down of the 'blood money' mean nothing to them – as a result, Judas leaves to go and hang himself (Matthew 27:4-6). This is paralleled in Jeremiah 19, which begins with a declaration of sin against innocent blood – 'Hear the word of the Lord, O Kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem... the people have forsaken me, and have profaned this place... because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent.' (Jeremiah 19:3-4) – a declaration made in the presence of the elders of the people, and the senior priests (Jeremiah 19:1). Likewise, just as the chief priests refuse to listen to Judas' repentance, so do they not listen to Jeremiah. Jeremiah foretells that the people of Judah and Jerusalem will 'fall by their swords,' their dead bodies shall be food for the birds and the animals, the city will be hissed at by those horrified by such a sight, and the people of the city will eat the flesh of their sons and daughters (Jeremiah 19:6-9). The priest, Pashhur, strikes Jeremiah for prophesying such disaster and destruction, and puts him in the stocks (Jeremiah 20:2), which results in Jeremiah claiming that they shall fall by the swords of their enemies (Jeremiah 20:4). 'In both cases,' Sider Hamilton writes, 'an accusation about innocent blood and sin is made, and priests reject it⁴¹.' Destruction follows in both Jeremiah and in Matthew – for Judas, it is imminent, but for Pashhur and the people of Judah and Jerusalem, it will be in the future – Sief Van Tilborg refers to this as a 'narrative parallel structure' between the two texts⁴². In much the same way, in Zechariah it is written, 'be a shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter' (Zechariah 11:4) Here, 'the flock' refers to children, or the innocent, who are killed by those meant to protect them. A later verse says, 'I will cause them, every one, to fall each into the hand of a neighbour, and each into the hand of the king; and they shall devastate the land' (Zechariah 11:6) Whilst the term 'innocent blood' is not used, the imagery is echoic of what we have seen in Jeremiah and in Matthew – a correlation between innocent blood, sin, internal corruption, and an overall result of death and devastation.

⁴¹ Sider Hamilton, "The Death of Judas," 424

⁴² Sief Van Tilborg, "Matthew 27:3-10: An Intertextual Reading," in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writing: Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel*, ed. Sipke Draisma (Kampen: Kok Publishers, 1989), 159-174, as referenced by Sider Hamilton, "The Death of Judas," 421

Thus, both prophets tell a similar story – a story of ‘the history of Israel, its leaders, its people, and its corruption⁴³,’ which ultimately lead to its downfall. Ergo, it comes as no surprise that, with so many similarities between the three, an ongoing tradition has been developed based on this rational link between sin, innocent blood, and death and/or destruction. However, it is worth noting that, although all three texts have their similarities, there is one section of Zechariah that does not appear in Jeremiah, which makes for a crucial addition to the story of Judas’ death as seen through the lens of Jewish prophecy – this section appears in Zechariah 11, where it is written, ‘then the Lord said to me, “throw [the thirty shekels] down 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’ (Zechariah 11:13). The money in this passage of Zechariah is ‘payment from the sheep merchants who buy and kill the sheep⁴⁴.’ This, much like the money Judas received for being an informant and for being instrumental in putting Jesus to death, is blood money – tainted, associated with innocent blood, and of no use to the chief priests. However, by essentially buying Jesus’ innocent blood, and then using the blood money to buy the Field of Blood, or the Potter’s Field (Matthew 27:7-8), the chief priests here essentially carry out the prophecy foretold in Zechariah, unfortunately this time in a temple, a holy space that is now defiled⁴⁵.

Of course, Judas still plays a part in the narrative, bearing responsibility for the death of Jesus – the spilling of innocent blood - alongside the chief priests. The chief priests pick up the blood money where Judas throws it down, and Judas goes to hang himself – the narrative of innocent blood, blood money and defilement continues through Judas’ death. The death of Judas in Matthews’ narrative is neither an apology nor atonement for what happened to Jesus, but a consequence of the corruption and defilement that is unified by the idea of blood money. Be that as it may, this does not signal the end for Matthew. After all, the Gospel writers proclaim exactly that – the Gospel, the good news. In light of both Judas and Jesus’ death, the grave is triumphed over – almost literally, in the case of Matthew. In Zechariah, Judah and Jerusalem are defiled and are signalled for death and devastation, likewise in Matthew, the temple is defiled by blood money. However, at the death of Jesus, ‘the earth was shaken and the rocks were split, and the tombs were opened and many bodies of the holy ones who had fallen asleep were raised’ (Matthew 27:51-52). This mostly echoes Ezekiel, who writes, ‘behold, I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel’ (Ezekiel 37:12). Thus, in the death of Jesus, the aforementioned defilement is overturned – the dead are raised from the defiled land, ‘the burial ground now yields life and

⁴³ Sider Hamilton, “The Death of Judas,” 429

⁴⁴ Sider Hamilton, “The Death of Judas,” 430

⁴⁵ Sider Hamilton, “The Death of Judas,” 430

not death⁴⁶,' and 'Matthew announces new life, precisely in the place of bones⁴⁷,' and Judas, even in his own death, is conducive to all of this.

Ergo, Matthew presents us with a challenging text that marries Judaism - i.e. the fulfilment of scriptural prophecy - with early Christian evangelism - e.g. condemning the chief priests and portraying them negatively, thus emphasising the divinity of Jesus - and places Judas so strategically that he is useful in Matthew putting forward his ideas and his rhetoric through the narrative in which Judas is involved. Matthew's use of Judas helps frame Matthews' narrative of defilement through blood money, but also emphasising Christ's triumph over death and the significance of the crucifixion.

LUKE

Whilst most Gospels simply portray Judas as a traitor - earning thirty pieces of silver for telling the Roman authorities where Judas would be at a particular time - the Gospel of Luke takes an interesting turn both in terms of theology, and the events that take place. Luke's Gospel is defined by being a paradoxical dichotomy between being thoroughly theocentric, and yet also taking quite an androcentric viewpoint as well. The Fortress Bible Commentary states that "Luke's Gospel is embedded in Israel's story of God's relationship with humanity and the world⁴⁸," and places a "special emphasis on covenants" throughout, anticipating "extending God's commonwealth to the nations⁴⁹." This obviously places Luke's Gospel apart from the other three synoptic gospels, with far much more emphasis on the relationship between God and man fulfilled through Christ.

Of course, as with any scriptural exegesis, it is important to consider the aims of the author and whether or not this could influence their descriptions and perceptions of certain characters and events. It is commonly agreed that Luke was perhaps a Doctor, a physician, or a healer within the early Christian community, and this is hinted at by St Paul in his epistle to the Colossians (Colossians 4:14). As such, he was clearly a well-educated member of society and this can clearly be seen in Luke's writing, even from the very early verses. In comparison to his more colloquial fellow Gospel writers, Luke's writing is very Graeco-Roman in style, and subsequently much more formal. For example, in Luke 1:1-4, Luke makes no hesitation to tell us that his Gospel is 'an orderly account,' (Luke 1:1, Luke 1:3) a factual narrative about God's fulfilment and the truth of the Gospel. Similarly, it is evident that Luke understands the importance of being an eyewitness, and to have thoroughly investigated what he writes about (Luke 1:2-3). Moreover, Luke is considered an apologist for Christianity,

⁴⁶ Sider Hamilton, "The Death of Judas," 436

⁴⁷ Sider Hamilton, "The Death of Judas," 436

⁴⁸ Robert L. Brawley, "Gospel of Luke," in *Fortress Commentary on the Bible: The New Testament*, ed. Margaret Aymer, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, Davide A. Sánchez (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 217

⁴⁹ Brawley, "Luke," 217

striving to make Christianity seem favourable and appeaseable in the eyes of the Roman occupation, and likewise in comparison to the ways of the Jews and the Gentiles.

However, the Women's Bible Commentary also points out that Luke, if read in certain ways through close reading, could potentially be very dangerous. For example, "Luke omits Mark's prohibition against divorce but retains the prohibition of marriage after divorce⁵⁰" (Luke 16:18). If one were to read this from the viewpoint of a previously abused or downtrodden woman, it could easily be misinterpreted as "condemning women to the alternatives of an intolerable bondage or a life of isolation and sexual repression⁵¹." Of course, it is important to remember that whilst the Gospels are male-centred works, this does not mean that women are disregarded entirely – however, as noted in the Women's Bible Commentary, whilst widows appear more frequently in Luke than any other gospel, for example, they are nevertheless still portrayed as subordinate and outside the immediate circle of power during Jesus' ministry. Ergo, it is clear from the offset that Luke has presented us with a difficult Gospel to grapple with, and this only gets trickier to interpret as we continue reading.

But what of Judas, our alleged anti-hero? As in Mark's Gospel, Judas is only mentioned a brief four times, beginning with yet another snide description of Judas' infamy – "and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor" (Luke 6:16). However, it is Luke's description of the events of the Passion that differ greatly from anything seen in the other three Gospels. According to the Oxford Bible Commentary, "Luke sets the earthly events of the passion in the context of an eschatological battle with Satan⁵²," and this is obvious from the very beginning of the Passion narrative, with references to Satan being made only three verses from the beginning. This of course contributes to the idea of Luke's Gospel being a more theocentric narrative than its Gospel counterparts, with Luke wanting to prove God's grace and promise of salvation through the defeat of Satan himself (even if there is a human price to be paid through the sacrifice of Christ), but is also important in our study of Judas within Luke.

In Luke 22:3, we see Luke describing Judas' betrayal as an act caused by Satan entering into him, and carrying out a sort of bodily possession, acting as a puppeteer as Judas carries out his reprehensible deed. Of course, upon first reading, it can easily be interpreted as the obvious – that Luke is using this bodily possession as a metaphor, implying that Judas truly was doing the work of Satan, or perhaps simply to emphasise that what Judas did was so horrendous that it could only have been the work of Satan or his associates. However, as a

⁵⁰ Jane D. Schaberg and Sharon H. Ringe, "Gospel of Luke," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2014), 501

⁵¹ Jane D. Schaberg and Sharon H. Ringe, "Gospel of Luke," 501

⁵² Eric Franklin, "Luke," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 954

scholar, one must always look deeper than this. As noted by Ehrman in his study of the role of Judas in the Gospel of Luke⁵³, the Devil plays an interesting role not only in the Passion narrative but throughout Luke's Gospel specifically, where we see the Devil and Jesus, alongside his followers, battling for supremacy – a true case of good triumphing over evil. This is evident from early on in Luke, from Jesus being tempted by Satan in the wilderness. Whilst this narrative appears in other Gospels and is by no means exclusive to Luke, Luke does add an interesting twist – firstly, the order of the temptations is different in Luke to Matthew. In Matthew's Gospel, Christ is first tempted to turn stones into bread to satisfy his hunger, then to jump from the Temple in order to be rescued by a Godly miracle, and then, finally, to worship Satan for rule over all the kingdoms of the world (Matthew 4:1-11) – whereas Luke reverses the last two of the temptations, first having Christ be asked to worship the Devil and then for Christ to throw himself off the top of the Temple (Luke 4:1-13). Could this be an allusion to the start of this to-ing and fro-ing between Jesus and the Devil, with the Devil trying to get the upper hand by having Christ die so early on? Perhaps that might ruin the fun. Another interesting aspect of this narrative is the final phrase, stating that, having failed in his attempts to tempt Jesus into worshipping the Devil and abandoning doing God's will, he left Jesus 'until an opportune time' (Luke 4:13). Both Christians and scholars have long since puzzled over when, exactly, and opportune time for the Devil to make an appearance would be. 'Throughout Luke's account of Jesus' ministry, the Devil is noticeably absent.⁵⁴ Jesus encounters several demons throughout this period, for example the demons in the Gerasene demoniac in Luke 8, where Jesus casts a man's demons into a herd of swine, who then proceed to run off the edge of a sheer cliff (Luke 8:26-39), or those seen in small children (Luke 9:37-43), but these are swiftly rebuked and defeated, and thusly Satan 'faces one defeat after the other⁵⁵' in light of Jesus' ministry and mission.

In both Matthew and Mark, it is possible to see a connection between the series of events leading up to the Passion, insofar as how Judas could have been swayed to leave the scene and to betray Jesus to the authorities – in Matthew, it is clearly evident that money and greed were key factors in this. In Mark, it is likely it could have been the woman anointing Jesus with the expensive oils, or a lack of regard for Jesus' mission. In Luke however, we don't see so much of a motive as a persuasion, or a possession – and a demonic one at that. It is the Devil who is responsible for Judas' actions, and it is evidently part of the Devil's ploy to stop Jesus from being a saviour or a Messiah. Ehrman expands on this idea, suggesting that the entirety of the Passion narrative, right up until the crucifixion, was a 'satanic plot⁵⁶' – one that begun in the early chapters of Luke and has now resurfaced, the Devil reasserting himself. However, whilst this may seem a dismal perspective on the Gospel – a text that should proclaim good news and

⁵³ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 29-31

⁵⁴ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 30

⁵⁵ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 30

⁵⁶ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 31

salvation – it is not the end for Christ and his followers. As Ehrman writes, ‘it is not Satan and his allies who would have the last word God would raise Jesus from the dead... and empower his followers to overcome Satan,⁵⁷’ just as Christ has.

Moreover, another perspective to consider with regards to Luke’s Gospel is that it is clear that Luke has done prior research and investigation, alongside what he already knows, in order to present to us his ‘orderly account’ (Luke 1:3) of what happened throughout Jesus’ ministry, which suggests that exaggeration would not fit in with Luke’s academic style. Similarly, Luke makes an effort to apologise for Christians, to portray Christians in a better light than the Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, it is likely that Luke would not have written about a fellow follower of Christ in such a negative manner – thus, by using a satanic bodily possession as an explanation for Judas’ actions, Luke successfully shifts the blame from Judas to Satan, and subsequently from good to evil.

Judas once again fades into the background in Luke’s gospel, with no mention of his fate. However, one must not forget that Luke presents us with a panoramic vision in two halves – Luke’s Gospel, and the Book of Acts, which picks up from where the Gospel left off and describes the life of Christ’s followers once Christ has left them alone.

Ergo, it is clear that Luke’s Gospel has very distinct themes that set it apart from other Gospel texts – these include the role of women, a more educated viewpoint, and a strong desire to shift negativity regarding Jesus and his party onto just about anyone else, Satan included, in order to distinguish early Christians from the Jews.

ACTS

In Acts, we see the second half of Luke’s vision, his attempt to document not only the beginnings of Christianity during Christ’s ministry, but also the beginnings of the earliest Christian communities. Whilst Acts remains anonymous, the fact that it is dedicated to Theophilus, the same as Luke’s Gospel, makes it quite evident that it is likely to stem from the same author. As Loveday Alexander notes, the Book of Acts ‘forms a bridge between the Gospels and the epistles,’ and, subsequently, also builds ‘a narrative of the steps by which the Christian message made the transition from the rural, Palestinian world of Jesus to the more urban world of Paul⁵⁸.’ As such, this book focuses not on Jesus, or what Jesus said or did, but on the followers, the disciples, the apostles, and the followers of Christ to come.

The book of Acts opens with the very ending of the Gospel story, where Christ has risen from the dead and is with his disciples, shortly before his ascension,

⁵⁷ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 31

⁵⁸ Loveday Alexander, “Acts,” in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1028

which we see in Acts 1:9. A short allusion is made to a second coming, before we switch straight back to the lives of the disciples. Amongst them, Peter seems to take an authoritative role (likely a nod to Matthew 16:18, where Peter is made Christ's rock, whereupon his Church shall be built), speaking to the crowd about what should be done going forward, and how Judas should be replaced among the Twelve. Interestingly, Judas' description in Acts is somewhat more forgiving than in the Gospels, and is simply referred to as 'a guide for those who arrested Jesus,' as opposed to the typical harsh sneer that we have become accustomed to. The author of Acts also describes Judas' fate, telling his reader that, using the money he acquired from the Roman authorities for his information on Christ's whereabouts, Judas bought himself a field and proceeded to 'fall headlong,' so that 'he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out' (Acts 1:18-19) - gruesome, indeed.

As we have already seen in Mark's Gospel, the choosing of the twelve was a matter of great significance, parallel to the establishment of a new Israel. Therefore, the issue of who is to step up and take Judas' place is the first thing to be seriously addressed in the Book of Acts. Lots are cast between Joseph, who is called Barsabbas, and Matthias. The role is taken by Matthias, and normality is restored as 'the new Israel' can continue to be built by the Twelve.

Whilst an attempt is made in Acts to answer questions that readers may have at the end of the gospels – for example, what happened to Christ after the resurrection? What happened to the Twelve? How did the Word spread? – in fact, it is arguable that even more questions are raised. Namely, how can one account of Judas' death be so drastically different to another? It is easy to imagine that hanging oneself, and death by falling down a hill or into a field can't be too similar – however, it is plausible that they could be. Consider the natural decaying process of a dead body – if left untreated, or unpreserved, and left to the elements, the decomposition process would begin very quickly. Bacteria would start eating away at various tissues, and gas would begin to build up inside the body. Once enough pressure has built up as a result of this, a dead and decaying body could easily explode. Therefore, the two differing accounts of Judas' death don't necessarily have to contradict each other, but could possibly supplement each other – it is plausible that perhaps Judas *did* hang himself, the rope could have split or snapped, and the body could have rolled into Hakeldama – the field of blood – where his entrails gushed from his rotting body.

JOHN

Finally, we come to our final Gospel. The Gospel of John is believed by scholars to have been written approximately a decade after Luke and Acts, possibly as late as 110 CE. John is known for being the only non-synoptic Gospel, choosing to adopt a more reflective approach as opposed to a narrative or descriptive one, as seen in the synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke). This is seen several times in John's writing, but perhaps predominantly in John 2, the story of the wedding at Cana – John seems to be looking back at these events from a sort of temporal distance, making it clear that disciples are 'remembering' these events (John 2:17 and John 2:22), as opposed to making it clear that this is being written almost

instantaneously. However, this isn't to say that John is entirely independent of the synoptics – the text still of course concerns Jesus' ministry, his life, his Passion, and his death – John just goes about it in a slightly different way with a different perspective as to what is important, which will be discussed in my next paragraph.

As with the other Gospels, it is the writers' portrayal and understanding of Jesus which helps the reader establish much more about the text, such as understanding of other characters from the writers' perspective, and the social and historical context of the text. For John, Jesus is divine, and this is reflected in the way Jesus is talked about by John throughout the text. For example, many descriptions of Jesus in John follow the 'I am' formula (*'ego eimi'* in Greek) – such as 'I am the light of the world,' (John 8:12) or 'I am the way, the truth, and the life' (John 14:6) – thus, Jesus claims this identity for himself, emphasising his own divinity⁵⁹. Moreover, from the very introduction of the text, Jesus is immediately associated with the word of God – for example, John claims that 'the Word became flesh, and lived among us' (John 1:14), which, again, is an indicator of John's firm belief in Jesus' divinity. In the second chapter, we also see Jesus cleansing the temple – making a 'whip of cords and driving all of them [sheep, cattle, and those selling them] out of them temple' and pouring out all of 'the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.' (John 2:15) Through this act of (somewhat aggressive) cleansing, it is implied that here we see an end to the old ways of disrespect towards the holy space of the temple, and thus Jesus summons a new beginning, separate from austere Jewish leadership, inspired by Jesus' own approach to ministry.

Furthermore, another interesting aspect of Jesus in John's Gospel is Jesus' foresight – Jesus suggests that he is aware that he will die for others, but of his own accord⁶⁰, saying that he will 'lay down his life' so that 'no one takes it from him' (John 10:18), and is also able to identify his disciples, and tell them things about their lives, without previously having met them. This is the case in the first chapter, where Jesus declares Nathanael to be a 'true Israelite in whom there is no deceit,' despite only having seen him under a fig tree beforehand (John 1:47-48). As such, much of John's Gospel is devoted to discussion of Christological theology, and of Jesus being simultaneously the Son of God – 'whom God sent into the world as God's agent' – and the son of man, a more 'apocalyptic figure, who exercises judgement on God's behalf.'⁶¹ Jesus teaches in long, expressive monologues, and raises the dead – a miracle not seen in the synoptics (John 11). Therefore, all of these faceted aspects of Jesus Christ, according to John, not only emphasise Jesus' holiness, and the fact that he is the son of God, but also act to cast a more positive light on the Jesus Movement in John's time period.

⁵⁹ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 40

⁶⁰ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 40

⁶¹ Adele Reinhartz, "Gospel of John" in *Fortress Commentary on the Bible: The New Testament*, ed. Margeret Aymer, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, and David A. Sanchez (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 268

Yet again, we have a damning introduction to Judas where the only characteristic of importance is the fact that Judas was the ‘one who was going to betray [Christ]’ (John 6:71). This first introduction comes at the end of John’s telling of a string of Christ’s miracles – most notably, the feeding of the five thousand in John 6:1-15, and Jesus walking on the water in chapters 16-20. As Jesus attempts to teach his disciples about eternal life, things quickly go awry when some turn their backs on Christ, finding it difficult to grapple with such concepts. A possible allusion to predestination is made, or the fact that Christ already knew what his Father’s plan for him was well ahead of the Passion, as Christ announces that whilst he has chosen the Twelve himself, he knows that ‘one of you is a devil’ (John 6:70). John clarifies here that Christ is indeed referring to Judas – the one who will betray him. This fits in with John’s high Christological viewpoint, and emphasised Jesus’ divinity by implying an aspect of omniscience and foreknowledge on Jesus’ part.

John’s Gospel is also unusual insofar as that John brings to light several other aspects of Judas that we don’t see in the synoptics, and likewise we also see Judas interact with others more often. The first example of this is seen in John 12, where Judas openly speaks about his aversion to Mary Magdalene using her oils to anoint Jesus, when, according to Judas, they could have been used to raise ‘three hundred denarii,’ to be ‘given to the poor’ (John 12:4-5). Adding to John’s more detailed approach to Judas, he continues to note that Judas said this ‘not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief’ (John 12:6) – John’s Gospel tells us that Judas was the holder of an alleged ‘common purse’ – likely a sort of fund for Christ and his followers throughout Christ’s ministry. This is a new development in our character profile for Judas, as this fact is not mentioned by any other gospel writer. However, whilst it provides an interesting facet to Judas that will be highlighted by scholars and writers to come (this will be expanded upon later on in my work), it does not come without questions and problems. If Judas was never of the same moral character as his fellow disciples, how could Jesus have chosen him as one of the twelve in the first place? Or, perhaps Judas only became as evil as some might consider him now at a later time, closer to when he betrays Jesus. In John 12:7, Jesus goes on to rebuke Judas for commenting on the expense of the ointment, telling Judas to ‘leave [Mary Magdalene] alone, she bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me’ (John 12:7-8). This too, as noted by Reinhartz, can be seen to be problematic, as it Jesus here suggests that ‘there is a higher priority on the symbolic preparations for his death than on the needs of others⁶²’ – whilst this essentially fits in with John’s viewpoint of Jesus being divine and being aware of his purpose on earth, it also raises questions on whether ‘investing in expensive projects to honour Jesus’ with are worth neglecting the poor for⁶³. However, as we will see in later parts of this dissertation, the demonisation of Judas here has stuck in the western

⁶² Reinhartz, “Gospel of John,” 290

⁶³ Klassen, *Judas*, 146

imagination for centuries, becoming easily one of the most recognisable traits of Judas Iscariot.

In a similar vein to Luke, John also makes reference to Judas' actions being the result of a sort of demonic/Satanic bodily possession. In 13:2, it is implied that Satan had already 'put into the heart' of Judas to do what he will do – that is, to have given him the idea or inspiration for his future actions. This idea is taken further in 13:26-27, where John tells us that, during the Last Supper, Satan and his evil intentions enter Judas via the Passover bread. However, unlike Luke, this idea of satanic possession is not explored any further by John. Although, as Maccoby notes, it is interesting how John continues to build this 'diabolism' of Judas, making sure to note something fiendish about Judas each time he is spoken about – first, he is referred to as a devil by Jesus (John 6:70-71), then he is shown to be a thief (John 12:4-6), and now he is sidled with the devil as the betrayal narrative takes place. When one considers John's consistent negative attitude towards the Jews⁶⁴ throughout his Gospel, it could be considered that Judas here reaches the same level of antagonism, 'imbued with a... negative spirituality deriving from the devil.'⁶⁵

According to Kieffer in the *Oxford Bible Commentary*, John's rendering of the Last Supper is slightly different to the synoptics – in Mark, for example, the disciples are described as dipping their bread 'into the same bowl of spices, whereas in John, it is the eating of ordinary bread, which... Jesus hands over to Judas.'⁶⁶ Similarly, Keener discusses the discourse of the Last Supper in light of Middle Eastern traditions in both Mark and John. For Keener, the fact that Jesus is the one extending the bread to Judas shows Jesus extending with the bread an offer of love, even to Judas⁶⁷. However, this is an interesting development in comparison with the synoptics, where Judas is identified out of his own choice, as opposed to what we see here in John where Jesus is the one identifying Judas as a traitor⁶⁸. Furthermore, in the synoptics, Judas 'stretches out his own hand "with" Jesus, perhaps indicating a deliberate violation of rank, or rebellion.'⁶⁹ In ancient tradition, speaking in a proper order at a communal meal is of upmost importance, and this is highlighted in texts such as the Qumran Scrolls and *War* by Josephus⁷⁰. The deconstruction of these established traditions and social

⁶⁴ See my next section of work on Judas in the wider religious community

⁶⁵ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 67

⁶⁶ René Kieffer, "John," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 986

⁶⁷ John Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary, Volume 2* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2003), 918

⁶⁸ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 919

⁶⁹ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 919

⁷⁰ 1QS 6.10 (Qumran Scrolls) and Josephus, *War*, 2.130, as referenced by Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 916

norms within the Passover narratives in the Gospels highlight the gravitas of Judas' actions and the coming Passion of Christ.

The role of Satan is an important aspect of John's Gospel, particularly the Passion narrative. John omits any accounts of Jesus performing exorcisms, and thus the word 'Satan' only appears once, and three mentions of 'the devil' – in comparison to Matthew, who mentions 'Satan' three times and 'the devil' six times, Mark where we have five mentions of Satan in four different contexts, and Luke where we have five mentions of both Satan and the devil, respectively – in John's Gospel, these mentions of Satan or the Devil entirely and unanimously surround the Betrayal⁷¹. Of course, the idea of spirits entering into individuals in order to empower them for either good or evil would not have been a new concept in the Mediterranean world, having been used in literature right from Homer through to the earlier Gospels, however what *is* different is, as noted by Keener, Jesus' continuation to stay in control of the situation – much like how in earlier literature and Jewish culture, God is sovereign over the Devil⁷². Thus, this is mirrored in Jesus identifying Judas as a traitor at the Passover meal, and encourages Judas – possessed by a Devil – to do what is essentially Jesus' will. Judas departs into the night – a final ironic contrast to John previously referring to Jesus as the 'light of the world.'⁷³ (John 8:12)

Chapter Two - "Yet one of you is a devil:" Judas' role in the wider religious community according to the Gospel writers

Despite each Gospel telling a slightly different version of the same story – some with more embellishment than others – each Gospel writer has a very different perspective and intention. This, too, extends to Paul and what he writes concerning the Christianity. Paul (or Pseudo-Paul, as the case may be), focuses more on passionately preaching about the glory of God and of Jesus Christ in order to ensure that the Churches he wrote to rectify their wrongdoings and remained firm in the Christian faith in the face of crises. The text examined earlier, 1 Corinthians, is an excellent example of this – Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth, who were becoming divided over issues regarding morality and internal disagreements, and used the Christian idea of salvation and eternity in the Kingdom of heaven in order to regain the Corinthians' focus on, in Paul's mind, the more important aspects of being an early Christian. Nowhere does Paul go into explicit detail about the life or sayings of Jesus in the way that the Gospels do.

Mark's Gospel, on the other hand, keeps the story precise and to the point, choosing not to rely on embellishment or elongated passages of detailed description and instead focussing on Christology and the divinity and the suffering of Christ in order to succinctly tell of the good news of the word

⁷¹ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 919

⁷² Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 919

⁷³ Kieffer, "John," 986

incarnate⁷⁴. Matthew chooses to focus more on fulfilment of Jewish law, whilst also concentrating on Christian concepts of love, acceptance, and early group identity. Luke and Acts come from a more educated viewpoint, and, without attempting to vilify or scapegoat the Jews too much, attempts to shift any blame away from Jesus and his followers and onto Satan instead. Finally, we come to John's Gospel, a Gospel famed for its high Christology and an emphasis on the clearly evident tension between the Jesus Movement and the religious authorities.

However, despite these differences in content and in approach, there are some recurring and overarching themes that are crucial to note throughout each Gospel text, and how these themes are presented relates to the writer's intention. Namely, these themes include anti-Semitism, innocence, betrayal, and redemption. In this conclusive part of my analysis of Judas in the New Testament, I will not only summarise what has been said above in my analysis of the role of Judas in the Gospels, but also consider exactly how the New Testament writers have used Judas in light of some of these themes and of their own literary motives.

As mentioned, one theme in particular that runs through each text that I would like to look at in closer detail, unfortunately, is flagrant anti-Semitism – a term here referring to the act of hostility or prejudice towards the Jews as a race. This differs to the term anti-Jewish, or anti-Judaism, which refers to prejudice or disagreement with the Jewish religion on a theological level. Scholars have long since debated when anti-Semitism, as a political stance against the Jewish people, truly began. Some argue that it dates back to the Babylonian exile of the sixth century, when Jews left their homeland and began to settle 'in foreign lands and came into contact with... people whose customs, race and religion were opposed to their own⁷⁵,' others date it back to the Hasmonean Revolt when Judaism clashed with the Hellenistic cultures of the Greek cities in the second century⁷⁶, whilst others propose a theory of 'eternal anti-Semitism,' wherein the persecution of Jews is as old as the religion of Judaism itself⁷⁷. Of course, discussion of anti-Semitism came to the scholarly forefront following the

⁷⁴ This is expanded upon by C.M. Tuckett, "Mark," 887

⁷⁵ Bernard Lazare, *L'antisémitisme, son histoire et ses causes* (Paris: Léon Chailley, 1894), as quoted by Nicholas de Lange, "The Origins of Anti-Semitism." In *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis*, ed. Sander L. Gilman and Steven T. Katz (New York: NYU Press, 1991), 25

⁷⁶ Jules Isaac, *Genèse de L'antisémitisme: essai historique* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1956), English translation by Helen Weaver, *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), as referenced by de Lange, "The Origins of Anti-Semitism," 26

⁷⁷ The theory of Eternal Anti-Semitism was coined by French Jewish scholar Théodore Reinach in the nineteenth century, and was popular until the end of the Second World War. This is mentioned and discussed by de Lange, "The Origins of Anti-Semitism," 25

aftermath of World War 2 and the tragedy of the Holocaust, which brought about 'with unprecedented urgency the question of Christianity's responsibility for anti-Semitism⁷⁸.' That is to say that with the end of the war came a distinct consideration that Christianity, rather than politics or geography, played a significant part in anti-Semitic persecution. Indeed, one of the most prominent scholarly works on this matter is *Jésus et Israël*, or, *Jesus and Israel*, by Jules Isaac. Isaac was a renowned French academic in the early 20th Century, but when he was stripped of his position as Inspector General of Education in France in 1940 for the sole fact that he was Jewish, he became 'increasingly concerned with a need to understand the roots of Anti-Semitism⁷⁹.' However, it became apparent to Isaac that whilst Nazism was by no stretch of the imagination the same as Christianity, it was clear that 'Hitler was able to carry out his Anti-Semitic policies because of an antipathy to Jews and Judaism that was deeply rooted in European culture, that had been fertilised and nurtured through centuries of Christian teaching and worship⁸⁰.' Ergo, a new need for reading the Gospels and other parts of the New Testament in light of Anti-Semitism or Anti-Judaism was formed. Over the next few paragraphs I will examine exactly how Judas is used by New Testament Gospel writers to form an apology for Christianity, whilst using him as part of an anti-Jewish rhetoric to do this. Of course, whilst looking into anti-Semitism in the Gospels, it is important to bear in mind that Jesus was born, lived, and died as a Jew. His actions and ideas were opposed by some Jews – namely, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and priests – but were accepted by others, such as his disciples and those who bore witness to Jesus' miracles. This therefore emphasises the internal diversity within early Judaism and reminds scholars to keep an open mind when addressing ideas such as anti-Semitism. As well as this, the Gospels themselves were written many decades after the death of Jesus, in a time when Christianity was still considered an extension of Judaism, with an ever-growing number of Gentiles. The writers of the Gospels regarded Christianity, in its earliest form, to be the very fulfilment of Judaism and the prophecies and promises that surrounded the religion of the patriarchs⁸¹. Following on from this, 'the proportion of Gentile converts grew and the Jewish-Christian communities eventually dwindled, the notion of distinction and separateness between Christians and Jews began to take shape in both groups⁸².' The perception of this diversity and distinction, however, shifted

⁷⁸ John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Towards Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) 13

⁷⁹ Terence L. Donaldson, *Jews and Anti-Judaism in the New Testament: Decision Points and Divergent Interpretations* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2010) 1

⁸⁰ Donaldson, *Jews and Anti-Judaism in the New Testament*, 1-2

⁸¹ Donald A. Hagner, "Paul's Quarrel with Judaism," in *Anti-Semitism in Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Donald A. Hagner (Minneapolis, USA: Fortress Press, 1993), 128

⁸² William A. Farmer, "Introduction," in *Anti-Judaism and the Gospels*, ed. William A. Farmer (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 2

between and after the two Jewish wars in 70 and 135 CE, respectively. Christians – those who converted from being Jews or Gentiles – now saw themselves as ‘heirs and followers of the disciples and see in contemporary Judaism the successors of those who rejected Jesus⁸³.’ With the second century came a breadth of new Christian literature built on this foundation and began ‘discussing their distinction and separation on a theological level,⁸⁴’ with texts such as Irenaeus’ *Adversus Haereses* being brought to the forefront of early Christian scholarship in 180 CE. Ergo, Whilst Jesus and his followers were Jews from birth, the interpretations of stories told in the Gospel writings changed with political, historical and social context of early Christianity. Stories of Jesus being in conflict with certain groups of Jews became regarded as very ‘us against them⁸⁵,’ and Jesus’ Jewishness became forgotten as this approach became the new Christian norm. Therefore, it is important that, although I will subsequently be presenting a study of Judas being used to express anti-Semitism in the Gospels, this does not mean that the Gospels are, by their nature, anti-Semitic. More so that the anti-Semitic interpretation of the narrative of the Gospels is something that has become entwined with Christian history.

As we have seen, the concept of anti-Semitism has been relevant to the study of early Christianity through centuries of theological and historical study through the centuries, however it is important to consider the role that Christianity plays in establishing and continuing to influence an anti-Jewish narrative. As in many cases in the study of the history of theology, the Gospels make for a perfect starting point. Although the epistles of Paul were written before the Gospels, with Paul being Jewish himself and abiding by the Torah right up until his death, whilst at the same time writing for a Gentile audience, it is difficult to precisely argue that Paul is anti-Semitic or indeed anti-Jewish. Whilst there are some exceptions to this, perhaps most famously in 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16, wherein Paul outright accuses the Jewish people of being responsible for the death of Christ, these outbursts are few and far between in Paul’s writing, thus making them incongruous with the rest of the content of the epistles. Therefore, due to their more narrative nature (as opposed to the more proclaiming, instructive, or preacher-like style of Paul’s letters), the Gospels have the advantage of being able to use the characteristics or actions of those involved in the narrative in order to convey various concepts or underlying themes. Of course, in a similar way to Paul, the intention of a Gospel text is to reveal the Good News of the Christian narrative – i.e. the life and teachings of Jesus, his death for the salvation of man, and his triumph over death through the resurrection – However, the Gospels place much more emphasis on the life and teachings of Jesus, and uphold him as the central focus of the narratives. It is precisely these qualities that ensure that the Gospels are able to tactically implement an underlying anti-Jewish rhetoric in order to distance Christianity from Judaism in antiquity.

⁸³ Farmer, “Introduction,” *Anti-Judaism and the Gospels*, 3

⁸⁴ Farmer, “Introduction,” *Anti-Judaism and the Gospels*, 3

⁸⁵ Farmer, “Introduction,” *Anti-Judaism and the Gospels*, 2

Thus, we move onto the Synoptic Gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Here, we find Judas featured more prominently, and in more of a position to be featured in the Gospel stories. In all three Gospels, Judas is portrayed similarly – treated with contempt from his first mention by the writer, associated with Satan, and being described and dealt with ‘as swiftly and damningly as possible.’ However, the portrayal of Judas has as much to do with the authors’ political stance as it does their religious one. Here, I shall start with the Gospel of Mark and consider the role and degree of anti-Semitism in each Gospel and how Judas is used by the writer to convey these messages.

Mark presents us with a very matter-of-fact rendition of the Gospel, and very few details regarding the Gospel narratives or the intricacies thereof are expanded upon or elaborated. As such, there is not much content that explicitly implies Mark’s attitudes towards the Jewish people – or, not as much as can be seen in other Gospel writings such as Matthew or John. However, there are areas of the Gospel that could give the reader insight as to Mark’s religious predisposition and perspective. One such indicator of Mark’s attitudes towards the Jewish community can be seen between chapters 7 and 9, where Jesus ‘demonstrates an openness to gentile converts⁸⁶’ – one such example would be in Mark 7:25-30, where Jesus casts out a demon from the daughter of a Gentile woman ‘of Syrophenician origin’ (Mark 7:26). As well as this, a famously debated aspect of Mark’s Gospel, particularly related to Mark’s opinions and perspectives towards the Jews, is Mark’s inaccuracies regarding Jewish purity ritual and practice, seen in Mark 7:3-4. Here, Mark claims that ‘all the Jews’ must ‘thoroughly wash their hands’ before eating (Mark 7:3). Of course, the practice of all Jews washing their hands before eating came in much later, around 100CE – it was only the Jewish priests who practiced this any earlier⁸⁷. Interestingly, later on in this chapter, Jesus rejects kosher laws altogether, ‘declaring all foods clean’ (Mark 7:19), a passage not seen in later Gospel traditions. These inaccuracies and rejections of Jewish practices suggests that the writer of Mark’s Gospel was likely not Jewish, or at least unaware of how such practices were carried out in more traditional or orthodox communities. An alternative perspective on this suggests that here, Mark is suggesting that ‘how one acts... is a more important indication of holiness than what or how one eats,⁸⁸’ and that challenging distinctions such as purity rituals was ‘important for Mark’s Church.⁸⁹’ Others, on the other hand, claim that Jesus never said such things as declaring all foods to be clean – indeed, this is argued by Räisänen, who in his reflections on Jesus and food laws as seen

⁸⁶ Willis, “Negotiating the Jewish Heritage of Early Christianity,” in *Fortress Commentary on the Bible: The New Testament*, ed. Margeret Aymer, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, and David A. Sanchez (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014) 39

⁸⁷ Tuckett, “Mark,” 899

⁸⁸ Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “Gospel of Mark,” in *The Women’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2014), 484

⁸⁹ Malbon, “Gospel of Mark,” 484

in Mark, claims that later controversies in the early church regarding food would be negated entirely if Jesus had ever said anything as clear as what is seen in Mark 7:19⁹⁰.

Another interesting aspect of Mark's Gospel, and the undertones of religious climate therein, is not necessarily what Jesus said or did, but where he went. Willis notes that in Mark, Jesus 'moves into territories occupied by Gentiles,' which also happen to be 'part of the ancient borders of Israel,' with one exception in Mark 7:1. As we have already established, Mark places much emphasis on Jesus choosing twelve disciples to represent rebuilding the twelve tribes of Israel in a new light, thus, it could also be considered that by moving into these lands, previously conquered by the Maccabees and their descendants, Mark also adds another layer to the idea of Jesus reconstituting Israel. Therefore, these small details in the wider scheme of Mark's writing can indicate to us a number of things – whilst some argue that these are clear indications that Mark was a Gentile, writing for a Gentile audience, thus why Mark would not be as clear on certain Jewish practices but would of course pay more attention to Jesus interacting with other Gentiles. Thus, whilst this is not necessarily an anti-Semitic nor particularly anti-Jewish viewpoint within Mark's Gospel, it does indicate a strong Gentile tradition being present at the time of Mark's writing, wherein the Jesus Movement are gaining momentum, and being open to both Jews and Gentiles, whilst still being very much founded in traditional Judaism.

Ultimately, many of these facets of Mark's Gospel that suggest or imply a more Gentile or perhaps anti-Jewish perspective relate to discipleship – being chosen to be Jesus' closest followers and to represent a new Israel, the choice of the disciples not to question Jesus when he helps the Syrophoenician woman, or when he challenges Jewish food and purity laws, and the misunderstanding of the disciples' in relation to who Jesus really is or is meant to be. Therefore, despite Judas only being fleetingly mentioned by Mark, his brief appearances are amplified in importance due to the fact that he does not match the rest of the disciples in their united sense of discipleship or community. Though being 'one of the twelve,' (Mark 14:10), Judas falls foul of his position as a disciple, and establishes himself as yet another supposedly evil Jew, from whom the Jesus Movement appear to be distancing themselves from through the establishment of a new community.

Matthew's Gospel is more interesting in the study of anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism being a running theme in the Gospel writings. As previously mentioned in my analysis of Judas in Matthew, it is apparent that Matthew speaks harshly of particular sects of the Jewish community – particularly the Pharisees and the Sadducees, amongst others. However, a lot of emphasis is also placed on the use and the fulfilment of Jewish prophecy – a key aspect of the Jewish faith, and of early Christianity in its position between being a Jewish and Gentile sect prior to becoming a separate religion entirely. Of course, Matthew's Gospel also

⁹⁰ Heikki Räisänen, "Jesus and the Food Laws: Reflections of Mark 7:15" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 5, no. 16 (September 1982): 79–100, as quoted by Tuckett, "Mark," 900

features Judas more prominently, and thus we can explore how exactly Judas is used to present Matthew's perspective on the Jews. The way Matthew talks about the Jews is described by Willis as 'prophetic anti-Judaism' – that is, essentially, critiquing the prophetic figures of one's own religion⁹¹. Although Matthew was of course undoubtedly a Jew himself, he harshly talks about the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the priests, and how they openly disapprove of Jesus' ministry. Interestingly, Gentiles in Matthews' Gospel do not appear to receive the same treatment - even Pilate seems less malicious than his pharisaic counterparts. Although, having said this, it must also be noted that Matthew does not reject the Jews altogether as a race, but continues to evangelise this early form of Christianity (or 'authentic Judaism'⁹²) and uses Judas help achieve this.

In Matthew, Judas is given a very clear motive for his betrayal – as seen in Matthew 26:14, the question of payment for information regarding handing Christ over to the relevant authorities is raised by Judas, as opposed to by the priests as we see in Mark – 'when [the priests] heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So [Judas] began to look for an opportunity to betray [Jesus]' (Mark 14:11), versus '[Judas] said, "what will you give me if I betray him to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver' (Matthew 26:15). Maccoby examines the question of why a disciple, chosen by Jesus as seen in Matthew 10:4, would choose to betray Jesus in this way, and concludes that the answer could only be two-fold – firstly, the motive of greed. Despite being chosen, or elected, to be one of Jesus' closest followers, to cast out unclean spirits and to 'cure every disease and every sickness' (Matthew 10:1), as soon as Judas is 'given a financial motive in Matthew,' it becomes clear that 'there has been a descent into triviality⁹³.' Secondly, to portray Judas as 'clinging to a worldly Messiah' would be 'regarded as typical of the Jerusalem Church⁹⁴,' which would not be befitting of the Gospels' ultimate traitor. Both of these aspects of Judas' betrayal of Jesus push Judas further away from Matthews' initial criteria of being an ideal disciple as seen in Matthew 10:1. By associating Judas with greed – a common stereotype of Jewish people – and with going against the ideals of the early Church, even in its infancy, Matthew continues to portray Judas as a poor example of discipleship, and a common Jew easily lead astray by monetary gain. After all, thirty pieces of silver was considered by no means great riches – enough to feed one person for around five months, or, alternatively, the average price of a slave – but, it would perhaps be 'sufficient inducement for greed⁹⁵.'

Meanwhile, Luke and Acts also present us with a very different version of events to what has been seen previously in the Gospels. As previously seen in my analysis of the role of Judas in Luke's Gospel, Luke portrays the Passion narrative as less of a chronological series of events regarding Jesus' actions and teachings

⁹¹ Willis, "Negotiating the Jewish Heritage of Early Christianity," 35

⁹² Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism in the New Testament?* 70

⁹³ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 39

⁹⁴ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 39

⁹⁵ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 39

in the days leading up to his trial and crucifixion, and more of a 'cosmic conflict between good and evil'⁹⁶. As such, rather than Judas simply carrying out his actions of betrayal as per Mark and Matthew's versions of events, Luke instead opts to depict Judas' betrayal as the result of 'Satan entering into him' (Luke 22:3). This of course raises questions regarding Judas' responsibility, and whether or not he is completely worthy of being blamed for his actions if they happened whilst he was possessed by Satan, but it also raises questions on Luke's perception of the religious climate itself and of his perception of the person of Judas.

According to Luke's Gospel, the Jews are the enemies, or the opposition, to Jesus and his ministry. This idea presents itself through much of the text of the Gospel, and results in an amplified anti-Jewish narrative. A key example of this is Luke's negative attitude towards the Jewish leaders, who 'plot [Jesus'] death, denounce him to the temporal authorities, and oversee his execution'⁹⁷, some scholars even go so far as to suggest that even the executioners, referred to only as 'soldiers' by Luke, were indeed Jewish⁹⁸, which heightens the Jewish people's responsibility for the death of Jesus. There is only one mention of the Jewish leaders in Luke that is not explicitly linked or associated to the death of Jesus, which can be found in Luke 3:2, which affirms a uniformly consistent characterisation of the Jewish leaders in Luke. Whilst this is similar to what has been seen in previous Gospels – particularly Matthew, who projects a lot of negativity onto the Jewish leaders – there seems to be less of this hostility shown towards Judas. Instead, Luke uses the famous satanic possession, seen in Luke 22:3-6, to explain Judas' actions as the events of the betrayal occurred in the narrative.

Thus, we come to the Gospel of John. This Gospel is not only unusual in its differences towards the other Gospels in terms of narrative and style, but also in its bold attempts to be more anti-Semitic than its fellow Gospels. Adele Reinhartz notes that the Gospel's 'narrative, theology, message and language suggest that [John's Gospel] was written within... a specifically "Johannine" group⁹⁹," which 'may have included Samaritans and gentiles, alongside Jews.' However, the Gospel has distinct anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish aspects to it and conveys a particular hostility towards the Jews within its narratives. This is likely reflective of 'a process of identity-formation' within John's wider communal circle, and also 'entails efforts at differentiation from the Jewish community¹⁰⁰' specifically.

John's Gospel makes a total of 70 references to *loi Ioudaioi* – here translated as, the Jews - far more than the other three gospels combined. The vast majority of

⁹⁶ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 52

⁹⁷ Jack T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1987), 3

⁹⁸ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke XX-XXIV* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1496, as referenced by Sanders, *The Jews in Luke Acts*, 9

⁹⁹ Reinhartz, "Gospel of John" 268

¹⁰⁰ Reinhartz, "Gospel of John," 268

these references carry negative connotations, and present an overall negative depiction of Judaism and the Jewish people¹⁰¹. One example of this is seen in chapter 8, where Jesus claims that a group of Jews – even described as disciples – have the devil as their father, who was a ‘murderer from the beginning’ and is ‘a liar and the father of lies’ (John 8:44). Many scholars have questioned John’s references to the *Ioudaioi*, and have considered the possibilities of these references perhaps being directed less at the Jewish people as a whole, and more towards either the Jewish leaders specifically (in a similar vein to Matthew), or perhaps a geographical demographic as opposed to a religious one, wherein *Ioudaioi* is translated as ‘the Judeans’ as opposed to ‘the Jews.’ However, as Reinhartz notes in the Fortress Commentary on the Bible, with so much diversity within first century Judaism, it is difficult to make such proposals. For example, some parts of John are very clear regarding who is being referred to – in John 12:9, it clearly states a ‘great crowd of the Jews’ were present to see Jesus and Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead. Similarly, in John 19:6, the Jewish authorities are referred to separately from the crowd of Jews described in John 19:7. Moreover, owing to this aforementioned internal diversity across early Judaism, of course some Jews would have identified more with the religious practices and beliefs of being Jewish, whereas others likely would have explicitly rejected these practices, choosing to live as Gentiles or to join the Jesus Movement. Thus, ‘the Jews’ remains the most probable and most accurate translation, which takes into account the multitude of Judaisms and Jews prominent at the time. With John being a later Gospel, this negativity towards the Jews, combined with the lack of clarity regarding which types of Jews are being referred to in many passages of John’s Gospel, reinforces the idea that it was written at a time of social change and ‘identity formation¹⁰²’ for early Christianity as a separate entity to traditional Judaism in the Roman Empire.

Evidently, just as each Gospel text differs in terms of content and intention, so do they differ in approaches to the Jewish people and those in positions of authority. For example, Matthew harshly critiques the Jewish priests, but says little about the rest of the Jewish community other than acknowledging their existence. John, on the other hand, whilst somewhat ambiguous in his terminology, choosing only to use *Ioi Ioudaioi* to describe a broad spectrum of Jewishness and Jewish beliefs, takes a critical and disapproving stance against the Jews. However, as previously mentioned, during the time period when the Gospels were written, Christianity was still yet to become totally separate from Judaism, and was still considered a sect wherein Jesus was the promised Messiah who fulfilled Jewish prophecy, thus making a form of ‘authentic’ or ‘complete’ Judaism¹⁰³. This therefore presents a difficulty in declaring this to be specifically anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism, as opposed to it being a case of the Gospel writers criticising those who did not view Jesus to be the Messiah – for example, the Pharisees who condemn Jesus’ ministry in Matthew, and eventually put Jesus to death in the Passion narratives.

¹⁰¹ Reinhartz, “Gospel of John,” 267

¹⁰² Reinhartz, “Gospel of John,” 268

¹⁰³ Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism in the New Testament?* 70

The use of Judas in the Gospel narratives can be seen as a tool used by the Gospel writers to convey anti-Semitic, anti-Judaic, or otherwise political or theological attitudes such as that towards ideas of innocence, betrayal, or discipleship, and are largely seen as negative across the four Gospels. However, it is of course crucial to remember that although Judas helps the Gospel writers convey these ideas, Judas still remains pivotal to the Christian narratives. As mentioned beforehand, without Judaism, there is no Christianity – be that as a separate sect of Judaism or a religious entity in its' own right as we know it today. Similarly, with no Judas, irrespective of how exactly he is used by the Gospel writers, there is no Passion narrative. No betrayal, no arrest, no trial, no crucifixion nor resurrection. One could indeed argue that perhaps this would happen anyway, due to the need to fulfil Jewish prophecy – for example, Isaiah 7:14, which foretells that a 'virgin shall conceive'¹⁰⁴, Isaiah 61:1-4 which describes how 'the Spirit of the Lord' will 'bring about justice... to those most liable to be victims of injustice'¹⁰⁵ and to 'build up the ancient ruins' and 'repair the ruined cities,' and, finally, Daniel 7:13-14, which describes one 'like a human being' will be given 'dominion and glory and kingship' that shall be 'everlasting' – however, the New Testament leaves little room for speculation. Assuming the Gospels are to be trusted as the most reliable sources we have regarding the life of Jesus and his earliest followers, then the existence and actions of a figure mentioned and discussed by all four of the Gospel writers has little reason to be doubted. This is also applicable to Paul, our earliest mention of Jesus being betrayed – an act seen by Paul as crucial to the story of Jesus – 'a necessary part of Jesus' sacrifice, a preliminary to his trial, death, and rising from the dead.'¹⁰⁶

This being said, this doesn't mean that every scholar believes this – because some don't. For example, Hyam Maccoby famously suggests that Judas, at least as we know him, never existed at all, and was a figure simply created by the early Church as a Jewish scapegoat figure – someone to blame the betrayal on in its entirety. According to Maccoby, the true, historical Judas lies in the fleeting references made another Judas – Judas, the brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3, Matthew 13:55), Judas, the son of James (Luke 6:16, Acts 1:3), and simply 'Judas, not Iscariot' (John 14:22) – a Judas 'who has a blameless and loyal career as a follower of Jesus'¹⁰⁷, who is rarely discussed by the Gospel writers. For Maccoby, it is this Judas who is the real Judas of history, 'whose sobriquet was given to the mythical Judas who was split off from him'¹⁰⁸. However, Maccoby admits, in his own words, that this 'remains a hypothesis'¹⁰⁹. What doesn't remain a

¹⁰⁴ Quotation taken from the King James translation of the Holy Bible

¹⁰⁵ R. Coggins, "Isaiah," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 481

¹⁰⁶ Stanford, *Judas*, 40

¹⁰⁷ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 160

¹⁰⁸ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 160

¹⁰⁹ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 161

hypothesis, according to Maccoby, is the ‘incontrovertible fact’ that ‘the Judas myth has functioned, and still functions, as a vehicle for antisemitism¹¹⁰.’ This is to say that the very name ‘Judas’ has become so laden with negative connotations due to the establishment of this Judas myth, that even to this day, referring to someone or something as a ‘Judas’ bears the subtext of saying, ‘you are as bad as the Jews when they betrayed Jesus¹¹¹’ – thus, addressing the fact that Judas, as a Jew who betrayed Jesus, has set a universal benchmark for evil throughout the ages, as well as that Judas is widely regarded as the ‘eponymous representative of the Jewish people¹¹²,’ and this is primarily sourced from the depiction of Judas (mythical or historical) found in the New Testament.

Therefore, as we can see, Judas plays an increasingly important role throughout the New Testament Gospels, from being mentioned a mere four times in Mark to nine in John, with the role he plays differing each time according to the writers’ attitudes towards the Jewish community or the Jewish authorities. Whilst it is often difficult to pinpoint to what extent a Gospel is or is not anti-Semitic, clues can be found in the writers’ intentions and apparent political biases seen when one reads the text closely and considers these factors. However, as I will discuss in the second part of this thesis, these attitudes towards Judas and towards the Jewish people continue to evolve as Christianity continues to move and to develop into being more of a religion in its own right.

Chapter Three: Judas in Early, Gnostic, and Apocryphal sources

Whilst the New Testament canon provides narratives that have shaped modern Christianity as we know it in terms of belief, doctrine, and liturgy – for example, the Lord’s Prayer found in Matthew 6:9-13, which is an essential part of Christian worship, or the Institution of the Lord’s Supper found in Luke 22:18-20, which formed the Eucharistic prayer used by Protestants and Catholics alike at Eucharistic services - it cannot be disputed that an even earlier Christian tradition exists. In a true quest for the historical Judas, one cannot ignore the literature and work of this period. Mentions and representations of Judas Iscariot, in multitudinous forms and guises, have been prominent from the Gnostic writings of second century, to the Great Church Fathers of the third century, to the Passion plays and embellished morality-based literature of the thirteenth century. For example, whilst the Gnostic Gospel of Judas portrays Judas as somebody especially chosen by Jesus and set apart for salvation (this will be explained in greater detail in my analysis of the Gospel of Judas), St Jerome concludes that Judas is the very image of Judaism¹¹³, with the Jews

¹¹⁰ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 161

¹¹¹ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 161

¹¹² Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 161-162

¹¹³ Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of Relations Between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire AD 135-425*, trans. H. McKeating (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1986), 230

themselves being described only through means of ‘sarcastic remarks and offensive epithets¹¹⁴.’ St John Chrysostom, similarly, regards Judas Iscariot as sinful, and condemns the Jewish Passover by associating it with Judas’ betrayal of Christ¹¹⁵. Thus, a variety of attitudes and perspectives regarding Judas have been influenced by his earliest depictions found in the New Testament and have developed throughout antiquity.

Therefore, in order to supplement my research on Judas as he appears in the New Testament, I shall also be researching some of these early mentions of Judas in literature from throughout antiquity. Some of these early sources are very fragmentary in their nature, but of course are still of significance nonetheless. The texts I will be analysing range from the second century to the thirteenth, and will be discussed in a similar way to how I have examined Judas in the Gospels of the New Testament – that is, looking at the intentions, significance, and context of the text, before proceeding to look at how Judas is depicted and why this could be of importance.

Having discussed and analysed a number of textual sources from throughout antiquity, I will summarise this section of my research with a short conclusion. This conclusive part of my work will consist of an overview of the texts that have been discussed and analysed, as well as a brief analysis of overarching themes that run through most or all of the texts and how these themes are presented by the writers, and how these themes relate to Judas.

THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS

The Gospel of Judas was discovered in a cave in the Al Minya province of Middle Egypt in 1978, stumbled upon by illiterate townsfolk, and its English translation was revealed and announced to the public by National Geographic in April 2006¹¹⁶. Its publication attracted great public interest, as well as mixed perceptions from theological scholars. The *Mail on Sunday* proclaimed the document to be both ‘the greatest archaeological discover of all time,’ and a ‘threat to 2000 years of Christian teaching.’ However, the dramatic sensationalism was likely only founded on the basis that with the document being so ancient, it must undoubtedly hold the so-called secret to theology, or some sort of long-hidden scandal, which would unravel the New Testament narratives as we know them. With the Gospel of Judas still being a very recent publication, and with Judas scholarship still in its infancy, a pragmatic and level-headed scholarly approach must be taken when studying and examining such things. In this section of my work, I will be examining the translated text of the Gospel of Judas, and also looking at what current Judas scholars have been writing about the text over the past 13 years. As well as this, I will be looking into key themes relevant to the text, such as salvation, Gnosticism, and schism. My study and analysis of the Gospel of Judas will be split into two main segments,

¹¹⁴ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 230

¹¹⁵ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil*, 193-194

¹¹⁶ Ehrman, *The Gospel of Judas*, 70

firstly, I will look into key themes of Gnostic belief that are recurrent throughout the text. Our understanding of the social, historical, and religious background of the text and its writers will be instrumental in understanding the specific role that Judas Iscariot plays later on. The second part will consist of studying aspects of the text that feature Judas Iscariot, how he is portrayed, and why these parts of the text are so pivotal to Judas's Curriculum Vitae. Quotations from the Gospel of Judas will mostly be taken from Simon Gathercole's *The Gospel of Judas*, chosen for its succinctness and accessibility, or Marvin Meyer's more elaborate and lengthier translation, found in his own work, *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.

Part One: Gnostic Idealism Through the Lens of The Gospel of Judas

First and foremost, it is important to know exactly what we are working with and what I will be discussing over the next few paragraphs. The leather-bound codex (known as Codex Tchacos) that was initially discovered in the cave in Egypt is approximately 66 pages long, and written on papyrus. However, the Gospel of Judas only takes up twenty-five of these pages – pages 33-58, to be exact – roughly the same length as Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. The text is written in ancient Coptic, and the particular dialect and language used reflects the region where it was found – about 100 miles south of Cairo. The name of the text in Coptic is *peuaggelion nioudas*, which translates to 'the Gospel of Judas,' 'the Gospel about Judas,' or 'the Gospel for Judas,' not, as some may imagine, 'the Gospel according to Judas.'¹¹⁷ Carbon dating on this document tells us that it dates back to the third or perhaps fourth century, specifically between 220-340, however, according to scholars such as Simon Gathercole, it is unlikely that this codex would have been the original¹¹⁸. As is the case with many ancient texts, numerous copies would have been made by scribes over a number of years. This, according to Gathercole, is almost certainly the case with the Gospel of Judas, and the original document would likely have been written in Greek, not Coptic.

Additionally, the Gospel of Judas is mentioned in Irenaeus' *Adverses Haereses* (Book 1, Chapter XXXI¹¹⁹), which indicates that the original text of the Gospel of Judas must have been written prior to 180 CE for Irenaeus to have been aware of it. True to its name, *Adversus Heereses*, or *Against Heresies*, takes a condemning stance against both the Gospel of Judas and the Gnostic sect believed to have originally written it – a group known as the Cainites, a branch of Sethian Gnostics. Irenaeus claims that both the Cainites and Judas were 'thoroughly

¹¹⁷ Marvin Meyer, *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts in one volume* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 769

¹¹⁸ Simon Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas: Rewriting Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7

¹¹⁹ Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adversus Haereres*, 1,35, accessed 15th August 2019

<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book1.html>

acquainted¹²⁰ with the worst sorts of company – Including Esau, who is ‘hated,’ according to Paul in his letter to the Romans (Romans 9:13), and ‘an immoral and godless person’ according to the Book of Hebrews (Hebrews 12:16), Korah, the son of Esau who began a revolt against Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16:19), and the Sodomites, the people of the city of Sodom, which is infamous for its destruction by God as a result of the ‘wickedness of the inhabitants,’ and the assumption that ‘there are no righteous persons among them¹²¹’ (Genesis 18:20-33). Thus, by making such a comparison to these unrighteous and infamous Biblical figures, and therefore associating all of these negative people with each other¹²², Irenaeus successfully creates a polemic narrative against the Cainite sect and in favour of Christianity, whilst at the same time providing us with the very first mention of the Gospel of Judas as a work of Gnostic literature, helping us place the original text in chronology in relation to *Adversus Haereses*.

The premise of the Gospel challenges what we see in the synoptics, and suggests that Judas did not betray Christ at all – rather that Judas was chosen by Christ to be the one to hand him over to the authorities, and, in return, to receive salvation and to ascend to heaven to be with God. Similarly, the Gospel of Judas differs from the mainstream canonical gospels in the sense that as opposed to being a document of Jesus’ life and public ministry, it focuses solely on Christ’s last days, and the conversations he had during that time period. However, instead of these ‘conversations’ being sermons on mountains, or melancholic prayers in a garden prior to the Last Supper, these conversations are often between him and Judas – a chosen disciple destined for greatness, secret knowledge, and salvation – and the twelve. Although, more often than not, ‘these discussions with the [Twelve] function to show their ignorance and inferiority to Judas.¹²³’ Indeed, the writer of the Gospel of Judas makes no hesitation in describing how Jesus is extremely critical of some of his followers, going so far as to accuse them of misusing his name among the Jews and gentiles, and thus leading them astray, whilst at the same time praising Judas and choosing to treat him in a more respectful and dignified manner.

But why is this? And why exactly are Christ’s disciples treated with such contempt? The answer to this may be found when looking closer at the texts’ aims and those of the original author. The Gospel of Judas is a Gnostic text – written by a follower of the Gnostic faith in the early centuries after the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. In modern scholarship, particularly since the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library in 1945, the belief systems regarding Gnosticism have been notoriously difficult to define accurately - so much so that some scholars, such as Karen King, argue that there is indeed no such thing as

¹²⁰ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 1:31:1, as quoted by James M. Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas: The Story of the Misunderstood Disciple and His lost Gospel* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2006), 53

¹²¹ R.N. Whybray, “Genesis,” in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 52

¹²² More of this is explained by Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*, 53-54

¹²³ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 87

Gnosticism as a standalone ‘ancient religious entity with a single origin and a distinct set of characteristics¹²⁴.’ King argues that Gnosticism is instead a term ‘invented in the early modern period to aid in defining the values of normative Christianity¹²⁵’ – that is, anything that’s even vaguely esoteric, divergent or fluctuating from the ‘orthodox’ Christian or early Jewish culture of the time, or deemed to be heretical, is considered almost by default to be the part of the Gnostic ‘other¹²⁶’ by Christian apologists and polemicists. Gnosticism is just as diverse as any other belief system, with different sects and strands existing in antiquity, and this is shown through Gnostic literature. For example, some of the literature found at Nag Hammadi is believed to have been written by Valentinus, an Egyptian poet and theologian, such as *The Gospel of Truth* or *The Prayer of the Apostle Paul*¹²⁷, whereas other texts are considered to be more Sethian in nature. The followers of the Sethian sect of Gnosticism believed themselves to be ‘the seed of Seth¹²⁸’ – Seth here being the saviour, and the Son of Adam. These aforementioned Sethian texts often include *The Gospel of the Egyptians*, *The Apocryphon of John*, and, more recently, *The Gospel of Judas*. However, even in these two subcategories of Gnostic literature, there is still much internal diversity between these works¹²⁹.

However, as much of a theological minefield as Gnosticism has proven to be, there are many defining aspects that can help us come to a definition that brings together common beliefs from various aspects of Gnostic beliefs. The key components of Gnosticism focus on concepts of secret knowledge and revelation, and the belief that this secret knowledge will lead Gnostics to salvation – an eternity with a true, ineffable and divine creator. Simon Gathercole summarises the beliefs of Gnosticism into three main components:

‘Firstly, that the world was created not by a supreme God but by a second-rate deity who – since he is either weak or evil or both – forms a world which is from the outset fallen and corruptible; secondly, it is therefore essential to escape from this earthly and bodily imprisonment and have one’s divine self returned to its original home in heavenly luminosity; and, thirdly, that this salvation is achieved by attaining to special ‘knowledge’ (the Greek for which is *Gnosis*, hence Gnosticism) – insight which is revealed only to an elite and favoured few¹³⁰’

¹²⁴ Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003) 2

¹²⁵ King, *What is Gnosticism?* 2

¹²⁶ King, *What is Gnosticism?* 2-3

¹²⁷ King, *What is Gnosticism?* 156

¹²⁸ King, *What is Gnosticism?* 157

¹²⁹ King, *What is Gnosticism?* 157

¹³⁰ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 3

This aforementioned special, or secret, knowledge is an essential aspect of Gnostic belief. Within Gnostic circles, the Greek word *γνῶσις*, or *gnosis*, came to mean a 'knowledge of the divine world and the true nature of things'¹³¹ – that is, our true and divine selves, as opposed to the 'stranglehold of material existence'¹³² from which mankind must be liberated. This is to say that followers of the gnostic faith believed that the material world, as we know it, was evil, or, at the very least, something made mistakenly through the error of a creator. This 'creator' of the material world is referred to in Gnostic texts as the Demiurge. The term Demiurge, from the Greek *Dēmiourgos*, originally was just used to refer to workers, or craftsmen, even stretching so far as to mean soothsayers or physicians¹³³. The term can be found in the Book of Hebrews, where God is referred to as the *δημιουργός* (*demiourgos*, or creator) of a 'city that has foundations' (Hebrews 11:10). However, Plato adapted the term in his work, *Timaeus*, where a creator, known as a Demiurge – here referring to a sort of divine craftsman as opposed to a hardworking member of common society – takes the pre-existing concept of chaos, and rearranges it in a rational and purposive fashion, thus creating the orderly universe and cosmos¹³⁴. As a result of this influential cosmological exposition, the term 'Demiurge' remained grounded in its Greek and later Platonic roots, but continued to weave through Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism respectively. Within the Gnostic tradition, the Demiurge, rather than being the creator of the ordered universe and all its intricacies, is instead the creator of the material world – a wicked creation that must be transcended in order to have eternal life in a greater realm above¹³⁵.

The knowledge required for this, however, 'does not come from rational argumentation, but from inner enlightenment, which is based on a revelation from the divine world.'¹³⁶ Moreover, this knowledge is not accessible to just anyone – only the worthy, the holy and the strong. As such, it is imperative that it is kept secret, only known within the esoteric circles of Gnostic believers.

So how does this affect the narrative of the Gospel of Judas? In the eyes of the Gnostics of the first few centuries, the early and quickly establishing Christian Church was built on, and built by, Christ and the twelve. Thus, from the metaphorical outside looking in, it would seem that the twelve – still going about their lives after the ascension – *were* the Church. Ergo, to disregard or to attack the twelve would be to attack the established Christian Church – which explains

¹³¹ Roelof Van Den Broek, *Gnostic Religion in Antiquity*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 2

¹³² Van Den Broek, *Gnostic Religion in Antiquity*, 2

¹³³ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Demiurge," In *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed 10th August 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Demiurge>

¹³⁴ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Demiurge," In *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed 10th August 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Demiurge>

¹³⁵ The Tripartite Tractate, 104,18-106,25, trans. Marvin Meyer (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 87, see also The Teachings of Silvanus 115,36-117,5, trans. Marvin Meyer (New York, HarperCollins, 2207), 520

¹³⁶ Van Den Broek, *Gnostic Religion in Antiquity*, 3

the vitriol shown towards most of the disciples in the Gospel of Judas. This will be looked at in greater detail in the coming paragraphs.

In a similar vein, the Gnostic writers of the Gospel of Judas aim to challenge what was being written at the time by Christ's followers, and, in doing so, promote a more Gnostic agenda. A clear example of this is the 'secret teaching' and favouritism shown by Christ towards Judas. It is clear from the New Testament that Jesus taught in public – indeed, his public ministry is central to the New Testament narratives – and to an extent, he also preached 'privately' in the company of the twelve, however he is never shown to be preaching privately to select individuals. With secret knowledge being pivotal to Gnostic belief, it is no surprise that Christ is shown to be imparting secret knowledge to just one disciple, especially when there is a potential reward of salvation and divinity in the metaphorical equation. Whilst this could help us make sense of the social and historical context of the text that we are working with, it could also throw into question its authority, even as a non-canonical text. If the aims are simply to fulfil a particular agenda and to promote particular idealism, should someone believe what is written here, or use it to supplement what we already know? This is obviously debateable and a question still being discussed in these early years of Judas scholarship alongside the study of Gnosticism and Gnostic texts.

However, the question still remains, what exactly is this so-called 'secret knowledge' that Jesus imparts to Judas? And what makes Judas so special that he is set apart from the rest of Christ's followers? Let's start from the beginning. The text opens with a brief introduction so as to place the Gospel in a particular time frame – 'a week three days before [Jesus] celebrated Passover¹³⁷.' In other words, this is a time period that we are familiar with – the days leading up to the crucifixion. The early paragraphs of The Gospel of Judas give us a brief summary of Jesus' public ministry, and begin to give clues as to his relationship with his disciples. The writer tells us that when Jesus Christ appeared upon the Earth, he performed 'signs and great wonders for the salvation of humanity,¹³⁸' although what these wonders, or perhaps miracles, were is not explained or discussed. The Twelve disciples are called, because although 'some walked on the path of justice, others stumbled in their mistakes.¹³⁹' Again, these sentences are very vague and nondescript, giving the reader very little to uncover from first reading. For example, the reader is none the wiser as to what these transgressions could be, or why this would automatically be considered a reason for the Twelve to be called. As well as this, who was it that called the Twelve together? One would assume it would be Jesus, but the author does not confirm this. The end of this first section tells us that Jesus talks to the twelve about 'the mysteries that transcend the world, and what will happen at the end¹⁴⁰,' and that Jesus would

¹³⁷ The Gospel of Judas, 33,1-6, trans. Marvin Meyer (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 760

¹³⁸ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 63

¹³⁹ The Gospel of Judas, 33,6-12, 760

¹⁴⁰ The Gospel of Judas, 33,6-12, 760

not always reveal himself to the disciples in his true form, but as a child¹⁴¹. Whilst the apparition of Jesus as a child is not by any means unusual in either Christian or Gnostic literature from the early centuries after the death of Christ – as previously seen, a whole canon of infancy Gospels were written within the space of a few hundred years, and a fragmentary writing by the Gnostic writer Valentinus states that he had seen a ‘new-born infant child,¹⁴²’ who declared himself to be the Logos, or the word – it by no means makes exegesis of this text any easier. Why is Christ choosing to appear as a child? Or why would the author choose to include this? It could possibly be a literary device used to show Jesus as being pure and unafflicted by the transgressions suffered by others, and thus already symbolic of the divine and heavenly community to come once humanity has broken free of its sinful shell, thus alluding to Gnostic belief and teaching.

The following segments of the Gospel of Judas give us further insight to Jesus’ persona (according to the author), his relationship with the disciples, and the author’s perspective of Judas Iscariot, along with a plethora of Gnostic themes and concepts. Opening with another vague statement, we can only gather that Jesus and his disciples are in Judea, an entire province, on an arbitrary day¹⁴³. The disciples are taking part in an act of thanksgiving, or perhaps prayer – the exact word used in the Greek text is *eucharistia*, so it is entirely likely that this could well be a form of an early Eucharistic service taking part amongst the earliest Christians. However, the disciples’ attempts at piety and godliness are met with laughter from Jesus. The subsequent sections of the text immediately characterise Jesus as being much more smug and scornful than his depictions in the New Testament – ‘When he drew near to his disciples as they were assembled together, seated and giving thanks over the bread, he laughed¹⁴⁴.’ Whilst his laughter could be interpreted as friendly, perhaps as finding amusement in his disciples’ misunderstanding, this is unlikely to be the case. In the written Gnostic tradition, laughter is intended to be aimed at those displaying blind stupidity, or following a faith or belief not out of conviction but simply because everyone else is doing so. For example, in *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, a Gnostic infancy Gospel dating to the second or third century, the child Jesus laughs loudly as the Jews give advice to Zacchaeus, who had resigned as Jesus’ teacher after being stunned by his superior knowledge. Jesus warns Zacchaeus, the Jews and the surrounding crowd that he had come from above to curse those who are blind – that is, those who do not or cannot understand his teaching¹⁴⁵. Another example is seen in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, a Coptic

¹⁴¹ The Gospel of Judas, 33,6-12, 760

¹⁴² Valentinus, *Fragment 7: Valentinus’ Vision of the Word*, trans. Bentley Layton, accessed 1st September 2019 http://gnosis.org/library/valentinus/Fragments_Valentinus.htm

¹⁴³ The Gospel of Judas, 33,22-34,18, 760

¹⁴⁴ The Gospel of Judas, 33,22-34,18, 760

¹⁴⁵ Marius J. Nel, “He Who Laughs Last – Jesus and Laughter in the Synoptic and Gnostic Traditions,” in *HTS Theologies Studies/Theological Studies*, Vol. 70 No. 1 (2014), 5 – accessed online 10th September 2019 via <https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/2034>

document that is believed to date back to the eighth or ninth century. The Greek *Apokalupsis*, or apocalypse in English, simply means an uncovering, or for something to be revealed – a far cry from the phantasms of destruction, chaos and end of life as we know it that the word often conjures up. In the text, Peter sees a vision of the crucifixion – whilst Jesus hangs on the cross, being tortured by those who put him to death, another figure of Christ is seen, ‘smiling and laughing above the cross¹⁴⁶’ – some scholars suggest that this second figure is perhaps sitting in a nearby tree¹⁴⁷. Jesus, who is with Peter, explaining the visions that he is seeing, reveals to Peter that the figment seen ‘above the cross’ is the ‘living Jesus¹⁴⁸,’ laughing cynically at his enemies, who Jesus describes as being ‘blind’ to the truth, and who ‘do not know what they are saying.¹⁴⁹’ Nel adds to this, suggesting that those crucifying Jesus in Peter’s vision were ‘only able to recognise material reality¹⁵⁰’ as opposed to a superior understanding. Ergo, Jesus laughs at his disciples who do not understand, who he perceives to be stupid, and blind – worshipping in this way not ‘out of their own free will, but because in this way their god will be praised.¹⁵¹’ It is clear that the author here is not only reinforcing Gnostic idealism by depicting Jesus to be laughing at those who do not understand the identity of Jesus nor the supreme, ineffable and infallible deity who sent him, but also continuing the polemic against the mainstream Church by showing its followers to have no idea of their own truths.

This section ends with the disciples being (perhaps rightfully) confused, and angry at Jesus’ attitude towards them. But this too is met with more retaliation from Jesus, who continues to belittle them for their belief in a less supreme, false godly being. Jesus invites whoever is the strongest amongst them to come and stand in his presence. Despite the followers claiming that they are strong enough for this, not one of them approaches. Simon Gathercole notes that this, too, is a particularly common idea in Gnostic theology, and a key difference between Gnosticism and the early Jewish or Christian culture. ‘In the Old Testament, an absolute distinction is maintained between the creator God and his creation: “I am the lord, the maker of all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the Earth by myself...” (Isaiah 44:24)¹⁵², and similarly this is reflected in the Christology of the New Testament, wherein Jesus represents divinity alongside his Father, yet stands amongst humanity. Gnostic thinkers, however, ‘tended to see the spirit which was a part of the human person by nature as at

¹⁴⁶ Nag Hammadi Codices VII, 3:70,13-84,13, *The Revelation of Peter*, 81,3-82,3, trans. Marvin Meyer

¹⁴⁷ Nel, “He Who Laughs Last,” 6

¹⁴⁸ NHC VII, *The Revelation of Peter*, 81,3-82,3, 496

¹⁴⁹ NHC VII, *The Revelation of Peter*, 81,3-82,3, 496

¹⁵⁰ Nel, “He Who Laughs Last,” 6

¹⁵¹ The Gospel of Judas, 33,22-34,18, 760

¹⁵² Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 70

the same time a flash of divine light.¹⁵³ This is shown in the Gospel of Judas by the disciples having their 'divine selves' too much diluted by their ignorance to be able to stand before Christ.

Thus far in the Gospel of Judas, we have vague descriptions placing us in non-specific times and places, a cynical Jesus, apparently clueless followers, and a tirade against early Christians from our author. But where is our titular character? Judas Iscariot makes an appearance in this second section of the text, after the disciples are found to not be strong enough to stand before Jesus. Judas steps forward, and is able to stand before Jesus, but cannot look him in the eye, so he turns his head¹⁵⁴. Judas says to Jesus, 'I know who you are and from what place you have come. You have come from the immortal aeon of Barbelo and I am not worthy to pronounce the name of the one who sent you.'¹⁵⁵ This presents us with yet another layer of Gnostic theology to consider. Is Judas holy and strong enough to stand before Jesus, or is he considered to be so demonic and doomed from the start that he has nothing to lose by this act of boldness? In either case, it is evident that he knows the truth according to Gnostic belief, the truth that the other disciples have yet to grasp – that the true god is not the one who is worshipped through their 'eucharist,' but is the highest divine being, and is completely ineffable and incomprehensible. This is also shown through the language used by Judas. The word 'aeon' in Gnostic literature is not too dissimilar to how it is defined in English, usually being used to refer to 'both a heavenly realm and... a sentient divine personage.'¹⁵⁶ Moreover, Judas also makes a reference to Barbelo – an androgynous divinity in Gnosticism, often referred to as both male and female. Barbelo is second only to the great true god of the Gnostic faith, and is referred to as 'the First Thought of the Invisible Spirit,' or Pronoia, and often titles or definitions including 'shadow of the Holy Father,' and 'ineffable, incorruptible, immeasurable, inconceivable'¹⁵⁷. Judas is clearly aware of the existence of these Gnostic truths, even if he has not yet been taught their finer details, unlike his more mainstream-Christian counterparts. Thus, Judas is invited by Jesus to 'separate himself from them,' so that he can hear the 'mysteries of the Kingdom.'¹⁵⁸ This therefore implies that whilst Judas knows of these Gnostic truths and idealisms, there is more that he is to be taught before he can be considered to have perfect gnosis.

Part Two: Mysteries of the Kingdom

In a stark contrast to the Gospel narratives, Judas does not abandon Jesus in favour of his own agenda, but instead is set aside by Jesus to be taught the secret

¹⁵³ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 70

¹⁵⁴ Gospel of Judas, 34,18-35,21, 761

¹⁵⁵ Gospel of Judas, 34,18-35,21, 761

¹⁵⁶ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 71

¹⁵⁷ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 71

¹⁵⁸ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 71

knowledge required for salvation. In this second part of my analysis, having already looked into key Gospel themes and ideas that set the tone and provided a basis for our understanding of the text and its intentions, I will be focussing in more detail on the role of Judas Iscariot and how he is featured and portrayed in the text. For this section of the text, I will be choosing quotations from the text that predominantly feature Judas and his election as a chosen companion of Jesus, and analysing these appropriately.

**“Judas said to [him], ‘Rabbi, what is the fruit which this generation has?’
Jesus said, ‘the souls of every generation of man will die. But as for [the Holy Generation], when the time of the kingdom is fulfilled and the spirit separates from them, their bodies will die, but their souls will be made alive and will be raised up¹⁵⁹”**

The second half of the text of the Gospel of Judas consists mostly of dialogue between Jesus and Judas, with Jesus instructing Judas in the ways of Gnostic belief – discussing teachings regarding such concepts as creation, eschatology, and consummation of all things. This first section is referred to by Gathercole as the *Dialogue on the Hereafter*, where Jesus and Judas discuss not only what will happen to Judas now that he has been set aside for Gnostic instruction, but also what will happen to a so-called Holy Generation. This ‘Holy Generation’ is referred to throughout the Gospel of Judas – the Holy Generation here refers to the Gnostic elect, or those destined to learn the secret Gnosis of the divine and infallible deity required for salvation.

Later in the text, Jesus shifts the focus of the conversation from this holy Generation to the ordinary people. In a turn of phrase reminiscent of the parable of the sower found in Matthew 13:1-23 in the New Testament, Jesus relates ‘the rest of the generations of men’ to seeds planted on rock – that is, impossible to reap fruit from, both literally and metaphorically. Similarly, Jesus compares those who are part of these generations to ‘Corruptible Sophia¹⁶⁰’ – Sophia is another Gnostic deity, considered to be the female aspect of the true Godhead. It is also believed that Sophia represents in herself a sort of diarchy, or a split personality – the higher, perpetual Sophia, is often identified with Barbelo, whereas the corruptible Sophia, here mentioned in the Gospel of Judas, reigns over chaos and over Hades. She is believed to have brought instability or imperfection to the pleroma, or fullness, of the divine deity, and thus created immorality and imperfection to creation¹⁶¹. Thus, in making this comparison between the Corruptible Sophia and the ordinary people, those not included in the Holy Generation, Jesus makes a clear distinction between those who are destined to be a part of the Gnostic elect, and those who are but seed on a bed of rock, associated with imperfection and ill-repute.

¹⁵⁹ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 81, see also Gospel of Judas, 43,11-44,14

¹⁶⁰ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 82, see also Gospel of Judas, 43,11-44,14

¹⁶¹ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 81, see also Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 55

Ergo, through these somewhat elaborate metaphors and comparisons, we can see Jesus clearly beginning his private teachings with Judas. By introducing him to the concept of the Holy Generation, Jesus is ensuring that Judas is aware of the exclusivity and divinity of what he is destined for. This of course is a far cry from the damnation and disgust that he receives from the writers of the New Testament Gospels (for example, Matthew 10:4, Mark 3:19, and Luke 6:16).

'Judas said, "Master, surely my seed will never submit to the archons?"

Jesus answered and said to him, "come, and I will... (approximately two lines missing from the text) ... But you will grieve greatly as you see the kingdom with all its generation"

When Judas had heard these things, he said to Jesus, "What is the benefit which I have received as a result of you setting me apart for that generation?"

Jesus answered and said, "You will become the thirteenth. You will be cursed by the rest of the generations, but you will rule over them. In those last days they will... (small amount of text missing) ... you and that you might not ascend to the holy generation.¹⁶²"

This more fragmented part of the text appears to be somewhat disjointed or contradictory – for example, Jesus claiming Judas will 'grieve greatly¹⁶³' at the sight of the kingdom and the Holy Generation, and furthermore the possibility of Judas not ascending to the Holy Generation after all. Of course, as with many texts from antiquity, allowances for scriptural errors, mistranslations, and parts of texts missing due to gaps in the codex or from indecipherable writing must be made, and the Gospel of Judas is no exception. Whilst these disparities and inconsistencies can make the text difficult to follow, our existing translation and knowledge of the context of the narrative can help fill these gaps in the wording.

This extract opens with a question from Judas regarding yet another aspect of the hierarchy of Gnostic deities. Archons, as referred to by Judas, 'exercise a negative influence over the government of the cosmos¹⁶⁴.' Ergo, to 'submit to the archons¹⁶⁵' would be to fall under the same ill fate as the rest of humanity – the ordinary people who worship the false creator and who will fall short of the standards required to be a part of the true Holy Generation, and who are affected by the negativity and despair influenced by the archons.

Whilst Jesus' reply is somewhat discordant due to parts of the sentence being missing, an interesting sentence can be drawn from what has been translated – 'you will grieve greatly as you see the kingdom with all its generation.¹⁶⁶' When we consider what we already know of the story of Judas in light of the Gospel of

¹⁶² Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 85, see also Gospel of Judas, 46,5-47,1

¹⁶³ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 85

¹⁶⁴ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 85

¹⁶⁵ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 85

¹⁶⁶ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 85

Judas, and what comes next in the narrative, it is likely that this grieving will only be temporary for Judas. The grief may come as a result of leaving his physical body and former livelihood behind, or because of the knowledge that he will be hated and cursed by other generations – but once he has ascended, the grief will be no more, as he will take his place in the holy generation, becoming superior to those who curse him. In doing so, Judas becomes ‘the thirteenth’ – that is, he will have ascended the twelve who worship a false deity, affected by the archons, who do not know the mysteries of Gnosis. The concept of Judas being hated, or cursed, is likely a reference to Judas’ reputation in the wider Church and the early Christian Gospel narratives in circulation at the time.

The last sentence is confusing, but Gathercole suggests that a possible scribal error in the original copies of this section does not help¹⁶⁷. In fact, it is likely that the last sentence actually refers to an attempt by the rest – i.e. the rest of the generations – to prevent Judas’ ascent to the celestial realm, rather than Judas not ascending at all on his own part¹⁶⁸.

Thus, in these early paragraphs of the Dialogue on the Hereafter, more is revealed to the reader regarding the emerging relationship between Jesus and Judas. Consideration and focus is given to the disparity between the generations of ordinary people, and those of the Holy Generation, and how exactly being elected for this Holy Generation effects ones’ future after death. Whilst death for a Gnostic follower is not such a depressingly morbid rite of passage as one may expect – after all, Holy Generation or not, one is still escaping their physical body and the dullness of the created world – the very idea of being elevated beyond merely dying, and transcending to a higher existence with the true creator is the ultimate goal of Gnosticism. It has been made clear that Judas is the thirteenth, set aside from the twelve for his transcendence, but he still has much to learn in order to progress to perfect knowledge.

Jesus teaches the mysteries of the Gnostic universe

What follows in the text of the Gospel of Judas is referred to as Jesus’ Account of Creation – a sort of re-written Genesis from a Gnostic perspective. This is regarded to be the exact secret knowledge that Judas must learn. These teachings make up the majority of the Gospel of Judas text, and are presented in a monologue delivered by Jesus. Jesus describes how ‘a Great, limitless aeon exists, whose measure no generation of angels has seen¹⁶⁹’, and how the Great Invisible Spirit (also described allegorically as ‘cloud of light¹⁷⁰’) called forth Autogenes – an angelic figure inferior to the Great Invisible Spirit, yet above other angels described in the narrative – and many other additional heavenly entities,

¹⁶⁷ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 86

¹⁶⁸ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 86

¹⁶⁹ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 88, see also Gospel of Judas, 47,1-48,21, 765

¹⁷⁰ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 89, see also Gospel of Judas, 47,1-48,21, 765

including ‘tens of thousands’ more angels and ‘aeons of light.’¹⁷¹ Other topics of interest include the creation of the rulers of the underworld – angels with faces pouring forth with fire and polluted with blood – and the creation of Adam and Eve, and of the Generation of Seth, who is believed to be the Son of Adam, and the ‘father of the Holy Generation’¹⁷².

Throughout the entire creation narrative, the succession of heavenly beings spirals further and further away from the source (this source being the so-called Great Invisible Spirit, or the cloud of light). This of course contrasts with the Christian idea of man being made in God’s own image (Genesis 1:27). Further to this, Jesus claims that the source of mankind is not some great deity but indeed a fool. Whilst describing the angels who rule over Chaos and the Underworld, Jesus mentions an angel by the name of Saklas – a word that derives from the Aramaic *Sakla*, meaning ‘foolish’ or ‘fool’¹⁷³. Gathercole notes that Saklas also features in the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, another Gnostic text found at Nag Hammadi¹⁷⁴. The *Trimorphic Protennoia* appears to be written in the first person from God’s own perspective, describing the cosmological nature of creation. Regarding Saklas, it is written that he is the ‘great demon who rules over the bottom of the underworld.... He has neither form nor completeness, but has the form of the glory of those who are born in darkness’¹⁷⁵. Thus, a rebel and a fool, Saklas created humans, and name them Adam and Eve. This not only contrasts greatly with the Garden of Eden narrative seen in Genesis, but also continues the polemic narrative against the mainstream early Church, suggesting that those of the more orthodox Christian tradition ‘are so far wrong in what they think’¹⁷⁶, and that only those who learn of the true Gnosis, such as ‘Judas and those like him, will come to realise how they came to be here... and how they can return to the heavenly home’¹⁷⁷.

‘Behold, everything has been told to you. Lift up your eyes and behold the cloud and the light which is in it, and the stars which surround it. The star which is the leader – that is your star.’

And Judas lifted up his eyes and saw the cloud of light and leapt into it. Those who stood underneath heard a voice coming from the cloud which said, ‘... (an amount of text missing) ... image... and...’¹⁷⁸

¹⁷¹ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 90, see also Gospel of Judas, 47,1-48,21, 765

¹⁷² Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 93

¹⁷³ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 98

¹⁷⁴ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 98

¹⁷⁵ *Trimorphic Protennoia*, 39.21-7, as quoted by Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 98

¹⁷⁶ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 95

¹⁷⁷ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 95

¹⁷⁸ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 107, see also Gospel of Judas, 55,21-58,9

Finally, we come to the end of Jesus' teachings on the mysteries of Gnostic cosmology, of Adam and of Seth and of the Great Invisible Spirit. As we have seen previously in the Gospel of Judas, Judas had much to learn before he could be considered ready to ascend and join the holy generation. Judas has been deceived by false visions of grandeur, but now he has learnt all that needs to be known. His 'star' in the sky is ahead of all the others – whether the others here refers to the rest of the Twelve or the human race is uncertain, but Judas is ahead of them all. Gathercole relates this to the story of Joseph in the Old Testament, who recounts a dream to his brothers, wherein he sees 'the sun, the moon and eleven stars bow down to him' (Genesis 37:9) – here, the sun and the moon represent Joseph's mother and father, and the eleven stars his eleven brothers who torment and persecute him. Much like how the rest of the Twelve persecute Judas, yet they are the ones who will 'ultimately recognise his supremacy¹⁷⁹.'

The very ending of the section is also reminiscent of a section in the Christian Bible, with likeness to Jesus' ascension seen in the New Testament. Despite the ending being fragmented, it is clear that this is Judas' defining moment in the text, what the whole narrative has been leading up to. By dramatically leaping into this great cloud of light, according to the Gnostic traditions that have been explored throughout the text, Judas now takes his place in the Holy Generation, joining the Great Invisible Spirit – something that the rest of the Twelve could not comprehend.

Epilogue

(Five lines missing)... **Their chief priests were indignant that he had gone to his lodging place to pray. Some of the scribes were there looking out so that they might arrest him at prayer. For they feared the people, because they all held him as a prophet. And they advanced to Judas and they said to him, 'why are you here? You are the disciple of Jesus.' He answered them according to their wish. Judas took some money, and he handed [him] over to them¹⁸⁰.**

This is the very last thing that is written in the original *Gospel of Judas* codex. Whilst it is an unusual caveat having seen Judas previously ascending and transfiguring, it is possible that the lines of text missing from the beginning of the epilogue describe Judas returning to the earthly sphere from the celestial heavens.

The epilogue describes the infamous betrayal scene from the New Testament – albeit, from a Gnostic perspective. Whilst the writer does not specify where exactly this 'lodging place' is, or whose lodging place it is, by the way it is described by the writer, one may presume that the writer has attempted to push several events of the Passion into one short, succinct paragraph. Perhaps, the story of the Passion known to many by this point, so the writer didn't have to go into so much detail. Whilst this is uncertain, similarities can be seen between the

¹⁷⁹ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 107

¹⁸⁰ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 108-109, see also *Gospel of Judas*, 58,9-29

Passion narratives of the New Testament and what is written here – for example, in the Gospels, Jesus has his Last Supper in an upstairs room before going to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. Whilst the Last Supper and the Garden Gethsemane are seemingly absent, it would appear that Jesus is instead praying in the upstairs room, or the ‘lodging room,’ instead of at Gethsemane. The arrest is still ready to take place, thanks to Judas – despite being ‘a disciple of Jesus,’ he has come to the chief priests as an informant, and, as suspected, is paid his fee for ‘handing him [presumably Jesus] over to them.’¹⁸¹

The classic handing over of Jesus and the receiving of the money is where the Gospel ends. The prologue, at the very beginning of the text, stated that the text entailed ‘the secret message of the revelation which Jesus spoke to Judas Iscariot in the week leading up to the third day before he celebrated Passover.’¹⁸² Whilst there is no dramatic ending, no continuation of the Passion narrative, no mention of the crucifixion of Jesus, the text has achieved what it set out to do – inform the reader of the revelations that Jesus told to Judas. Whilst the Passion narratives of the New Testament Gospels ‘give the death of Jesus prime importance in their narratives’¹⁸³, the Gospel of Judas has very little to do with Jesus. The focus here is of course the secret knowledge that is spoken by Jesus, and the story of how Judas is elected to join the Holy Generation, because he is worthy of knowing this knowledge. Thus, this is an appropriate ending to the Gospel of Judas, having fulfilled its aims and told the story that was intended.

Summary of The Gospel of Judas

Therefore, to summarise, the character of Judas and his prominence in the Gospel of Judas varies incredibly to his portrayal in the Gospels of the New Testament. No longer is Judas sentenced to fading into the background after his fleeting moments in the metaphorical spotlight. Instead, Judas is elevated to a position of responsibility and supremacy – being recognised as worthy by Jesus to be taught the cosmology and phenomenology of the Gnostic beliefs. Within the confusion, the bewilderment and the obscurity of Gnosticism (especially Sethian Gnosticism) and its deities, its hierarchies and its odd names – Autogenes, Barbelo and Saklas, to name but a few – lies a familiar character to many, with an unfamiliar story.

It is uncertain as to why exactly Judas got the sort of positive attention from the Gnostics that never came from the mainstream church. Perhaps therein lies the answer – that in polemicising against the mainstream, more orthodox church, due attention would be given to the more enigmatic characters of the Christian or early Jewish tradition. Ergo, whilst Judas and others mentioned in the Gospels were being condemned and scapegoated by the New Testament Gospel writers and, subsequently, early Christians, he was also being celebrated by the Gnostics. For example, Gnostic Gospels were also written about Thomas, James, and Philip,

¹⁸¹ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 109

¹⁸² Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 61, see also Gospel of Judas, 33,6-12

¹⁸³ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Judas*, 109

as well as apocalyptic texts (apocalyptic here being used in its true sense, meaning an uncovering or a revealing of knowledge or information, as opposed to its more popular, eschatological sense) dedicated to Adam, Peter, and Paul. All of these texts were discovered at Nag Hammadi, a town in Upper Egypt, in 1945, along with 46 other Gnostic texts, and have been crucially influential in scholarly study of Gnosticism. Numerous similarities can be drawn between the Gospel of Judas and other Gnostic texts – for example, the famous Gospel of Thomas, one of the most well-known Gnostic texts, contains very little narrative material, and is instead a collection of the sayings of Jesus. Whilst the Gospel of Judas is, on the other hand, a more narrative text, the aims of the two texts are very similar, with underlying themes of salvation and Gnostic eschatology. The prologue of the Gospel of Judas, as we have seen, informs us that the text revolves around ‘the secret message of the revelation that Jesus spoke to Judas,’ whilst, similarly, the Gospel of Thomas opens with, ‘these are the secret words which the living Jesus spoke, and Didymus Judas Thomas wrote them down. And he said, “the one who finds the meaning of these words will not taste death.”¹⁸⁴’ Ergo, both texts discuss Gnostic themes of salvation, secret knowledge, and words spoken by Jesus as private, secret teachings. Therefore, the Gospel of Judas sits well alongside a tradition of similar texts that were in circulation at much the same time, and makes sense within Gnosticism.

Due consideration should also be given to the role of Gnosticism within wider society during this time period. No longer was religion just black and white at this point – during the first and second century, Christianity was quickly becoming more of an institutionalised religion, with texts such as the *Didache* being written to instruct the earliest Christians in the ways of early Christian ritual and tradition, and Irenaeus writing against Christian heretics and esotericism, such as the Gnostics. Thus, the Gospel of Judas, as well as a plethora of other Gnostic texts, offer insight into the state of religious diversity in the early centuries of the Common Era, whilst also shedding new light on early perceptions of Christianity as it begins to part from Judaism.

THE WRITINGS OF PAPIAS

The Writings of Papias, or sometimes the Fragments of Papias, is a work supposed to be attributed to Bishop Papias of Hierapolis (modern day Pamukkale, Turkey), in the second century. These writings unfortunately now only exist in quotations from others. For example, references to Papias’ wider and extended work can be found in the writings of prominent Church Fathers Irenaeus and Eusebius. Irenaeus tells us of a five-volume work produced by Papias, and alludes to the reader that Papias was a prominent figure in the early Church, who knew personally of John, the son of Zebedee, and was a companion of Polycarp¹⁸⁵. This information is important in dating the work of Papias, and also helps place his role as Bishop in terms of chronology – if Papias was, as

¹⁸⁴ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 113

¹⁸⁵ Full quotation found in Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 44-45

claimed, a companion of Polycarp, it is likely that he was bishop of Hierapolis around a similar time to when Polycarp was Bishop of Smyrna to the west.

In the fifth book of his most famous work, *Against Heresies* (also known as *Adversus Haereses* in Latin), Irenaeus writes about a sort of paradisaical state, wherein 'the righteous will rise from the dead and rule,' the 'fertility of the soil will bring an abundance of food of all kinds,' and where tens of thousands of grapes will produce a wealth of fine wine¹⁸⁶. However, Irenaeus is quick to bring Papias into the equation, and with him comes Judas. Referring to what was supposedly originally written by Papias, Irenaeus adds that this realm of paradise 'can be believed by those who believe,' but the betrayer, Judas Iscariot, 'did not believe.'¹⁸⁷ It remains ambiguous as to what is exactly meant by this, but it would not be too much of a stretch to presume that it is implied that Judas would not be among those who will see this paradise. It could be considered that here, the early Church Fathers are using Judas as yet another negative example of discipleship and Christian identity and fellowship. By denying Judas of salvation and an eternity in paradise (that is, by stating that this time when 'tens of thousands of grapes' shall each yield 'twenty-five measures of wine' will only come to those who believe, and that Judas is not included in those who believe) amongst believers, it could be implying here that Judas was beyond repentance or forgiveness as a result of his betrayal of Jesus.

A second quotation, also found in Irenaeus' work but attributed to Papias, makes reference to Judas in a more direct manner, and also reinforces the idea of Judas being evil, a poor example of a disciple, and 'a great model of impiety.' This extract gives us yet another account of Judas' death – much more graphic than what we see in Matthew 27 or in Acts 1:

'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 a doctor could not see his eyes even with an optical device, so deeply sunken they were in the surrounding flesh. And his genitals became more disgusting and larger than anyone's; simply by relieving himself, to his wanton shame, he emitted pus and worms that flowed 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, until now, desolate and uninhabitable because of the stench. Indeed, even to this day no one can

¹⁸⁶ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, Chapter 33,3 - accessed 10th July 2019

<http://gnosis.org/library/advh5.htm>

¹⁸⁷ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 33,4, as quoted by Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 45

pass by the place without holding their nose. This was how great an outpouring he made from his flesh on the ground.’¹⁸⁸

The idea of people swelling up, or being consumed by worms is not unusual in Jewish antiquity. It has often been used as a metaphor for divine retribution or punishment throughout the Old Testament and well into scholarship of the early centuries. For example, Sirach 7:17 states that the punishment of the ungodly is fire and worms, and similarly a passage in 1 Maccabees notes that the splendour of the ungodly will turn to dung and worms (1 Maccabees 2:62). Another prominent reference to this is found in the New Testament, where worms eat King Herod until his death in Acts 12:23. The Jewish historian Josephus expanded on this, writing that ‘a fire began to glow in [Herod’s] belly, so that he was pained from within. This pain created ‘an enormous appetite, which he indulged, leading his entrails to become exulcerated and his colon infected.’¹⁸⁹ Eventually, as per the account in Acts, he filled with worms, and died. In addition to this, Eusebius, a fourth century theologian and scholar from Palestine, wrote of a similar fate that came upon Emperor Galerius, who, along with Emperor Diocletian is often associated or blamed for the Great Persecution of Christians prior to the Edict of Toleration in 311 CE, which brought the persecution and oppression to an end under the Roman government. Eusebius writes in his work, *Church History*, that the Emperor broke out in severe inflammation – beginning in his genitals, then spreading through to his bowels – which burst open, giving way to worms and a foul smell. His illness turned his body into ‘a huge lump of flabby fat,’ which continued to decompose, leaving him a ‘revolting and horrifying sight.’¹⁹⁰

Therefore, this form of punishment of evildoers or blasphemers is by no means uncommon throughout Jewish and early Christian literature, and it is thus understandable as to why it would be applied to Judas if this wholly negative perception of him was rife during the early centuries.

THE GOSPEL OF NICODEMUS

The Gospel of Nicodemus, also known as the Acts of Pilate, is a text featuring an account of Jesus’ trial, death, and descent into hell – a part of the Passion narrative rarely seen elsewhere in Church literature, yet is a commonly discussed aspect of Christian doctrine and belief, particularly in the Greek Orthodox Church, where an entire service during Holy Week (Great and Holy Saturday Morning) is dedicated to remembering Jesus’ time in Hades, punctuated with readings from the Old Testament that prophesise the conquering of death (for example, Hosea 6:1-2, which foretells that ‘[the Lord] will revive us... he will raise us up, that we may live before him’), as well as New Testament readings such as Romans 6:3-11, wherein Paul encourages the faithful in their belief – ‘Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as

¹⁸⁸ Papias, *Fragment 4*, quoted by Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 45

¹⁸⁹ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 17.6.5, as quoted by Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 45-46

¹⁹⁰ Eusebius, *Church History*, 8.16.3-5, as quoted by Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 46

Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life' (Romans 6:4)¹⁹¹.

It is thought that the Gospel of Nicodemus dates back to the fourth century, and was originally written in Hebrew by Nicodemus¹⁹². The text emphasises and explores concepts of Christology – particularly the divinity of Christ and the role he plays in salvation. As well as this, an important aspect of the text is the idea of Christ being a saviour and a divine being, far superior to Caesar or the Roman governors of the time. However, the stories told in the text are unlikely to be historically reliable – for example, as previously mentioned, part of the text discusses Jesus' descent into hell. Whilst this is alluded to in Paul's letters – most notably in Ephesians 4:8-9 which suggests that Jesus must have 'descended into the lower parts of the Earth' in order to have ascended on high, and in 1 Peter 4:6 which claims that 'the Gospel was proclaimed even to the dead' – there is very little in the New Testament that explicitly suggests such a narrative. Elsewhere, it is mentioned in the Apostle's Creed, used widely in liturgy by several denominations of Christianity today, including the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. However, whilst the narrative of Jesus descending into hell does not appear in every translation of the Gospel of Nicodemus, it is regarded to be one of the earliest mentions of this discourse¹⁹³, and thus an inspiration for many more of its kind.

Our text begins with Jesus being brought before Pontius Pilate at the beginning of his trial – an area of the Passion narrative that we are familiar with, thanks to the Passion narratives of the New Testament (namely, Mark 15:1-15, Matthew 27:11-26, Luke 23:13-24, and John 18:28-40). Alongside Jesus and Pilate are Annas and Caiaphas, 'the chief priests and scribes¹⁹⁴,' (Gospel of Nicodemus, part one, 1:1) and, perhaps surprisingly, Judas. The first few paragraphs describing the details of the trial tell us how ensigns and busts of the Emperor Caesar appeared to bow in reverence to Jesus as he entered the room – the Jews and officials became enraged with the standard-bearers, accusing them of making the ensigns bow, and insist that some more 'strong and able' standard-bearers are chosen to do the job instead (Part one, 1:6). Jesus is made to enter the room a second time, and again the standards, ensigns and busts appear to show reverence yet again. This is a sure sign of Christ's divinity, and his rule over both

¹⁹¹ Rev. George Mastrantonis, "Holy Week in the Eastern Orthodox Church," *Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (Articles)*, accessed 25th September 2019 <https://www.goarch.org/-/holy-week-in-the-eastern-orthodox-church>

¹⁹² George Reid. "Acta Pilati." In *Catholic Encyclopedia Volume 01* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1913), 111

¹⁹³ K.M. Warren, "Harrowing of Hell," In *Catholic Encyclopedia Volume 07* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1913), 143-144

¹⁹⁴ Any references to the Gospel of Nicodemus will be taken from the translation found here: Montague Rhodes James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924), accessed 10th July 2019 <http://gnosis.org/library/gosnic.htm>

Caesar and the grave. In spite of this, Judas, along with ‘Gamaliel... Levi and Nephthalim, Alexander and Jairus and the rest of the Jews’ insist that they know Jesus, and that ‘pollutes the Sabbath and destroys the law of their fathers’ (Part one, 1:1).

As with many ancient texts, the Gospel of Nicodemus has been subject to being recopied and retranslated time and time again over the centuries, with different handwritten copies being passed around the Christian communities. In some copies, Judas plays a minor role (i.e. appearing at Jesus’ trial before fading once more into the background), whilst others feature a more intriguing version of events. Ehrman writes on one particular manuscript, which tells us of Judas arriving home after the trial, shortly before his death. Judas comes home to find some rope to hang himself with, but comes across his wife, who is preparing a roast chicken on a spit over a fire. He tells her to find him some rope, and of course she asks what for. He answers her, telling her that he has handed Jesus over to evildoers to be killed, but that he will also rise again in a matter of days. His wife replies that Judas must think no such thing, and that just as the chicken she is roasting is unable to speak or to move anymore, so Jesus could not possibly rise from the dead. In an unexpected turn of events, the chicken roasting on the spit stretches out its wings, and crows three times. This convinces Judas against the words of his wife – he proceeds to take some rope and go to hang himself¹⁹⁵.

This is of course a most unusual retelling of the story of Judas and the end of his life. Whilst repentance or sorrow for his wrongdoings is not specifically mentioned, the fact that Judas is aware of the divinity of Christ, and the significance of the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, and that he is responsible for putting him to death, shows that Judas was very aware of what he has done and that he cannot live with the consequences of his actions. This draws on ideas seen in Matthew’s Gospel, particularly with Judas going to hang himself. This could potentially show a more sympathetic view of Jesus coming into play in the fourth century onwards, but with Judas still playing a fairly minor role in the grand scheme of the text, it is difficult to tell exactly. Alternatively, this could be evidence of different attitudes to Judas co-existing during this time period. As we will see in other texts from this time period (fourth or fifth century), a negative perception of Judas was still very prominent in literature of a religious nature, and was still having an influence on the minds of scholars and early Christians alike¹⁹⁶, however alternative perspectives are not unlikely to have been existing, much like internal diversity across many other religious issues such as the Eucharist, which was brought to the forefront of academic thought by theologians such as Gregory of Nyssa in the mid-fourth century¹⁹⁷.

¹⁹⁵ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 47

¹⁹⁶ See section on the *Carmen Paschale* – an epic poem based on the four gospels which was very influential amongst the educated in late antiquity

¹⁹⁷ Thomas O’Loughlin, *The Eucharist: Origins and Contemporary Understandings* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 29

Whilst it is an interesting and certainly different version of Judas' story, it still has distinct undertones of Christology within, and tells us more about the writers' ideologies of Christ, particularly regarding salvation and repentance – that is to say that the author appears to be using Judas in order to make a point about how God, through Christ, can forgive those who do repent, unlike Judas.

As well as this, as previously mentioned, this narrative is not seen in every version of the Gospel of Nicodemus, and many manuscripts of it survive, including those written in the original Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Georgian and Slavonic. The historical and social context of the document, or the intended document, brings the authenticity and authority of the Gospel into question – Jesus was not a Roman citizen, and thus there probably would have been little to no documentation produced detailing the events of his trial and execution produced by any officials. With the Gospel of Nicodemus being written so much later than Christ's death, it is unlikely to be based on eyewitness accounts, so it is more believable to assume that it is an allegorical text using stories based on well-known characters or situations from the period of Jesus' ministry in order to drive home truths or ideologies regarding Christian identity and belief.

THE CARMEN PASCHALE

The Carmen Paschale, rather than a Gospel or similarly religious or doctrinal text, is actually an epic poem about the four Gospels, composed by Coelius Sedulius in the early part of the fifth century CE. Written originally in Latin and composed of five books, the work is reminiscent in style of the epic works of Virgil, and was considered 'required reading¹⁹⁸' for theologians and scholars throughout the Middle Ages. For example, the Venerable Bede 'used Sedulius as one of his principle models in his treatise on metrics¹⁹⁹,' and Martin Luther himself translated some of Sedulius' works into the vernacular, and referred to him as a *poeta Christianissimus* – the Christian poet²⁰⁰. Little else is known about Sedulius, other than that the Carmen Paschale would have been written prior to 431 CE, and that he is thought to have resided in Italy, according to one medieval commentary²⁰¹. The Carmen Paschale, however, was certainly considered a very academic text of the period, and held in high regard among the educated ranks of

¹⁹⁸ Klassen, *Judas*, 19

¹⁹⁹ Carl P. E. Springer, "The Manuscripts of Sedulius: a Provisional Handlist," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 85, no. 5 (1995), 2

²⁰⁰ Carl P.E. Springer, "Introduction." In *Sedulius, the Paschal Songs and Hymns* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical literature, 2013), xx – here, Springer mentions that Luther refers to Sedulius and his hymns in *De diuinitate et humanitate Christi* in support of the full humanity of Christ, referring to him as 'the most Christian poet'

²⁰¹ Paul Lejay. "Sedulius." In *Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. 13*, ed. Charles Herbermann (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1913), 680

society – the poem was used to teach schoolboys and to educate the masses from the pulpits of churches well into the seventeenth century²⁰².

Sedulius' longest literary interlude within the *Carmen Paschale* happens to be what he has to say about Judas, thus making it an important source for discovering attitudes and perspectives regarding Judas in late antiquity. It has been suggested by scholars that this is indeed the very text that sparked Judas' downfall in terms of Christian perspectives. Whilst many earlier texts that I have examined previously – such as the Writings of Papias or the Gospel of Nicodemus – were discussed amongst Church Fathers and found their way into great works of theological literature (for example, Ireneaus' *Adversus Haereses*), the *Carmen Paschale* was read amongst the people in schools and churches, it became part of the 'language of the liturgy²⁰³,' and remained an important work of literature for centuries. Ergo, by reaching a wider readership, the ideas of the poet are likely to have been inferred onto those reading or listening to a text that had been held in such high regard by the educated upper echelons of society.

Judas features prominently in the fifth book of the epic, first appearing in lines 26-31, which describe the events surrounding Passover and the Last Supper. From his very first mention, Sedulius' negative attitudes towards Judas are clear. Sedulius describes how despite having his feet washed by Jesus, along with the other disciples, there is no way that Judas could ever possibly be truly clean – according to the poem, Judas was 'contaminated in mind like any sepulchre; its outward covering has a white appearance, but inside it is full of decay and a foul corpse.'²⁰⁴ This is indeed a truly poetic way of describing Judas – whilst perhaps looking not too different from the rest of the disciples, and being treated equally by Jesus, a sort of dramatic irony comes into play when the reader (as well as the writer) knows the rest of the story.

However, Sedulius' *pièce de résistance* regarding Judas occurs in lines 38-68 – a literary tirade describing the act of Judas' betrayal against Jesus. These lines have been described as a 'torrent²⁰⁵' of virulent and vitriolic epithets describing the events:

“You bloody, savage, impudent, crazy, rebellious,
Faithless, cruel, deceitful, venal, evil,
Heartless traitor, savage betrayer, disloyal thug,
Are you their standard bearer, marching in front of the bristling swords?
As you bring up the unholy line that threatens him with swords and
staves,

²⁰² Springer. “The Manuscripts of Sedulius,” 3

²⁰³ Carl P.E. Springer, *Sedulius, the Paschal Songs and Hymns*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical literature, 2013), xxxii

²⁰⁴ Springer, *Sedulius*, 143

²⁰⁵ Roger Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament: Juvenecus, Sedulius, Arator* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), as quoted by Springer, *Sedulius*, 41

Do you press your lips to his, slip poison into the honey,
 And betray your Lord, using the guise of a friendly gesture?
 Why do you pretend to be his ally and greet him with congenial deceit?
 Never does peace conspire to use dreadful swords;
 Never does a wolf offer fierce kisses to a holy lamb²⁰⁶

The passion and anger that Sedulius feels towards Judas is blatantly obvious in his writing here, no other person in the poem receives this kind of attention. Whilst this deluge of emotion, criticising Judas for his betrayal against Jesus and accusing him of committing this betrayal under a 'friendly guise,' is indeed an admirable and cathartic work of literature on Sedulius' part, it unfortunately his condemnation doesn't seem to match up with the biblical precedent already set, and thus 'far exceeds any historical evidence²⁰⁷.' For example, whilst the gospel writers are quick to scorn Judas in their narratives, nowhere is it explicitly mentioned that Judas necessarily 'pretended' to be Jesus' ally, as the *Carmen Paschale* suggests. It is entirely likely that the betrayal came as the result of a change of heart, or an impulsive decision based on money, greed and anger, as so often appears to be the case in the Gospels (key passages here include Mark 14:1-11, where we see the betrayal happen immediately after Jesus is anointed at Bethany, and Matthew 26:14-16, where Judas raises the question of payment for his information). However, whilst the narrative proposed by Sedulius can be rejected on historical grounds, it still had an impressive impact on the minds of those who read the epic.

As previously mentioned, the *Carmen Paschale* was known to be 'required reading²⁰⁸' amongst the educated throughout Europe, so this poem came to be very well known. Klassen suggests that the *Carmen Paschale* was chosen in particular to be taught in schools to 'introduce Christians to beautiful Latin prose in Christian form so that they would not have to read pagan writers²⁰⁹' throughout the Middle Ages. With Britain moving away from the rule of the Roman Empire in the early fifth century, the fall of the Roman Empire not far behind at the end of the century, and Christianity quickly becoming a more organised and established religion, it makes sense that a less pagan text would rise in popularity at this time. One such person who was influenced by the *Carmen Paschale* was Abraham Santa Clara, a 'gifted preacher²¹⁰' in the Austrian Church during the late seventeenth century. According to Klassen, Santa Clara was 'obsessed with Judas²¹¹' for over a decade, preaching about him (or rather, against him) almost every Sunday during that time. His elaborate sermons,

²⁰⁶ Springer, *Sedulius*, 145

²⁰⁷ Klassen, *Judas*, 20

²⁰⁸ Klassen, *Judas*, 19

²⁰⁹ Klassen, *Judas*, 19

²¹⁰ Klassen, *Judas*, 18

²¹¹ Klassen, *Judas*, 18

claiming that Judas' mother talked too much, or cursing Judas' red hair and even his toes, captured the appeal of the masses, who were urged to ensure another Judas would never be brought forth²¹².

Therefore, despite flaws in its historicity, thus making it an unreliable source for learning facts about Judas per se, the Carmen Paschale is significant when considering what sources led to a mass disapproval of Judas within Christian communities through the middle ages and into very early modernity. The text would have been read and known by many and its influence passed on from the educated down to those who were quite likely illiterate, through preachers such as Abraham Santa Clara. Thus, this text was highly influential during this period, and is still of value to scholars in considering attitudes towards Judas and how they were formed and passed on to other readers and thinkers.

THE ARABIC INFANCY GOSPEL

The Apocryphal Infancy Gospels are a number of texts in which Jesus and other Christian figures, such as Judas, or John the Baptist, are depicted as children. Most of these texts date back to around the second or third centuries, and have been used by scholars in recent years to study the theme of childhood and the experiences of children in antiquity. As well as looking at the life of Jesus from a different perspective, key themes of the Infancy Gospel texts also include Marianism, and considering why exactly she may have been the chosen vessel for the Son of God. The most common Infancy Gospels include the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* and the *Protoevangelium of James*.

The *Arabic Infancy Gospel*, however, is dated a bit later – around the fifth or sixth century – and to this day only survives in Arabic. However, two published copies of it exist; one in Oxford, published by Hienrich Sikes, and the other in Florence, produced by Provera²¹³. Both these copies are largely similar and feature most of the same content, with some expected discrepancies throughout. However, the Provera publication appears to be more in line with an Eastern Syriac text called *History of the Virgin*, which is considered to be the Arabic Infancy Gospel's antecedent²¹⁴.

The narrative of the Arabic Infancy Gospel begins at the announcement of the Census of Augustus, shortly before the birth of Christ, which proceeds to take place in a cave near Bethlehem. As the text continues, there appears to be a particular emphasis on miracles being performed by Jesus, even in his infancy. For example, an elderly Hebrew woman is healed of paralysis by touching the

²¹² Klassen, *Judas: Betrayed or Friend of Jesus?* 18-19

²¹³ Tony Burke, "Arabic Infancy Gospel," *e-Clavis: Christian Apocrypha*. Accessed 13th July 2019
<http://www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/arabic-infancy-gospel>

²¹⁴ Tony Burke, "Arabic Infancy Gospel," *e-Clavis: Christian Apocrypha*.

child whilst assisting with the birth (*Arabic Infancy Gospel*, section 3²¹⁵), and one of the Magi casts one of Jesus' swaddling cloths into a fire yet it remains perfectly intact (*Arabic Infancy Gospel*, section 8). Later on in the text, when they heard that Herod seeks to kill the infant Jesus, the Holy Family flee to Egypt, and we read about them travelling from city to city, using Jesus' swaddling cloths and bathwater to heal the sick and to exorcise demons (*Arabic Infancy Gospel*, sections 9-11). One passage tells us of a man who has been turned by magic into a mule, but returns to his normal form when Jesus is placed on his back. Whilst this would appear to bear little to no significance in our study of Judas specifically, it is an interesting aspect of Christian literature, and by understanding the authors view of Christ and Christian belief and theology, we can understand more clearly their view of other figures within the Christian canon.

An angel declares to Joseph that Herod has been killed, and the Holy Family returns to Judea. Much of this final section of the text takes place in Bethlehem (*Arabic Infancy Gospel*, section 27), where we meet the young Judas, a playmate of Jesus. Even at such a tender age, Judas is known for being possessed sporadically by Satan. It is said that Satan manifests himself in Judas by driving him to bite anybody who comes close to him – even to the extent of biting his own hands or limbs if no one is nearby. The mother of Judas, having heard of the healing miracles of Mary, the mother of Jesus, believes that her child can be cured (*Arabic Infancy Gospel*, section 35).

One morning, the young Jesus is taken out to play with some other children by a stream. This sets the scene for a juvenile retelling of the famous betrayal scene. Whilst there is no Last Supper, no bread nor wine, nor a kiss of betrayal, it still bears significance and is an interesting example of foreshadowing events to come later in the Passion narrative (even though the Passion would indeed be much, *much* later than the events described in the Infancy Gospels). The author of the Arabic Infancy Gospels describes the happenings by the stream as follows:

‘And the demoniac Judas came up, and sat down at Jesus' right hand: then, being attacked by Satan in the same manner as usual, he wished to bite the Lord Jesus, but was not able; nevertheless he struck Jesus on the right side, whereupon He began to weep. And immediately Satan went forth out of that boy, fleeing like a mad dog. And this boy who struck Jesus, and out of whom Satan went forth in the shape of a dog, was Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him to the Jews; and that same side on which Judas struck Him, the Jews transfixed with a lance.’ (*Arabic Infancy Gospel*, section 35)

Despite this being a relatively short paragraph, there is a lot going on thematically. Of course, we have the idea of demonic possession being applied to Judas. Could this be intended to be taken literally, suggesting that Judas was

²¹⁵ “The Arabic Infancy Gospel of the Saviour,” in *Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 8*, ed. Alexander Roberts, Sir James Donaldson, and Arthur Cleveland Coxe. Accessed 13th July 2019

<http://gnosis.org/library/infarab.htm>

really doing the devil's bidding? Quite possibly. Unlike Luke's Gospel, for example, where Satan and demonic possession also feature, the author of this text appears to have an entirely different motive. Whereas Luke probably intended demonic possession to shift the blame for evildoing from Christ and his followers to another party, the author of the Arabic Infancy Gospel appears to be finding anything to slander Judas' reputation. Not only is Judas portrayed as a 'demoniac child,' hurting Jesus and other children, but also indicates the spot whereupon Jesus would be pierced with a lance at the crucifixion, specifically by 'the Jews.' By including this vital piece of information, the author automatically associates Judas with the Jews, and vice versa, and thus by doing so, labels both parties as 'evil.' Whilst, yes, the devil runs off and flees the scene, it is still foretold that the Jews will hurt Jesus in much the same way that Judas did.

Although it is worth noting that, according to John's Gospel, it is not a Jew but a Roman soldier who pierces Jesus' side (John 19:34), the author of the Arabic Infancy Gospel makes their intentions clear for the reader – that the Jewish people, much like Judas, are untrustworthy and harmful to the Christian faith.

THE GOLDEN LEGEND

The Golden Legend is a compilation of stories about Jesus, his followers, and numerous Christian saints, gathered and compiled by Jacobus of Voragine, a Dominican friar, in the mid-thirteenth century. It is considered to have been the most widely read book amongst Christians prior to the Protestant Reformation, and is thus of great importance and significance in the study of medieval Christianity. The Golden Legend was a book intended for preachers, much like Jacobus himself, in order to 'edify the faithful, convert the heathen, and combat the heresies plaguing Europe²¹⁶.' This was achieved by glorifying the acts and works of Christ and the saints – their brave martyrdoms and their efforts to defend Christianity - and damning those who were considered less heroic or less obedient to the traditions and beliefs of the Church.

The story of Judas as told in the Golden Legend is one unlike any other seen in similar Christian literature, or indeed even the canonical gospels found in the New Testament. The story lies within Jacobus de Voragine's story of the life of St Matthias, as Matthias is the apostle who replaces Judas amongst the twelve disciples of Jesus in the book of Acts (Acts 1:26). The story provides us with an interesting and dramatic backstory to the Judas we know from the New Testament, and how he came to be one of the Twelve prior to his death and his replacement by Matthias. Due to the uncanny similarities between the two texts, this story of Judas is thought to have been inspired by the story of Oedipus – a Greek tragedy written by the classical playwright Sophocles²¹⁷. It begins with

²¹⁶ Kevin Di Camillo, "What Was the Golden Legend and Why is it Relevant Today?" *National Catholic Register (blog)*, accessed 1st August 2017
<http://www.ncregister.com/blog/dicamillo/what-was-the-golden-legend-and-why-is-it-relevant-today>

²¹⁷ Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel*, 48

Judas being born to his mother, a Jewish woman named Cyborea. After a bad dream that her son will 'bring ruin upon our whole people'²¹⁸, she and her husband, Ruben, not wishing to kill their only child but also 'unwilling to nurture the destroyer of their people'²¹⁹, decide to abandon the child, placing him in a basket and leaving it to drift out to sea. The basket washes ashore on the Island Scariot, which lends its name to become part of Judas' identity.

The Island's queen spots the baby Judas as she is walking along the shore. She has always wanted a child to be her successor, but believes herself to be unable to do so, so she thus comes up with a scheme wherein she 'had the infant nursed secretly while she pretended to be pregnant. When the time came, she lied by announcing that she had borne a son.'²²⁰ Thus, Judas is adopted into royal lineage. However, things don't necessarily fall into place so easily – before she knows it, the queen really does fall pregnant, and births another boy.

Judas and his alleged brother grow up together, but by no means amicably. Judas constantly mistreats and bullies his brother, and is 'chastised for his misdeeds' by his adoptive mother, but to no avail. When Judas discovers that 'he was not the queen's child but a foundling',²²¹ Judas kills the king and queen's son, and flees to Jerusalem in fear of his own life. He finds himself working for none other than Pontius Pilate, the 'governor of Judea',²²² and, after forming a good relationship with his new boss, eventually becomes head steward in Pilate's workforce. One day, 'looking out of his palace',²²³ which overlooks an orchard, Pilate declares, 'I crave that fruit so much that if I don't get some of it, I'll die!²²⁴' – thus, Judas infiltrates the orchard, unknowingly stepping onto land belonging to Ruben, his real father. Judas is spotted, and a fight breaks out between he and his father. Ruben is killed by Judas, but is rewarded by Pilate for his faithfulness. Pilate hands over to Judas all of his possessions – including his wife, Cyborea.

One day, Cyborea, overcome with grief whilst reminiscing what her and her husband had done so many years ago, confides in Judas. She says, 'I drowned my baby son in the sea, I found my husband stricken with sudden death, and to all my sorrows, Pilate has added a new one, handing me over, saddened as I am and totally unwilling, to be your wife.'²²⁵ She tells him more about how they had set their infant son afloat in a basket and abandoned him. Together, both Judas and

²¹⁸ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints, Volume 1*, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 167

²¹⁹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 167

²²⁰ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 167

²²¹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 167

²²² Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 167

²²³ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 168

²²⁴ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 168

²²⁵ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 168

Cyborea now realise what has happened – Judas had killed his real father, and was now incestuously sleeping with his own mother. Cyborea persuades him to repent, and thus he turns to ‘the lord Jesus Christ and begged forgiveness for all his crimes.²²⁶’ A shift in the passage of time within the narrative seems to occur, as the next we are told by the writer is that ‘the lord made Judas his disciple and then chose him to be an apostle. Indeed he loved him so dearly that he made him the keeper of the purse.²²⁷’ However, as is perhaps to be expected, things aren’t exactly smooth sailing for Judas. Old habits don’t die easily, and he is seen regularly raiding the purse, taking out a small share for his own personal, and selfish, use. Hypocritically, he is angered by the fact that some ointment worth three hundred pence had not been sold, so he could not steal the money made from this. Instead, he betrays Jesus (although it does not state what information is betrayed, or to whom) for ‘thirty pieces of silver, each coin being worth ten pence, and so he made up the three hundred pence lost over the ointment.²²⁸’

Feeling desperate, remorseful, and angry, Judas gives up, and goes to hang himself. He bursts forth from his midst, and that is the end of Judas. The last that Jacobus de Voragine has to say on the subject is that Judas ‘had offended the angels in heaven and men on earth, [and so] was kept out of the regions belonging to angels and to men, and was left in the company of demons,²²⁹’ implying that Judas’ actions, despite acts of repentance seen before he joined Jesus’ mission and before he went to hang himself (‘however, he was sorry for what he had done, threw back the money, and hanged himself²³⁰’), were not enough for eternal salvation.

As previously mentioned, this was a text intended for preachers to instruct their congregations in the ideals of Christianity – not so much dogma and doctrine so much as basic do’s and don’ts. For example, do be humble and remember to say your prayers (for example, St Martha, as seen elsewhere in the Golden Legend, is said to have ‘genuflected a hundred times a day and the same number of times at night²³¹’), but perhaps don’t kill your father, sleep with your mother, or steal money that isn’t yours. Despite repentance, Judas was still left to ‘suffer in the company of demons²³²’ as opposed to angels or his fellow men. This contrasts greatly to the rest of the story of Saint Matthias, who, in true martyr-like fashion, is stoned by false witnesses before being ‘beheaded with an axe²³³.’ Matthias is

²²⁶ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 168

²²⁷ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 168

²²⁸ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 168

²²⁹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 169

²³⁰ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 169

²³¹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints, Volume 2*, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 24

²³² Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 169

²³³ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 170

described by Jacobus de Voragine as being ‘very learned in the law, clean of heart, prudent in judgement, keen in solving problems concerning the sacred scripture, cautious in counselling, and frank in speech.’²³⁴ Whilst preaching in Judea, it is written that many converted to Christianity after seeing Matthias perform miracles. ‘This made the Jews envious,’²³⁵ and thus he was brought to trial before his execution. If one were to look at this text from the perspective of an upstanding member of the medieval Christian community, it is entirely likely that the subtext of this Judas story is that Judas is nothing but a stereotypical Jew – an incestuous, murderous, and greedy thief, and this is shown not only by how Judas is described throughout his story, but also in how that compares to the story of Saint Matthias only paragraphs later.

“Heartless traitor” – Judas in the imagination of antiquity

Therefore, I conclude my work with a few summative paragraphs which will provide an overview of what has been analysed and what can be inferred regarding Judas Iscariot in texts from antiquity. We have seen a multitude of different aspects of Judas, as well as the Judas narrative, develop throughout antiquity. Building upon the foundations of Judas laid down by the New Testament Gospels, such as Judas’ name, the fact that he betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, and that he kept a communal purse, writers from the first century CE onwards have continued to develop this further and use the character and story of Judas to suit their own ideals and agendas. For example, whilst some earlier texts, such as *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, show a more sympathetic approach towards Judas by showing him to be very aware of his actions and their consequences – that is, having knowledge that Jesus is the son of God, and not being able to reconcile the fact that he betrayed him, so kills himself as a result – other texts, such as *The Carmen Paschale* or *The Golden Legend*, were less kind to Judas, quickly identifying him as a thief or a heartless traitor and using these traits to establish Judas as an antagonist. Just as each Gospel writer had a different perspective of Judas and wrote more or less about him according to their understanding of Jesus and the Gospel narrative, so different ideas of Judas are presented alongside different ideas and understandings of Jesus and early Christianity.

Whilst all five of the texts I have examined are of course different in their own right – whether that’s because of the social context, the writers’ own aims (theological or political), or simply the stories they tell (for example, the story of Judas’ killing his father and sleeping with his mother as told by the *Golden Legend* is very different to the story of Judas the demoniac child featured in the *Arabic Infancy Gospel*), certain common features can be identified in each of them, thus presenting a common idea of Judas and of Jewish/Christian relations that was prominent throughout antiquity in early Christian circles.

²³⁴ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 170

²³⁵ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 170

The first text where anti-Semitism plays a key role, and is a noticeable theme where Judas is concerned, is of course the *Carmen Paschale*. This text features several invective interludes regarding Judas, where he is referred to as 'savage,' 'impudent,' and 'faithless.' In a dedicatory letter preceding the *Carmen Paschale*, addressed to Macedonius, Sedulius describes how he dedicated much of his life to secular literature, however had an apparent conversion experience to Christianity. This is described in his letter as follows: 'As soon as the inner fog was cleared from the eyes of my heart, I turned my feet which had been wandering through the briars of a thorny countryside back onto the grass of the flowery turf and dedicated to God the use of my illuminated mind²³⁶.' Ergo, as a newly devoted Christian, he dedicates his passion for literature to the 'Sacrament of the Gospel's teaching²³⁷.' In turn, through reading the *Carmen Paschale*, it is evident that Sedulius not only uses the *Carmen Paschale* as a platform to metrically retell the Gospel narratives, but to also criticise and chide the character of Judas – a Jewish scapegoat who, according to Sedulius, used a 'friendly guise' in order to surprise Jesus and his followers with the betrayal²³⁸. Of course, as mentioned previously, the influence that the *Carmen Paschale* had on many of its readers extended to preachers such as Abraham Santa Clara, who subsequently spent almost a decade preaching against Judas, and preached many sermons about each individual aspect of Judas²³⁹. Ergo, this provides evidence of an anti-Jewish culture being present throughout antiquity and through to the middle ages, encouraged by the early Christian literature of the time.

The next source where Anti-Semitism plays a vital role in the writers underlying political agenda is the *Arabic Infancy Gospel*. Whilst the anti-Jewish rhetoric in this text is more subtle than in the *Carmen Paschale*, it still presents a key insight to the attitude of the writer. In the segment describing the Passion (Section 35), where Christ is crucified, the writer insinuates that 'the Jews' pierce Jesus' side with a lance, in the same location where the young Judas – a demonically possessed child – had hit him. Whilst this fleeting reference to a select few members of an entire community may seem insignificant, the implications of such a claim by the writer are very serious. By claiming that 'the Jews' hurt Jesus in much the same way that Judas did, the writer binds together the misdoings of both Judas (a Jew) and of the Jews at the crucifixion. Both hurt Jesus, and both play a part in his betrayal and his death, thus, both take an amount of the responsibility, according to the writer.

The final text that has been studied in this section is the *Golden Legend*, a medieval text containing numerous Christian stories and retellings of Gospel narratives, compiled by Jacobus of Voragine in the thirteenth century CE. This text contains a story of Judas, and how his upbringing and temperament lead to him being the traitor that the Gospels portray him as. As such, in terms of

²³⁶ Springer, *Sedulius*, 211

²³⁷ Springer, *Sedulius*, 215

²³⁸ Springer, *Sedulius*, xxxix-xl

²³⁹ Klassen, *Judas*, 18-19

providing an anti-Jewish subtext, the Golden Legend focuses less on the physical aspects of Judas, and more on his traits and persona that make him a negative stereotype of the Jewish people. The story of Judas as told by Jacobus of Voragine is inspired by the story of Oedipus, who killed his father and slept with his mother – only, instead of Oedipus, it is Judas who carries out these acts. Therefore, Judas is consequently portrayed as a murderer, who kills his father, incestuous, for sleeping with his mother (even if Judas did not know this at the time), and a thief, who regularly steals from the common purse once he is made a disciple of Christ towards the end of the text. Ergo, it is evident that Jacobus of Voragine bases this story not only on the classical Greek tragedy, Oedipus, but also on stereotypes of the Jews, which have been seen to be prominent in Christian culture of the time period – such as red hair, crooked noses, and evil and greedy personalities. In medieval Morality plays, for example, Jews appear to receive the lion's share of negative depictions. In one such particular play attributed to French playwright Jehan Michel, Jewish characters 'compete to pull out handfuls from Jesus's beard, pulling away flesh at the same time; then they draw lots for the parts of his body that each will abuse.'²⁴⁰ Through performances such as these, the Christian communities of the Medieval period 'indulged in an orgy of dramatic sadism, performed by imaginary Jews, for whose imaginary cruelty the real Jews were punished with real cruelty.'²⁴¹ In relying on such stereotypes, and by portraying Judas as all of these terrible things as well as betraying Jesus, Jacobus of Voragine continues to contribute to the Anti-Jewish sentiment found in early Christian literature.

Ergo, by featuring Judas and by portraying him as a 'typical' Jew – red hair, incestuous, a thief, cunning and conniving, and ultimately responsible for the death of Jesus following the betrayal – the writers of these texts continue to take an anti-Semitic political stance in order to push a Christian agenda. By doing this, they emphasise the divinity and Messianic qualities of Jesus, and continue to negate and scapegoat the Jews through the discourse of an Anti-Jewish ideal through literature, with Judas not only taking responsibility for the betrayal and subsequent death of Christ but also for the negative attitude towards the Jewish people that was encouraged by his actions in the Passion narratives of the Gospels.

Whilst not necessarily anti-Semitic per se, the Gospel of Judas deserves a mention for its clear message against the mainstream early Christian Church, in favour of a more esoteric and secretive group of early Christians believing in a mystical Gnosis, essential for salvation. Whilst there is no mention of the Jews in the Gospel of Judas, the opening tells us that the story of the text is set in Judea, which implies a Jewish demographic, either geographically or religiously. Moreover, specific mentions are made to the followers of Jesus whilst he was alive and active in his ministry, all of whom would have been Jewish. Although, having said this, the disciples are described early on in the text as performing a sort of Eucharistic celebration, a ritual which wasn't common in the early Church

²⁴⁰ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 107-108

²⁴¹ Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, 107-108

until well after Jesus' death. However, with the writers of Gnostic text being noticeably against the mainstream Church, and of course with the Gospel of Judas being written so much later than even our latest canonical Gospel, this could imply simply a lack of knowledge on the writers' part regarding Christian practices and rituals during the second century CE. Furthermore, it could be argued that by polemicising against the mainstream Church established by Christ's followers, the writers of the Gnostic gospels also argue against the Jewish faith, too, as early Christianity would have been nothing without the influence or even existence of Judaism, from which it was originally simply an offshoot.

Thus, it is clear that an anti-Semitic agenda continues to develop through antiquity. Whilst it is alluded to in the Gospels, or the undertones of anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism become clearer when one looks more closely at the text and it's subtext, in later texts such as the ones I have examined, the religious opinions of the writers becomes increasingly clearer. As well as this, particular traits of Judas seen in the New Testament have been brought into these later texts and have been exaggerated in order to produce a Judas easily recognisable to any Christian from antiquity – a Judas who was a Jew who betrayed Christ, who was a thief, and who focussed only on his own personal and financial gain.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, we have seen a diverse approach to Judas throughout antiquity, through to the Middle Ages. The elaboration and augmentation of the story of Judas saw considerable growth from being merely mentioned by the early Church Fathers to having an entire backstory fabricated in the middle ages, where we read about Judas as a child in the *Arabic Infancy Gospel*, and about Judas parents and his life prior to discipleship in *The Golden Legend*. In years to come, Judas will be featured in Dante's *Inferno*, where he sits in the mouth of Satan, shown to be just as evil as he is, and mentioned by William Shakespeare, where, in *As You Like It*, Orlando's red hair is described by Rosalind as 'the dissembling colour,' which suggests deceitfulness. Flash forward to the twentieth century, and Judas is the star of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's rock opera, *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The Judas narrative, from its beginnings in the New Testament, to its development throughout antiquity and into the Middle Ages, continues to capture the curiosity and imagination of theologians and historians.

Whilst elements of anti-Semitism have of course become more prominent in depictions of Judas throughout antiquity, it is important to remember that these are just a few select texts, wherein Judas has a featured role. Many other texts from this time period would not have mentioned Judas at all, and were likely focussed on other matters – namely, key theological texts such as *The Shepherd of Hermas* (100-160 CE, approx.), Justin Martyr's *First Apology* (155-157 CE, approx.), St Augustine's *Confessions* (397-400 CE), or Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* (1485 CE). Of course, Judas is a pivotal character in the Passion Narratives, and has been instrumental in acting as a potential scapegoat, a historical figure, a mythical figure, and a negative example of discipleship. However, this, too simply adds to the fact that early Christianity is just as diverse as it is today, with no

opinions, ideas or concepts ever truly set in stone or followed by all. Should my word count have allowed for it, studying some additional texts which mention Judas, and perhaps looking at some more modern media – poetry, films, art, television, music, so on and so forth – would have made for an excellent contrast and a deeper, more diverse and detailed study. However, over the course of this dissertation it has been established that Judas has been used by writers to increasingly exaggerate particular traits of Judas – his greed²⁴², and his betrayal of Jesus²⁴³ – to avert readers from Judaism, choosing instead to favour stories of Jesus (such as in *The Arabic Infancy Gospel*, where Jesus is but an innocent, small child, playing with other children and performing miraculous healings), the salvation promised in the sacrifice of the son of Man, and the saints who act as perfect examples of discipleship in contrast to Judas, such as those found in the stories in *The Golden Legend*. As crucial to Christianity as we know it today as the historical Judas is, one must differentiate between him, and the exaggerated Jewish traitor found in the imagination of antiquity.

²⁴² Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 168

²⁴³ *The Carmen Paschale* – see Springer, *Sedulius*, 145

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