

Judas Iscariot

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Betrayal, Blasphemy, and Idolatry in
the Gospels and Acts

Richard Harvey

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Abbreviations

A. General Abbreviations

CD	<i>Church Dogmatics</i>
GNT	Greek New Testament
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic text
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
Q	Quelle (“Sayings” source in the Gospels)
UBS	The United Bible Societies’ Greek Text

B. Abbreviations for Books of the Bible

OLD TESTAMENT

Gen	2 Kgs
Exod	1 Chr
Lev	2 Chr
Num	Ezra
Deut	Neh
Josh	Esth
Judg	Job
Ruth	Ps (Pss)
1 Sam	Prov
2 Sam	Eccl
1 Kgs	Song

Isa	Obad
Jer	Jonah
Old Testament (<i>continued</i>)	Mic
Lam	Nah
Ezek	Hab
Dan	Zeph
Hos	Hag
Joel	Zech
Amos	Mal

NEW TESTAMENT

Matt	1 Tim
Mark	2 Tim
Luke	Titus
John	Phlm
Acts	Heb
Rom	Jas
1 Cor	1 Pet
2 Cor	2 Pet
Gal	1 John
Eph	2 John
Phil	3 John
Col	Jude
1 Thess	Rev
2 Thess	

C. Abbreviations of the Names of Pseudepigraphical and Early Patristic Books

Bib. Ant.	Ps.-Philo, Biblical Antiquities
Pss. Sol.	Psalms of Solomon
Adv. Haer.	Irenaeus, Against All Heresies
Adv. Marc.	Tertullian, Against Marcion

D. Abbreviations of Classical Literature

Jos.	Josephus
Ag. Ap.	Against Apion
Ant.	Jewish Antiquities
<i>J. W.</i>	<i>The Jewish Wars</i>
<i>Life</i>	<i>The Life of Josephus</i>
Xen.	Xenophon
Cyro.	Cyropedia
Mem.	Memorabilia
<i>HG</i>	<i>Historia Graeca</i>

**E. Abbreviations of Orders and Tractates in
Mishnaic and Related Literature**

Sanh.	Sanhedrin
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Preface

IN RECENT TIMES, SOME commentators from within mainstream Christianity such as Karl Barth, Hans-Josef Klauck, and William Klassen have attempted unsuccessfully to defend or exonerate Judas Iscariot. This thesis will assess the evidence for Judas's betrayal of Jesus. It has three main original contributions to knowledge.

Firstly, a thorough analysis of *παραδίδωμι*, the verb used for Judas's act of handing over Jesus, will show that it is consistent with betrayal, it is overwhelmingly a divine act, and it is normally coercive. Similarly, Matt's use of *ἑταῖρος* is a master stroke, continuing the pattern from the LXX and Josephus, where a previously close friend betrays. These two terms alone suffice to establish Judas's guilt.

Secondly, Judas is not only a traitor, as he uniquely encapsulates the three main rivals to God: human, demonic, and material. Like other human rivals to God, he is powerless, linked with evil, and directly judged by God. Satan enabling Judas to betray Jesus (Luke 22:3; John 13:2) shows Judas's betrayal in the worst light, but there is a deeper parallel. Both are named rebels, allowed to remain in God's presence until irrevocably cast out. The third rival is money: 'You cannot serve both God and money.' (Matt 6: 24; Luke 16: 13). Judas was paid to perform the divine like function of handing someone over to death. Although human, he displayed the essential features of an idol.

Mark's stark portrayal of Judas's guilt is only enhanced by Matthew and Luke. If Mark 3 casts Judas as an outsider, Luke 6 calls him *πρόδοτης*. If Mark 14 links Judas with the chief priests in plotting against Jesus, Matt 23 inserts three *παρουσία* parables to show presumed disciples of Jesus being exposed in increasingly severe terms. Finally, Judas's disrespectful 'Rabbi' to Jesus in Gethsemane (Mark 14: 45), when he knew Jesus was so much more reflects the oral element of blasphemy in 1st CE Judaism. Abrogating to

himself the divine privilege of handing over may fairly be called blasphemy by action.

In conclusion, there is sufficient evidence to show that Judas is a traitor and a blasphemer who has all the essential literary features of an idol. The electronic form of this thesis uses SBLHebrew and SBLGreek. Quotations in English are taken from the NIV, unless otherwise indicated. SBL abbreviations are used.

Section 1

Introduction, problem statement, methodology

1.1. Perspectives on Judas Iscariot

FOR MOST OF CHRISTIAN history, Judas has been seen as the consummate traitor who betrayed his Lord, the Son of God, to death. Few people are more reviled or so closely linked with betrayal. The names of few, if any, historical figures remain a term of deep abuse. Australian Federal Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon resigned on June 3, 2009, accusing “two or three Judases” of disloyalty.¹ Ex-Honduran President Manuel Zelaya referred to his opponents as Judases who kissed and betrayed him.²

We could assume that Judas has been universally condemned since his death. Until the late twentieth century, commentators in mainstream Christianity broadly condemned him, sometimes leading to anti-Semitism, while some commentators from other religions urged a more sympathetic view. This commenced with the Gnostic *Gospel of Judas*, to which Irenaeus referred in 180 CE.³ In the twentieth century, the prior commitments of Karl Barth, William Klassen, Hans-Josef Klauck, and Anthony Cane from within Christianity, and the Jewish authors Hyam Maccoby and Gary Greenberg, precluded an objective examination of Judas. Works like the *Arabic Infancy Gospel*, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, *The Golden Legend* and the works by Timayenis, Monro, and Leloup can all be eliminated from serious discussion. They either diverge markedly from the gospel accounts or are so focused on one aspect that they lack balance. These texts are not meant to be exhaustive—only to illustrate general trends.

1. Snow and Pearlman, “Fitzgibbon,” 4.
2. Australian Broadcasting Corporation 702 Radio News, July 5, 2009.
3. Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” 1.31.1; Maritz, “Testimony,” 300.

1.2. The figure of Judas Iscariot in historical perspective

1.2.1. The New Testament

After praying all night (Luke 6:12), Jesus called twelve disciples, the apostles (Matt 10:2; Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13), by name to be with him and to preach (Mark 3:14), to heal and deliver (Matt 10:1; Mark 3:15). The order of names is largely uniform. They are in three groups of four, headed by Simon, Philip, and James, the son of Alphaeus. Identifying Thaddaeus and Judas the son of James is plausible.⁴ Judas Iscariot is always last, and called he who “betrayed (or handed over) him (i.e. Jesus)/became a traitor.”⁵ The gospels show Judas associated negatively with money at Bethany (Matt 26:8; Mark 14:4; John 12:6).⁶ Judas is the only one identified as complaining about the anointing, and Jesus answers similarly each time.

All the gospels say that Judas agreed to hand Jesus over to the temple authorities. Matthew 26:14 and Mark 14:10 have Judas taking the initiative, while Luke 22:3 and John 13:2 say Satan prompted him. They do not describe his motive, but their accounts all involve money (Matt 26:15; Mark 14:11; Luke 22:5). All agree that Jesus spoke of being handed over at the Last Supper (Matt 26:21; Mark 14:18; Luke 22:21; John 13:21). Luke 22:22 records Jesus’ woe on the traitor. John 13:30 notes that Judas left the meal to finalize the deed, whereas the Synoptics imply it. All agree that Judas led the crowd which arrested Jesus (Matt 26:47; Mark 14:43; Luke 22:47; John 18:3).

Finally, Judas died ignominiously. Jesus reportedly said that Judas, the son of perdition, was the only apostle lost, and that fulfilled Scripture (John 17:2). Judas was remorseful, threw the money into the temple, and hanged himself. The chief priests used the money to buy the potter’s field for gentile burials (Matt 27:3–7). Acts 1:18 states that Judas fell headlong in this field, his intestines spilled out, and he died. These accounts differ markedly, but both show an ignominious end. The infant church elected Matthias to replace Judas (Acts 1:16). It is hardly surprising that the early church condemned Judas.

4. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 108.

5. Maritz, “Judas Iscariot,” 304.

6. See Section 4.3.3 (this form will be used henceforth). Luke 7:36–50 is arguably another incident.

1.2.2. The Ante-Nicene Fathers

1.2.2.1. *Fragments of Papias*

Fragment II explicitly calls Judas a traitor. Fragment III notes that Judas's body was so swollen that he could not pass where a chariot could. Judas's eyes could not see light, his body was covered with running sores, and he died in a lonely place, the stench still evident.⁷ These fragments luridly embellish the gospels.⁸

1.2.2.2. *Irenaeus of Lyons*

Irenaeus⁹ succeeded the martyred Pothinus as Bishop of Lyons in 177 CE. His few references accept Judas's treachery unquestionably: "the apostasy of Judas,"¹⁰ "Judas the traitor,"¹¹ the Gospel of Judas being "fictitious history," and "the treachery of Judas."¹² Irenaeus's enthusiasm for opposing heresy sometimes overwhelms his work, but he never calls Judas anything positive. Secondly, in his eyes, there was little worse than Gnosticism, which linked Jesus, as the human part of Christ the twelfth eon, to the apostasy of the twelfth apostle Judas and Jesus' suffering in the twelfth month.¹³ He asked how Judas, "the betrayer of Jesus," can be a type of the suffering twelfth eon, when it is clearly Jesus who suffered.¹⁴ Judas "accomplished the mystery of the betrayal" and is linked with the Cainites in understanding secret knowledge.¹⁵

7. Kleist, *Didache*, 117, 119.

8. Papias, "Fragments of Papias," <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anfo1.vii.ii.html>.

9. He used logic and aesthetics to derive four principles of divine intellect (God, the source of all good, embraced all things), economy (salvation is discerned through Jesus), recapitulation (change is the norm for God and everything finds meaning in Jesus), and participation (God became human that we might become like God). He attacked the Gnosticism of Valentinus, who argued that the primal Bythos brought forth thirty eons in fifteen male-female pairs, called "syzygies," the most commonly cited pair being Jesus and Sophia (Osborn, *Tertullian*, 18–22, 265–70).

10. Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," 1.3.3; Rousseau and Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon*, 120.

11. Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," 2.20.4; Rousseau and Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon*, 207.

12. Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," 1.31.1; 2.20.2; Rousseau and Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon*, 201.

13. Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," 1.3.3; Rousseau and Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon*, 120.

14. Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," 2.20.2; Rousseau and Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon*, 203.

15. Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," 1.31.1; Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anfo1.ix.ii.html>.

1.2.2.3. *Tertullian*

Tertullian's few references are telling. He rebukes Marcion for despising Yahweh's judgmental nature while wanting God to be just, an impossible contradiction.¹⁶ Marcion overreaches when arguing that, had Yahweh foreknown Judas's treachery, he would not have chosen him, as this implied that Yahweh did not foreknow Judas's treachery, which is impossible for an all-knowing God. In 4.41, Tertullian cites Marcion's argument that such ignorance proves Yahweh's evil/inferior nature, but Tertullian notes the contradiction: it is Jesus, the son of (as Marcion admits) the good Heavenly Father, who chose Judas. Tertullian disputes Marcion's description of Yahweh's evil powers bringing Christ to the cross, as this denies the plain meaning of Scripture.¹⁷ An evil Yahweh would have rewarded Judas for handing Jesus over. He further argues at 4.40 that Jesus might have been betrayed by a stranger but how then could Scripture be fulfilled? There was no need to betray him who "offered Himself to the people openly" and could easily have been captured.

Allowing for some overly enthusiastic expression, Tertullian has a uniformly severe view of Judas as "the traitor" (2.28), who committed "treachery" (3.23), and upon whom Christ's woe was justly pronounced (4.41). Moreover, Tertullian argues that only Marcion's evil demiurge would consider rewarding Judas (3.23). Given the thrust of "Against Marcion," it is hard to imagine a more damning case.¹⁸

1.2.2.4. *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*

The *Constitutions* link Simon Magus, who received "the seal of the Lord" with Judas, "one of us," in sin, and met death at God's hand.¹⁹ Book Five recounts the Last Supper, arguing that it was Jesus' comment that it would have been better if Judas had not been born (the "birth woe") which

16. Marcion, *Adversus Marcionem*, 2.28.2. He said that the creator, Yahweh, was an evil demiurge, but that above him was a good and more powerful Father in Jesus. He founded a church which was a serious rival to the Catholic Church (whose streams of theology were recognized as valid and canonical at councils such as Nicea) into the third century. Marcion's arguments demanded a detailed response, which Tertullian did, as he expounded his central idea of the economy of salvation in Christ.

17. Marcion, *Adversus Marcionem*, 3.24.

18. Tertullian, "Five Books Against Marcion," <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anfo3.v.iv.i.html>.

19. "Le sceau du Seigneur" and "qui était des nôtres" (Metzger, *Constitutions*, 1:175).

prompted him to go to the high priests.²⁰ Judas's "*baiser perfide*" is the proof of his treason.²¹ Book Seven links Judas, and especially his theft, with that of Achan and of Ananias and Sapphira, who were killed for theft, and with Gehazi, whom God struck with leprosy.²²

1.2.2.5. *Summary of the Fathers*

The *Fathers* is unanimous concerning Judas's treachery. He is either called a traitor or likened to some of the most heinous individuals in the Bible who professed some form of commitment to Jesus, such as Ananias and Sapphira and Simon Magus (Acts 5, 8). Irenaeus and Tertullian link him with heresies they are opposing—Gnosticism and Marcionism. His guilt is never diminished and his death is always understood as God's just punishment. While Papias embellishes, and Irenaeus and Tertullian use extravagant language, the core of their narratives reflects the gospels. Similar parallels could also be cited from Ignatius, Tatian, Clement, and Origen. None of the proto-orthodox suggested that Judas was anything other than a traitor.²³

1.3. Modern approaches²⁴

While many modern scholars view Judas as a traitor, some do not. I have chosen four scholars who attempt to exonerate Judas from within Christianity (Barth, Klassen, Klauck, and Cane) and two who write from within Judaism (Maccoby and Greenberg). They illustrate a modern trend where scholars, as opposed to more popular writers, attempt to highlight new perspectives on Judas.

20. Ibid., 2:251.

21. Ibid., 2:251.

22. Ibid., 3:31; Donaldson, "Constitutions of the Holy Apostles," <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anfo7.ix.html>.

23. Roberts and Donaldson, "Ante-Nicene Fathers," <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anfo1.i.html>.

24. While I referred to the *Golden Legend* (above), I will not use any other medieval or mystical texts, as their usefulness is (severely) limited by their anti-Semitism and composite nature. Paffenroth (*Images*, 17–57) has many examples of medieval anti-Semitic depictions of Judas as avaricious and generally evil.

1.3.1. Karl Barth (1888–1968)

If election is Barth's great contribution to theology,²⁵ then his Jesus Christ as "Electing and Elected" is perhaps his most original. Jesus as "elected man" is understood only in the light of his being simultaneously the "electing God."²⁶ Any divine decision included the Logos, who would then be bound as the incarnate Jesus.²⁷ This avoided speculation concerning a Logos who existed in and for himself alone before any decision for redemption, so that the incarnation added something new to his being and his death diminished his deity.²⁸ The identity of the immanent and economic Trinity is vital when discussing his view of Judas.

Judas is the test case of whether anyone is predestined to hell, as the loss of one so close to Jesus is a failure by God.²⁹ While conceding that we cannot know Judas's final state, Barth describes the relationship between Jesus and Judas as "the overwhelming power of grace and the weakness of human wickedness,"³⁰ so his betrayal does not finally undo his election. But he seems not to have applied consistently his belief in the Electing Jesus, for it is precisely this Jesus whom Judas betrayed. Judas's election sounds less like an act of a gracious Lord than an immutable decree, an idea which Barth was keen to criticize in Calvin.³¹ This may show God's patience, but disregards Judas's free will.

Barth was accused of anti-Semitism when arguing that Judas represents Judaism in its rejection of Yahweh.³² Yet he affirms that Christ became incarnate for all,³³ making this harder to understand. The idea that "[Judas] obviously represents the Jews,"³⁴ though argued by Maccoby and Greenberg, is unsupported. No NT text connects the similar names of Judas and Judah as representing Judaism.³⁵ It is difficult to convict Barth of anti-Semitism.³⁶

25. McCormack, "Grace," 92.

26. *CD* II.1:99; II.2:109.

27. McCormack, "Grace," 94.

28. *Ibid.*, 97–98.

29. *CD* II.2:475–76.

30. *Ibid.*, 476–77.

31. McCormack, "Grace," 97.

32. *CD* II.2:464–65.

33. Gunton, "Salvation," 143.

34. *CD* II.2:464–65.

35. Maccoby, *Myth*, 28.

36. Was Barth anti-Semitic? Lindsay notes some unhelpful comments near the end of Barth's life, the difficulty in reading *CD* and his lack of genuine encounters with Jews (*Israel*, 19–24, 26). In Barth's defence, he noted his deep and mutual interaction with

Rather, his unfortunate comments show defects in his attempt to balance God's grace and human sin. God elected Israel, but a problem arose when Israel rejected the very same God.³⁷ He drops his opposition to universal salvation in a "final . . . expansion of the circle of election."³⁸ While God elected that Jesus would die for all, people must still respond.

1.3.2. Hyam Maccoby (1924–2004)

Hyam Maccoby believes that, while the story of Judas is "almost entirely fictional," his betrayal coheres with the communal Jewish rejection of Jesus, and so Judas is used to justify anti-Semitism). The key weakness is, as he admits, that such a communal dimension is absent from the NT.³⁹

Maccoby's argument rests on the unproven link between the name of Judas and the Jewish people. His apparent unfamiliarity with the Eucharist means that he argues that John 6 is a "denial of [its] efficacy," as Judas comes from Jesus' inner circle.⁴⁰ Asides like the "amazing co-operation between Jesus and Satan" in designating Judas at the Last Supper, defy belief.⁴¹ Maccoby is so (rightly) insistent upon countering anti-Semitism that he proposes an extraordinary conspiracy, wherein the church vilified a good disciple in order to sustain a schism within the emerging church. Neither does he ask whether this demands a historical Judas, nor how this coheres with his "entirely fictional" approach. He fails to address two key points: the historical accuracy of a split between Paul and the Jerusalem church (Galatians 2 notwithstanding) and, even if that could be sustained, why Paul never mentions Judas in detailing any such split.

Jewish professors at Marburg, his sheltering of Jewish refugees, his public denunciation of anti-Semitism at Wipkingen, and his deep involvement in resistance efforts for the Jews, especially those in Hungary, before concluding that a couple of unfortunate comments should be seen against a lifetime of support for Jews, which exposed him to serious danger (Lindsay, *Israel*, 15, 27–29, 31–32, 33–35). Rabbi Taubes had no hesitation in approaching Barth for help (*Israel*, 34). We may conclude that he was not anti-Semitic.

37. Hunsinger, "Christology," 137. A similar situation existed between Jesus and Judas (s4.3.4).

38. *CD* II.2:417; Gockel, *Barth*, 188.

39. Maccoby, *Myth*, 2, 5, 28. So also Zwiep, "Judas and the Jews," 79.

40. Maccoby, *Myth*, 65.

41. *Ibid.*, 73.

1.3.3. Gary Greenberg (1943–present)

Greenberg argued that the NT accounts of Judas are “historically implausible.”⁴² This approach permeates *The Judas Brief: Who Really Killed Jesus?*, where very little in the gospels happened the way they are narrated. Greenberg’s use of secondary material is a real strength, but he fails to note his own findings on Pilate. He argues that Judas negotiated with the chief priests for Jesus to be arrested before Passover in order to prevent riots, but that Herod demanded Pilate execute him for claiming to be King of the Jews.⁴³ Post-Easter, tension between Jesus’ disciples and other Jews led the evangelists to invent texts like Lazarus’s raising and to malign the hitherto-respected and benevolent Judas.⁴⁴ The evangelists adapted their sources to decrease Pilate’s culpability, but to increase that of the Jews. He adds to The Jesus Seminar’s criteria, that the least hostile text is probably the earliest, failing to recognize that tensions between Jesus’ followers and other sectarians likely emerged within his lifetime, not only after the first Easter (Mark 3:6).⁴⁵

Greenberg’s sources show Pilate’s “cruelty, corruption,” and love of extra-judicial executions.⁴⁶ He argued that Pilate would not have given in to a Jewish crowd, but fails to understand two things which he did fear: a riot or being reported unfavorably to Rome. These did sway Pilate (Matt 27:24; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:2; John 19:12). He could not afford another military standards affair, when thousands of Jews preferred death to the dishonoring of Jerusalem, or another Golden Shields affair, when Tiberius severely rebuked him.⁴⁷ Having misunderstood Pilate, Greenberg compounds his error with an argument which amounts to guilt by association when suggesting that, if the evangelists could not portray Pilate correctly, neither could they do so with Judas.⁴⁸

42. Greenberg, *Myth*, 187.

43. *Ibid.*, 187.

44. *Ibid.*, 187, 147.

45. A brief but useful critique of the Seminar agrees with NT Wright, that Crossan’s *Historical Jesus* (1991), which reduced Jesus to an illiterate “peasant Jewish Cynic” (421–22), is almost wholly wrong (Casey, *Jesus*, 18–21). Members voted on the authenticity of gospel texts, excluding any passage which was not attested twice, regardless of how well it fitted the context. Mark 1:16–38 was excluded, but the Gospel of Thomas was felt to have a higher proportion of original material than Mark (*ibid.*, 19, 21).

46. Greenberg, *Myth*, 13.

47. *Ibid.*, 94–100.

48. *Ibid.*, 131.

Greenberg sees Judas as a trusted disciple, as he was treasurer.⁴⁹ He might have been more just if he was concerned for the poor, and Jesus only concerned about his looming funeral.⁵⁰ Judas's rebuke of Jesus was an occasion for the evangelists to blacken his name, and so John's charge that Judas was a thief can be dismissed.⁵¹ Despite his attempted source analysis, Greenberg's thesis is supposition with the gospels being little more than fabrication. Also, he is inconsistent in accepting what the gospels detail concerning Pilate, but not Judas. He does not explicate key terms like παραδίδωμι, and too readily accepts the connotations of Judas as treasurer.⁵² Jesus may have appointed Judas as treasurer to test him whom he foreknew would betray him. Greenberg's worst failure is not recognizing how vulnerable Pilate felt to the crowd's implied threat to report him to Rome.

1.3.4. William Klassen (1930–present)

William Klassen argues that Judas could not have betrayed Jesus, as παραδίδωμι is not translated “betray” in classical Greek, the LXX, or Josephus. Consequently, it cannot mean “betray” in the NT. Rather, προδοσία usually means “treachery.” He cites Xenophon on Cyrus: “the garrisons . . . with . . . the terror inspired by Cyrus, were persuaded to surrender.”⁵³ An object may be handed over (under coercion): “to receive his sword when he surrenders it.”⁵⁴ He believes that betrayal is inappropriate for people handing over themselves or their weapons, but fails to note that each use of παραδίδωμι involves coercion. The NT narrative preserves this element which, with a person as the object of the verb, is an inalienable part of classical usage.

49. Ibid., 266.

50. Ibid., 147. Alternatively, the honor/shame culture of the time abhorred the lack of proper burial. Burial of the dead was a “universal duty,” particularly by children for their parents (Allison, *Resurrecting*, 169–72). Jesus' comments about the dead burying their own dead and hating their father/mother (Luke 9:59–60; 14:26) are his way of saying that following him superseded all other duties (ibid., 170). Allison's discussion of 14:26 was complicated unnecessarily by omitting discussion of Jesus' climactic demand “even his own life,” which shows that this is not just about superseding the Fourth Commandment.

51. Greenberg, *Myth*, 140.

52. Ibid., 132.

53. Klassen, *Betrayer or Friend*, 47–48; Cyro 5.4.51; Dindorfius, *Institutio*, 185.

54. Cyro 5.1.28; Dindorfius, *Institutio*, 185.

He argues that Josephus uses παραδίδωμι 293 times, but betrayal does not fit the contexts; rather, he uses προδίδωμι or προδοσία.⁵⁵ However, it is inconceivable that the “will of God” (*Ant.* 2.20), an office (*Ant.* 2.89), or a free self-offering (*Ant.* 2.137) could ever be “betrayed.”⁵⁶ Nor does he engage with Josephus’s use of προδότης at Yodefath, asserting rather than proving that Luke 6:16 provides no parallel.⁵⁷ Klassen does not examine this text which must call his thesis into question. He argues without support that “Luke deviates from his source by calling Judas the προδότης,”⁵⁸ surely a court of last appeal. He argues that no LXX example can be translated “betray,” but he does not address all the data.⁵⁹ The verb occurs 194 times, with God usually the subject (Appendix 1). Sometimes, an object is handed over—e.g., land (*Deut* 1:8). Most uses show God’s judicial wrath, when handing over the nations to Israel, as a penalty for sin, or the reverse (*Num* 21:3; *Judg* 6:1). Handing over is overwhelmingly a divine act, normally only in response to continual, unrepented sin. There are some exceptions—e.g., God hands over kingdoms to people (*Dan* 4:17).

Klassen argues that, as παραδίδωμι is not translated “betray” in classical Greek, the LXX, or Josephus, then it cannot be in the NT.⁶⁰ This lacks a clear logic, for it is difficult to argue that, say, ἀπόστολος should only be translated according to pre-NT usage. Secondly, the difficulties are compounded by his reliance on the work of others, and so his failure to note that God is mostly the subject of παραδίδωμι in the LXX (Appendix 1). For such a critical word, this is a serious omission. It is not just that παραδίδωμι is not translated “betray” in these cases, but rather that it could never be translated “betray.” To whom would God betray anyone? He does not distinguish between voluntary and involuntary (coercive) handings-over, whether the object of the verb is personal or impersonal, or whether the act of handing over is for judgment or blessing.

There are frequent instances where Klassen has failed properly to evidence his claims. He asserts that Judas did “what Jesus asked him to do,” yet provides no evidence.⁶¹ He believes that Jesus could have escaped arrest, but ignores his agony in Gethsemane (*Matt* 26:39, 42) and his insistence that

55. Klassen, *Friend*, 49.

56. *Ibid.*, 81, 86, 90.

57. *Ibid.*, 116; s2.2.2.

58. *Ibid.*, 117.

59. *Ibid.*, 49.

60. *Ibid.*, 47–49.

61. *Ibid.*, 45. John 13:27 (uncited by Klassen) is a possibility, although this is better understood as Jesus bringing matters to a head, sensing that Judas will not repent.

this is exactly what he would not do (Matt 26:53). He claims that the evangelists did not believe that “Judas did nothing until Jesus told him,” and felt the need to “ascribe dark motives” to Judas.⁶² This may be derived from John 13:27, but is absent from Matthew 26:14/Mark 14:9, where Jesus’ anointing at Bethany seems to prompt Judas. Luke ascribes Judas’s motivation to Satan (Luke 22:3). Saying that Jesus did not criticize Judas or imply that the impending betrayal was sinful is odd, given Jesus’ “birth woe” on Judas (Matt 26:24; Mark 14:21).⁶³ Jesus did foreknow the betrayal (John 6:71), and highlighted this fact at the Last Supper in particularly solemn words. Ultimately, Jesus respected Judas’s free will. Klassen has ignored the lexical fields which frequently give words their nuance, but his work nonetheless demands a reconsideration of the lexical evidence.

1.3.5. Hans-Josef Klauck (1946–present)

Klauck’s *Judas, un disciple de Jésus: Exégèse et repercussions historiques* (2006) translates an earlier German work.⁶⁴ Disappointingly, it lacks the evidence to justify that “a rehabilitation of Judas is imperative.”⁶⁵ Firstly, he argues that the data implicating Judas “only corresponds to a relatively narrow textual base.”⁶⁶ Next, Judas “is not a demoniacal monster . . . but . . . is mistaken.” Moreover, God has placed over the act of Judas “a veil of mystery which we cannot and do not wish to remove.”⁶⁷ Lastly, “it will [only] be possible to render justice to Judas” when we have seen “our own traits” in Judas, as “we have transferred onto Judas . . . our desires of murder, our greed and our religious doubts.”⁶⁸ The Judas texts are mainly a mirror to reflect ourselves rather than anything historical.

He divides the data into categories: “the personification of evil,” “a figure symbolic of subversion,” “representing the desire to assert oneself,” “an innocent instrument,” “a product of formation by legend,” “a projection of the unconscious,” and “a function of narrative structure.”⁶⁹ Klauck’s argument lacks a critical edge. He is rightly concerned not “to apply . . . to the

62. Ibid., 45.

63. Ibid., 45.

64. The work that he translated was *Judas—ein Jünger des Herrn*. It is unavailable in English. My translation is in the text.

65. Klauck, *Disciple*, 165.

66. Ibid., 12.

67. Ibid., 165.

68. Ibid., 165.

69. Ibid., 13, 16, 18, 21, 24, 26, 28.

Jewish people the . . . negative traits of Judas,” yet even Maccoby notes that the NT never makes this connection.⁷⁰ Klauck argues that he is a joker who introduces “an aspect of contingency and uncertainty in which the narrative can unfold with a merciless necessity.”⁷¹ He does not explain how uncertainty coheres with necessity.

Klauck tries to argue that “the group of the 12 was only formed after Easter, as a response to the appearances of the risen one,”⁷² and that another disciple who was not part of the Twelve betrayed Jesus. Judas’s “treason” was “to leave the group of the 12 after Easter,” at which point his name was “retro-projected” back onto the name of the actual traitor.⁷³ He provides no evidence whatsoever for this singular thesis.

Secondly, he argues that the relationship of παραδίδωμι with treason is “only . . . very marginal.”⁷⁴ It is remiss not to study its pre-NT meaning, with its common thread of coercion (see section 2). He cites Barth approvingly: “Judas accomplished precisely what God wanted.”⁷⁵ This is hard to reconcile with Jesus’ clear anguish at the Last Supper, when pronouncing the “birth woe” (Luke 14:21). If Judas is “the particular agent . . . according to the design of God” and “*l’executor Novi Testamenti*,” why the “birth woe”?⁷⁶ Arguing that Judas accomplished God’s will, but not as God intended, does not recognize that Jesus rejected precisely this temptation from Satan (Matt 4; Luke 4).⁷⁷ For all his concerns about a simplistic good/bad dichotomy, no one says anything positive about Judas.

Any treachery in a relationship is problematic, which he admits in “the distance which separated them.”⁷⁸ While recognizing that it is “tentative” to “absolve Judas of all fault,” he believes that we can understand Judas’s act as “something . . . historically understandable and plausible.”⁷⁹ He reasons that Judas’s act is between “divine election and the free decision of the human will.”⁸⁰ But it is Judas’s use of his free will that makes his act so heinous.

70. *Ibid.*, 14; Maccoby, *Myth*, 28.

71. Klauck, *Disciple*, 28.

72. *Ibid.*, 30. It is reasonable to see the Twelve existing during Jesus’ lifetime (Meier, “Twelve,” 671).

73. *Ibid.*, 32.

74. *Ibid.*, 45.

75. *Ibid.*, 47.

76. *Ibid.*, 47. *Particulier* in French means “special” or “distinctive,” and highlights Judas’s uniqueness.

77. *Ibid.*, 47–48.

78. *Ibid.*, 94.

79. *Ibid.*, 165, 168.

80. *Ibid.*, 168.

Scripture foresaw the betrayal, but Jesus' anguish at the Last Supper shows that he did not want Judas to hand him over. It is difficult to imagine a more damning indictment than the "birth woe" (Mark 14:21).

Thirdly, "To consider avarice and greed as determining factors . . . blackens . . . Judas."⁸¹ Rather, he was motivated by "messianic expectations."⁸² While the NT never discusses his motivation, he is often associated with money and greed. Klauck rightly wants to disassociate anti-Semitism from connotations of greed, but cannot disprove the NT's association of Judas and greed. Contra Klauck, Judas does not appear simply mistaken, but mercenary.⁸³ If his only motivation was God's will, why accept the money offered or ask for it?

Fourthly, he says that the function of Judas's kiss "is not easy to determine," being "a legendary amplification of a more ancient report."⁸⁴ Judas's role in Jesus' arrest "is not possible to define" exactly.⁸⁵ There is nothing unclear about leading the arrest party (John 18:3). He does not help his case by using two OT examples of guilt: Joab and Esau.⁸⁶ Esau is not recorded as kissing anyone, and Joab's treachery will be considered in s2.3.4.

Lastly, Klauck notes the differences between Matthew and Luke on Judas's death. He says "If it is a historical fact," implying that Judas may not have died and may have "return[ed] to his own country, to live faithfully according to the traditions of his people."⁸⁷ Both Matthew (27:8, "why it has been called") and Luke (Acts 1:19, "Everyone in Jerusalem heard") report popular views about Judas's death, which need not agree.⁸⁸ Both describe an awful death: Matthew by suicide and Luke apparently by a sovereign act of God. Concluding that both are wrong when they agree on the awful nature of Judas's death requires more evidence than conflicting accounts. It is hard to see Luke implying God's sovereign slaying of someone who, according to Klauck, was simply mistaken.⁸⁹

Klauck's points fail both individually and collectively. Judas was not caught in a deep contradiction or mistaken, but did what not even God

81. *Ibid.*, 56.

82. *Ibid.*, 164.

83. *Ibid.*, 165.

84. *Ibid.*, 68, 70.

85. *Ibid.*, 71.

86. *Ibid.*, 69–71.

87. *Ibid.*, 137.

88. Zwiep, "Matthias," 108.

89. *Ibid.*, 165.

did in handing over an innocent person (Matt 27:4).⁹⁰ Given Jesus' clear anguish at the Last Supper, it is difficult to acknowledge the degrees of guilt which Klauck allows, where he seeks not a pardon, but a plausible explanation.⁹¹ We cannot ascertain Judas's motivation, but this does not entitle him to an acquittal without compelling evidence. The motives of many Biblical characters are not explored in detail, but that does not entitle them to an acquittal. While some interpretations of Judas's actions have produced unfortunate results, this requires better exegesis, not arguing that "a rehabilitation of Judas is imperative."⁹² It is highly unusual, given Klauck's concern for sober exegesis, that his longest citation is from the *Golden Legend*.⁹³

1.3.6. Anthony Cane (1961–present)

Cane's *The Place of Judas Iscariot in Christology* argues that we should see Judas in "the tension between providence and tragedy."⁹⁴ He uses Barth to illustrate the allegedly providential role of Judas in salvation where "all things are directed and ordered by God."⁹⁵ In contrast, Cane uses MacKinnon's approach to tragedy: "those . . . intractable aspects of existence which expose the inadequacies of human ratiocination."⁹⁶ MacKinnon argues that attempts to resolve the Judas narrative show more of our need for answers than of the nature of reality.⁹⁷

Cane's handling of the Greek lacks rigor. He claims that παραδίδωμι is more neutral than the treacherous προδίδωμι, yet "handing over" could be acceptable if done with due cause and proper authority," but he does not show this.⁹⁸ He then addresses fulfillment. How could Jesus go "as it is written," and yet it would have been better if Judas "had not been born" (Matt 26:20–25)? Moreover, is the loss of Judas a failure by Jesus? He concludes that, as the NT moves from Mark to John,⁹⁹ the portrayal of Judas becomes

90. Ibid., 176, 165. See s2.2.

91. Ibid., 168.

92. Ibid., 165.

93. Ibid., 160–62.

94. Cane, *Place*, 2.

95. Ibid., 5.

96. MacKinnon, *Borderlands*, 20.

97. Cane, *Place*, 6. More detailed arguments against Cane's position will appear in a future article.

98. Ibid., 17–19, 22.

99. This raises a number of questions about the relative datings and intertextuality of the gospel accounts, which he does not raise, let alone address. See s4.1.

more negative. Judas may have been chosen to fulfill a particular role, but once that has been completed, he disappears.¹⁰⁰ Based on Markan priority, I will show in s4 that Mark establishes Judas's guilt early on. His guilt is then not a later invention by the church.

Secondly, Cane argues that the loss of Judas is a defeat for Jesus, in whose company he spent three years, and he questions the effectiveness of Judas's (alleged) participation in the institution of communion and the foot-washing.¹⁰¹ He finds Jesus guilty as charged, and sees this as a necessary limitation of the incarnation.¹⁰² This is odd, as Luke 6:12 states that Jesus spent all night praying to God and then called the Twelve. A better way to see if this is a result of the incarnation¹⁰³ is to ask if there is an OT parallel. Evil had continued access to God's presence—YHWH in the OT and Jesus in the NT (ss3.4; 5.3). The "heavenly assembly" included, for at least some time, beings in rebellion against/not submitted to God. As the same pattern happened in both the OT and the NT, it is not a limitation of the incarnation, but something inherent in God's nature. Therefore, Cane's argument must be assessed as problematic.

Thirdly, Cane asks if Judas repented by studying the word μεταμέλομαι. This is an odd choice, as μετάνοια would seem more appropriate. Cane disputes whether Judas is overcome by despair, but believes that "Judas is so repentant that he . . . hangs himself."¹⁰⁴ He notes Jesus' woe in Matthew 26:24 and the unfavorable comparison with Peter,¹⁰⁵ who wept bitterly after denying Jesus (Matt 26:75).¹⁰⁶ Lastly, for someone concerned with exploring tragedy, his solution is surprising. He argues that "it is Judas rather than Jesus who is truly lost . . . he is . . . necessary to the salvific death of Christ . . . and yet only finds condemnation."¹⁰⁷ Judas's role was unnecessary. Given the antipathy between the temple authorities and Jesus, he only had to walk alone into the temple to be arrested.¹⁰⁸ He had already stated his willingness to obey the Father in dying; e.g., Matthew 26:39, 42.

100. Ibid., 55.

101. Ibid., 89.

102. Ibid., 185.

103. And not say that Judas is a particularly poignant example of John 6:66.

104. Ibid., 48.

105. So also Oropeza, *Footsteps*, 1:75.

106. Cane, *Place*, 48–49.

107. Ibid., 155.

108. This obviates any need for Judas to hand Jesus over and hence any concern like Oropeza, *Footsteps*, 1:184 that Jesus could use Judas for such purposes fully knowing the perdition which awaited Judas.

Finally, he explores the descent into hell, but ignores the complexities of 1 Peter 3:18–19.¹⁰⁹ He argues that “if the saving power of Christ can extend even to the dead Judas,”¹¹⁰ then all is resolved. Cane agrees with Nathanael Emmons, that God had the salvation of everyone else in mind when “effecting the eternal perdition of Judas.”¹¹¹ Balthasar argues that Judas’s fate must be seen against “the whole economy of salvation.”¹¹² Although a follower of Christ, he is more akin to Judaism. Balthasar wants to avoid scapegoating the Jews, Judas, etc., and his solution is that God sent Jesus to save hell, not condemn it.¹¹³ Cane simply follows Balthasar’s reading of 1 Peter 3, ignoring the wider debate over the best meaning of the text.¹¹⁴ Michaels argues that Jesus is announcing his victory to imprisoned, unclean spirits; Grudem that God preached through Noah to those who did not repent, later died, and are now in hell; and Kelly that he proclaimed defeat to the fallen angels.¹¹⁵ There is no hint that Jesus was preaching to convert anyone. Cane’s case is stated rather than argued.

Cane is heavily reliant on secondary literature, and does not display evidence of having considered key terms in the primary material. He fails to note the consistent element of coercion in παραδίδωμι in secular Greek, the LXX, and the GNT. Such a term allows evangelists to link together the various steps necessary for Jesus to be crucified, but allows Jesus to assign differing degrees of guilt to those involved (s4.3.5), something which Cane has not considered. The same criticism can be leveled at his analysis of Judas’s alleged repentance and Christ’s descent into hell.¹¹⁶ He does not adequately critique his two poles of providence and tragedy. He fails to note that, despite Barth’s concerns about anti-Semitism, even the Jewish scholar Maccoby notes that the NT never links Judas’s name with Judaism.¹¹⁷ Barth’s singular view that Judas is indispensable for salvation is not supported by the NT or by common logic. If Judas was so indispensable, why did Jesus speak the “birth woe” (Mark 14:21)? Jesus did not need Judas’s help to be

109. There are a number of NT passages on this theme (King, “Dead,” 5, 7–10).

110. Cane, *Place*, 156.

111. *Ibid.*, 156.

112. *Ibid.*, 170.

113. *Ibid.*, 176.

114. Carson, *1 Peter*, 1043.

115. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 3:18–19; Grudem, *1 Peter*, 203–39; Kelly, *Epistles*, 156.

116. Cane, *Place*, 155.

117. Maccoby, *Myth*, 28.

arrested himself.¹¹⁸ This undercuts MacKinnon's view that Judas is crucial to salvation, and so that his fate is ultimately God's responsibility.

Cane's belief that Judas is a defeat for Jesus due to an inherent limitation of the incarnation must be assessed as wrong on the basis of the clear, and even more telling, parallel of a sinful Satan's access to the heavenly council in the OT (s3.4.2).

The *Arabic Infancy Gospel*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, *Jesus of Montreal*, *The Golden Legend* and the works of Timayenis, Leloup, and Monro are unworthy of serious study. They are obviously later texts driven by ideological concerns, and so of questionable reliability. The consciously theological treatments of Barth, Maccoby, Greenberg, Klassen, Klauck, and Cane deal with the original Greek and attempt some theological discussion. However, they are unconvincing due to prior theological commitments, such as Maccoby's and Greenberg's noteworthy desire to combat the anti-Semitism supposedly flowing from the link between Judas's name and Judaism. All else is subsumed under this desire. It is a red herring without scholarly support,

118. An allied point is whether Jesus had to die on the cross. To say that this was unnecessary ignores crucial data. First, Matt 26:54 argues that, otherwise, the Scriptures could not be fulfilled. To argue that necessity can be based in Scripture but not God's nature (Brondos, *Paul*, 54) severs the link between God's nature and its representation in Scripture. Second, arguing that God is not subject to any necessity, including his own nature, and could have forgiven however he chose, ignores the facts that God and his nature are not separate, and that in both testaments, his chosen method of forgiveness meant sacrifice (*ibid.*, 30, 193).

Brondos's main argument is that Jesus' death is not the means of forgiveness by penal substitution, but as the culmination of his work to establish a new people of God (*ibid.*, 50, 111). But Brondos has not shown that it cannot be understood as penal substitution. He has glossed over the idea of ransom (Mark 10:44–45) by arguing (correctly) that this does not imply that a price would be paid to someone, but failing to enquire in any sustained way why the evangelist would use such a graphic word (*ibid.*, 43). Brondos argues that "no cost was involved for God" (*ibid.*, 145) but this ignores the constant refrain that the Exodus, the OT salvation event, was accomplished by "God's mighty hand and outstretched arm" (Deut 5:15, etc.). Salvation involved a great cost to God: it was not just paid to anyone. Brondos disputes that forgiving sin required Jesus' death, arguing that Heb 9:22 is making an observation about purification under the old covenant (*ibid.*, 54). It is not clear, however, that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" is limited to the OT, as this would presumably require a past tense. Finally, Brondos argues that forgiveness was facilitated by the prayer for repentance which accompanied the sacrifice, rather than the sacrifice itself (*ibid.*, 130). The problem here is that the OT focuses on the mechanics of the sacrifice, and not on any accompanying prayer, and the closest that Brondos can get to this in the NT is to say that Jesus' death is "in effect" a prayer that God might forgive (*ibid.*, 130). This is hardly convincing.

In essence, Brondos has separated God from his nature, and has not seen the consistent theme through the Bible that forgiveness and sacrifice are linked, but (not unnaturally) come to their sharpest focus in Jesus. He has not given due weight to momentous words like ransom. His thesis is unproven.

which must not intrude into a full examination of Judas. Maccoby has not shown that the early church split Judas into a good and bad Judas to safeguard its ministry to the poor. Greenberg does not grasp the import of his well-proven claim that even a tyrant like Pilate was vulnerable in two areas known to the crowd: the fear of another riot, and of being reported again to Rome.

Klassen's attempt to exonerate Judas is based on a misunderstanding. He believes that *παραδίδωμι* does not mean "betray" prior to the NT, but fails to note (due to heavy reliance on secondary data) that it always includes coercion. He does not address instances in the LXX and Josephus where *παραδίδωμι* not only can but must mean "betray." Klassen so focuses on Judas's innocence that he ignores data like Jesus' devastating "birth woe" (Mark 14:21). Barth uses Judas as the test case for his understanding of election. Barth so emphasizes the strength of God's grace that it is almost irresistible. He is then caught on the horns of a dilemma: is Judas saved because grace is strong and human sinfulness weak, or is he lost because he has handed over the Electing Jesus Christ? Barth claims that we cannot know, whereas more detailed consideration of cases like Eli (1 Sam 2) should have led him to conclude that God's election can be undone by serious, unrepented sin. Klauck fails to produce anything like enough evidence to merit Judas's rehabilitation. He repeats the errors of others by failing to research *παραδίδωμι* adequately. Lastly, Cane fails to show that Judas is somewhere between providence and tragedy by opting for providence where the risen Christ allegedly preaches salvation to the dead, including Judas. There is no single error which has led the writers to their various conclusions, but they frequently fail to work out the implications of their theories through all relevant texts.

1.4. The statement of the problem

It is apparent that attempts to exonerate Judas have hitherto failed for a number of reasons. Rather than approaching the text with this aim, a new direction may be appropriate. The main original contribution to knowledge of this thesis will be to examine whether Judas, although a human being, functions like an idol. Without prejudging the issue, there is *prima facie* evidence that this idea is worth pursuing. Idols are not just objects of stone or wood, but "the visible manifestations of the powers that oppose Yahweh" and his people.¹¹⁹ This is primarily a Lukan feature, but echoes may be found in the other gospels. In the LXX, handing over is almost entirely God's pre-

119. Pao, *Acts*, 182.