

THE
SECRETS
OF
JUDAS

*The Story of the Misunderstood
Disciple and His Lost Gospel*

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	iii
1. The Judas of the New Testament	I
2. The Historical Judas	33
3. The Gnostic Judas	53
4. <i>The Gospel of Judas</i> Surfaces in Geneva	89
5. The Peddling of <i>The Gospel of Judas</i>	121
6. The Publication and Significance of <i>The Gospel of Judas</i>	159
<i>Notes</i>	185
<i>About the Author</i>	
<i>Credits</i>	
<i>Cover</i>	
<i>Copyright</i>	
<i>About the Publisher</i>	

Preface

The Gospel of Judas, a long-lost second-century fictional account that elevated Judas to hero status in the story, has been rediscovered! But it has been kept under wraps until now, to maximize its financial gain for its Swiss owners. The grand exposé is being performed by the National Geographic Society, timed for the greatest public impact, right at Easter. Those on the inside have been bought off (no doubt with considerably more than thirty pieces of silver), and sworn to silence on a stack of Bibles—or on a stack of papyrus leaves.

But it is amazing how much can be known about it by those of us on the outside looking in. This little book that you have in your hands has been written by an outsider who is not privy to the details about how *The Gospel of Judas* is being published. Many of you will read my book because you have read, or heard about, or seen on television, what the National Geographic Society is doing.

But there is a distinct advantage that I have over you, which is why, after all, you must read this book if you want to know what is really going on with *The Gospel of Judas*. For my narration is not expurgated, sanitized, cleaned up to make it an appetizing story. What has gone on in this money-making venture is not a pleasant story—about how all this has been sprung upon us, the reading and viewing public—and you have a right to know what has gone on.

can remember the shape of the Greek letters found on the fraternity and sorority houses of college campuses, you are ready: ignore the P, since that is just the Coptic definite article *The*. But what follows, EUA, is the beginning of the Greek word for "Gospel," EUAGGELION, familiar to us from our verb *evangelize*. (When U is between two vowels, it is treated as a consonant, so we transcribe it *v*; and since double-G was nasalized, i.e., pronounced *ng*, we transcribe it that way, "ng," and so: "evangelize".) Then comes the hole, where once there was papyrus with the letters GG. Just to the right of the hole, you can see (if you look hard) ELION. So we transcribe the first line of the title PEUA[GG]ELION, *The Gospel*.

The second line of the title, the bottom line of the papyrus page, has the letters NI in a dark patch you cannot read, then OUDAS. The N is the Coptic genitive preposition, meaning "of." The I before the diphthong OU is a consonant, so we translate it "J." We translate the diphthong OU as a single vowel "u." And so there you have it: *Judas*. See, in just five minutes you have translated the title, *The Gospel of Judas*, and even learned a little about Coptic!

The Historical Judas

THE NAME JUDAS ISCARIOT

Judas is the Greek spelling of the Hebrew name *Judah*, meaning “praised.” Judah is about as popular a name as one can find in all of Judaism. Indeed, Judaism itself is named after Judah! Judah is, after all, the origin of the word *Jew*. Paul points out that he grew up “in Judaism” (Gal. 1:13–14), though he was of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5).

Judah was the fourth son of Jacob and Leah, and Judah was the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, the tribe of Judah was awarded the southern part. After the reign of Solomon, the Israelite kingdom that David had created was divided into two kingdoms: Judah was the southern kingdom and Israel the northern kingdom. The northern kingdom was overrun by the Assyrians and disappeared from the pages of history. But after the Babylonian captivity of the southern kingdom, Judah was repopulated by those who returned from captivity. The Roman emperor Augustus named it Judaea, and so its inhabitants became “Judeans” (John 7:1). In our day, Judea is the name used by the modern state of Israel to designate its southern part, though the United Nations, the United States, and hence the media, usually refer to much of it as part of the “occupied West Bank.”

Understandably enough, Judas, as the Greek spelling of the Hebrew word *Judah*, was a very popular Jewish name indeed. The Maccabean revolt against Syrian armies was led by Judas Maccabee (167–160 BCE), and of course the name was especially popular among the Maccabeans. The Jewish historian Josephus reports that the terrorists of his day, the Zealots, whom Josephus calls Sicarii, often used the name Judas for their leaders. In the New Testament, six people named Judas are mentioned.

Actually, Jesus had a brother named Judas. This has been somewhat hidden from view by the fact that the translators of the King James Bible wanted, at all costs, to keep the two persons named Judas separate. So the King James Bible entitled the Epistle ascribed to Jesus's brother as "Jude." The Epistle begins: "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James." James is of course another brother of Jesus, as the list in Matthew 13:55 indicates:

Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?

Furthermore, in Luke's list of the twelve apostles, two are named Judas (Luke 6:16):

. . . and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Of course, after the crucifixion when Luke lists only eleven apostles, there is only one Judas (Acts 1:13):

. . . and Judas the son of James.

Because of the number of persons named Judas, and especially because there are two named Judas in Luke's list of the Twelve,

not to speak of Jesus's brother Judas, it was obviously necessary to distinguish one Judas from the other. One may compare the various lists of the Twelve: most apostles are given only one name. But when there are more than one with the same name, for example Simon Peter and Simon the Cananaean, or James the brother of Andrew and James the son of Alphaeus, these clarifications are appended to their names to distinguish between them. So it is with Judas the son of James and Judas Iscariot.

What then does *Iscariot* mean? There are various theories, so many in fact that none can be counted on as definitive.

Perhaps it means "man (Ish-) from Karioth," if that really is the name of a town of southern Judea mentioned in Joshua 15:25. But what is written there could just mean "town," as suggested by the rather free New Revised Standard Version translation, "Kerioth-hezron (that is, Hazor)." The New Revised Standard Version also lists, in a note to "Judas son of Simon Iscariot" (John 6:71), a second choice: "Judas son of Simon from Karyot (Kerioth)." There is a Tel Qirrioth on the current map in the Negev. And there is an Askaroth or Askar near Shechem. Another suggestion has been that it just meant a person from the "city," i.e. Jerusalem, as attested in later Jewish sources. Any of these derivations would make Judas the only one of the twelve apostles from Judea, and would help explain how it was that he was known to the Jerusalem authorities.

Or *Iscariot* may mean one of the Sicarii, the name Josephus used for the Zealots of his day. And there are still other explanations for *Iscariot*. In sum, there is so much uncertainty about the derivation of the term that nothing can be made of it, other than that it was used to distinguish this Judas both from the other Judas listed among the Twelve and from Jesus's brother Judas.

The Gospel of John also lists the name of Judas's father. For it was customary then, just as it is now, to use a father's name

(or ancestor's name) as the "second" name of a person. My own name has two such "patronymics." Of course "-son" is the most common English way to produce a patronymic. Robinson goes back to the Scottish nickname for Robert, Robin. But even my middle name, McConkey, uses the Gaelic patronymic, Mc or Mac. In Greek, the patronymic is put in the genitive, meaning "X (the son) of Y." So the Gospel of John refers to "Judas (son of) Simon Iscariot" (John 6:71; 13:2, 26). But since this Simon is unknown, that bit of information does not help us further.

JUDAS IN THE INNER CIRCLE

There is of course discussion as to whether Judas was one of "the Twelve." It has seemed to many that it would be unreasonable for Jesus to admit such a person into that inner circle. Yet the Gospel of John, which is the Gospel that is most critical of Judas, explicitly scores the point that Jesus did choose him (John 6:70):

Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil." He was speaking of Judas son of Simon Iscariot.

But John's having to score the point that Jesus really did choose him assumes Judas to have been a notorious scoundrel, which is precisely what one would like to question.

Celsus, a Jewish critic of Christianity in the second century, used Jesus's betrayal by a disciple as a reason to discredit Jesus:¹

How could we have accepted as God one who, as was reported, did not carry out any of the works he announced, and when we had evidence against him and denounced him and wanted to punish him he hid himself and tried

to escape; who was captured in a disgraceful manner and even was betrayed by one whom he called his disciple? Surely if he was God he would not have needed to flee, or been taken away bound, and least of all to be left in the lurch and deserted by his companions, who shared everything with him personally, considered him their teacher.

Nonetheless, Judas is after all listed in each list of the Twelve in the Gospels (Matt. 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16). His credentials are solid!

The question of his being in the Twelve has less to do with Judas than with whether Jesus ever really created an inner circle of disciples consisting of precisely twelve persons. The number twelve used of the inner circle seems to have come from the twelve tribes of Israel. One can detect the beginnings of such an idea at the conclusion of the Sayings Gospel Q (Q 22:28, 30):

You who have followed me will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Then Matthew edited this conclusion of Q to suggest that, since a disciple of Jesus was judging each of the twelve tribes, there would surely be twelve judgment seats (Matt. 20:28):

. . . you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Here the idea of judging the twelve tribes of Israel clearly preceded the idea of there being twelve thrones, which in turn would engender the idea of twelve members of the inner circle. So one may assume that they arrived at the number twelve not by counting those in the inner circle, but by counting tribes. In fact, Paul can simply refer to the Twelve, on an occasion

when in fact no more than eleven could have been involved. For example, in the list of resurrection appearances, Paul lists (1 Cor. 15:5):

. . . he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

But at the time of the resurrection appearances, Judas was no longer a member of the Twelve. At most, Jesus appeared to eleven. But Paul's point is only that Jesus appeared to the inner circle of disciples, which was named the Twelve. In fact, some of the persons named in the Twelve are names only—their names never crop up in specific stories. Names that usually crop up together in stories of the inner circle are Peter, James, and John.

A Jewish-Christian Gospel that did not gain admission into the New Testament, the Gospel of the Ebionites, listed only nine disciples, including Judas, but in the calling of Matthew it referred to there being "twelve apostles as a witness to Israel." Here again the association with the twelve tribes of Israel is implied.

Irrespective of whether the Twelve was an actual number of members in the inner circle during Jesus's public ministry, it seems clear that Judas was a member of that inner circle. His name would hardly have been inserted into the list later, after he had given Jesus over and committed suicide. But what can we know about him?

WHAT DID JUDAS ACTUALLY DO?

The Gospel of John presents Judas as the treasurer of the Jesus movement, as a way to discredit him in the story of Mary and Martha (John 12:4–6):

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to give him over), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the

poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.)

There is then a flashback to this story at the Last Supper (John 13:27–29):

Jesus said to him, "Do quickly what you are going to do." Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the festival"; or, that he should give something to the poor.

But since this report of Judas having the common purse is only in John, and is used there just to discredit Judas, it is hard to determine whether there is any truth to this detail. Indeed, it is more probable as a creation of John than as a historical fact.

Mark had explained that the Jewish authorities wanted to find a way to arrest Jesus privately, for fear of the enthusiastic crowds at the festival (Mark 14:1–2). Jesus then alludes to this in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:49):

Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the scripture be fulfilled.

But the historical Jesus of course did not know about their comment (Mark 14:2):

Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.

And which scripture would Jesus have had in mind? Did he really know as much scripture as modern scripture scholars ascribe to him? Certainly not!

Mark had presented Jesus predicting at the Last Supper that Judas would give him over (Mark 14:18, 21):

When they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will give me over, one who is eating with me. . . . For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to the one by whom the Son of Man is given over! It would have been better for that one not to have been born."

Here Jesus is presented as fulfilling a prophecy from the Old Testament (Ps. 41:9):

Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me.

This then is a really odd situation: the Hebrew scriptures predict what Judas will do, and Jesus knows this scriptural passage quite well, but does nothing to prevent it, since it obviously is the prophesied will of God. So why does he proceed to pronounce a woe on the one who fulfills the prophecy? Would it really have been better for Judas never to have been born? Perhaps better for Judas, but not better for carrying out Jesus's God-willed destiny to die!

Matthew emphasizes this role of Judas (Matt. 26:25):

Judas, who turned him in, said, "Is it I, Master?" He said to him, "You have said so."

The Gospel of John describes the scene in much more detail (John 13:22, 25–27, 30):

The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. . . . Jesus answered, "It is the one to

whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "Do quickly what you are going to do." . . . So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

What then is so terribly wrong with what Judas left the upper room to do, namely to give Jesus over to the Jewish authorities? After all, he was even fulfilling the prophecy of the Hebrew scriptures! And he was just obeying orders: "Do quickly what you are going to do."

All of this sounds much more like what the learned Evangelists could compose, with the help of the Hebrew scriptures in front of them (in Greek translation), than like an actual dialogue in the upper room at the Last Supper, where literacy was at a much lower level!

DID JUDAS ISCARIOT "BETRAY" JESUS?

The Gospel of Mark presents in graphic detail the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Judas plays the central role (Mark 14:43-45):

And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the one who turned him over had given them a sign, saying, "The one I shall kiss is the man; seize him and lead him away under guard." And when he came, he went up to him at once, and said, "Master!" And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him.

What is actually going on here in the case of Judas? Several recent books about Judas have turned a sympathetic ear to him, sensing that what he is reported to have done was not all that wrong, after all. The more fictional presentation of Ray Anderson presents a dialogue between Jesus and Judas in which Jesus forgives Judas—and his book already bore the title *The Gospel according to Judas*!² Hans-Josef Klauck, a German professor who has recently joined the faculty of the University of Chicago's Divinity School, laid out a very balanced assessment of Judas as “a disciple of the Lord,” in a work that unfortunately is available only in German.³ William Klassen's book *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus*!⁴ defends the thesis that Judas was indeed more friend than betrayer. And Kim Paffenroth, who specializes in the area of religion and film, has a very sympathetic though half-fictional presentation in *Judas: Images of the Lost Disciple*.⁵

The thesis of Klassen's book is that Judas did not *betray* Jesus, but only *gave him over* to the appropriate Jewish authorities to evaluate his claims, a quite appropriate and understandable transaction within the Judaism of that day. Hence we are wrong to understand Judas as a *traitor*, as if what the Gospels present him doing is a *betrayal*. Klassen points out:⁶

Not one ancient classical Greek text . . . has the connotation of treachery. Any lexicon that suggests otherwise is guilty of theologizing rather than assisting us to find the meaning of Greek words through usage.

Hence, the Greek word in the Gospels that is translated as “betray” (*paradidomi*) does not actually have that basically negative meaning that we associate with betrayal in English.

In the standard Greek-English dictionary of the New Testament that all scholars use,⁷ the first meaning is listed neutrally as “hand over, turn over, give up” a person. But it has also the

decidedly positive meaning “give over, commend, commit,” for example, to commend a person “to the grace of God” (Acts 14:26; 15:40). It often means “hand down, pass on, transmit, relate, teach” the oral or written tradition. It is in fact most familiar to us in the liturgy of the Lord’s Supper, “For I received from the Lord what I also *handed on* to you” (1 Cor. 11:23), and in the way Paul introduced a list of resurrection appearances: “For I *handed on* to you as of first importance what I in turn had received” (1 Cor. 15:3). It is consistent with this double meaning of the verb that the noun means a *handing over* or a *handing down* both in the sense of an *arrest* and in the sense of the *transmission of tradition*. It is clear from the use of this verb that Judas *handed Jesus over*. The etymology of the Greek word is neutrally *give over*, which I hence use in what follows. But what that *giving over* actually meant is the question at issue.

In the whole of the New Testament, the literal term *traitor* is applied to Judas Iscariot only once, in Luke’s naming him as the last in the list of the Twelve (Luke 6:16): “Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.” Is this a mistake on Luke’s part?

JUDAS ISCARIOT GAVE JESUS OVER TO THE JEWISH AUTHORITIES

There have been a lot of efforts to define in theological detail what it was that Judas “betrayed” about Jesus, such as the fact that Jesus was the Messiah. But the record is clear in this regard: Judas did not reveal anything about who Jesus was or what he taught or did. Judas simply revealed where Jesus was. Mark makes this quite clear (Mark 14:1–2):

It was now two days before the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth, and kill him;

for they said, Not during the feast, lest there be a tumult of the people.

This in turn is a flashback to an earlier comment at the cleansing of the Temple (Mark 11:18–19):

And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

Klassen's main point is that for Judas to turn Jesus in to the proper Jewish authorities is not necessarily a hostile "betrayal," but rather a proper procedure in the Jewish world of the day. He comes to the following conclusion:⁸

What precisely was Judas's contribution? I submit that in the grand scheme of things, it was quite modest. In discussions with Jesus, he had often heard Jesus criticize the Temple hierarchy. When Judas reminded Jesus that his own advice had always been to rebuke the sinner directly, Jesus may have said that an occasion to confront the high priest directly had not appeared. Perhaps at that point Judas offered to arrange it, hoping that the process of rebuke would work. At the same time, he may have questioned Jesus about his own faithfulness to his mission. All of this could have led to a plan whereby Judas would arrange a meeting with Jesus and the high priests, each agreeing to that meeting on their own terms and with their own hopes for the outcome. This role in the "handing over" was later transformed into a more sinister one, especially after Judas died at his own hand. Whether the reader is able to accept this interpretation of the earli-

est tradition available to us, I submit that it is at least as plausible as the very negative view of Judas that still pervades the church but rests on a very shaky foundation.

This alternative is of course fleshed out with undocumented speculation about what might have gone on between Jesus and Judas, and therefore is hardly a convincing argument. Yet it does illustrate the other alternative to the standard view, that Judas was radically disloyal and simply *betrayed* Jesus. And it does show how *The Gospel of Judas* could, without too much fantasy, have made Judas into the hero of the story.

THE SUICIDE OF JUDAS

Whereas the Gospel of Mark reports nothing more specific about Judas's fate than Jesus pronouncing woe on the one who turns him in (Mark 14:21), Matthew proceeds to describe in some detail Judas's remorse and suicide (Matt. 27:3–10):

When Judas, the one turning him in, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. He said, "I have sinned by giving over innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money." After conferring together, they used them to buy the potter's field as a place to bury foreigners. For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 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."⁹

Rather than this story being a strikingly exact fulfillment of a prophecy from the Old Testament, it is, like several other details in the passion narrative, more likely to be the other way around: the prophecy engendered the detail in the story. The Old Testament was considered a thoroughly reliable source for facts fulfilled by Jesus. One need only read Zechariah 11:12-13:

Then I said to them, If it seems right to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them. So they weighed out as my wages thirty shekels of silver. The Lord said to me, Throw it into the treasury—this lordly price at which I was valued by them. So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them into the treasury in the house of the Lord.

For example, the detail that those who crucified Jesus "divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take" (Mark 15:25), comes from Psalm 22:18:

They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.

Such details from the crucifixion story probably do not reflect eyewitness reports. But only in modern times have historians changed their methods enough to question the factuality of details derived only from Old Testament quotations.

Luke also writes that Judas committed suicide, in a report that diverges slightly from that of Matthew (Acts 1:15-19):

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, "Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which

the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus—for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language *Hakeldama*, that is, Field of blood.)

These two narratives of Judas's suicide would seem to confirm the fact that he did indeed commit suicide, though the specifics of the two stories are mutually exclusive. In Matthew, he hangs himself, in Acts, he falls forward and ruptures himself. Both reports associate the suicide (in different ways) with the place name "field of blood" purchased with the thirty pieces of silver, but in one instance it is purchased by the Jewish authorities with the money he threw back at them (Matt. 27:5–7), in the other it is purchased by Judas himself with the money he was given, to become the place where he killed himself (Acts 1:18). Since the details are mutually exclusive, one is hardly copying the other. Rather, we should assume that they share a tradition with the overlapping facts that Judas committed suicide and that the term "field of blood" is in some way associated with his suicide.

THE REHABILITATION OF JUDAS ISCARIOT

No one in our history has such a bad name as Judas Iscariot. You only have to sneer "Judas!" or say "thirty pieces of silver" or "Judas kiss" to score your put-down, without going into detail. People who have never read the Gospels know what you mean! It is like referring to someone who betrays one's country as a "Benedict Arnold," without needing to know any details of his betrayal of the American colonies to the British.

Maybe Judas Iscariot needs to be rehabilitated! After all, the Evangelists presented the Twelve as quite dull about Jesus's mission, yet they have become honorific names used to accredit the Gospels of Matthew and John; Peter is said to have rebuked Jesus when he foretold his passion, but Peter's reputation has shifted from "Satan" to "rock"; Jesus's family tried to restrain him early in his ministry, but now it is dogma that Mary has been assumed into heaven, where she can be appealed to: "Hail, Mary, mother of God," as one recites the rosary. Thus the dubious characters in the story have all become saints—except for Judas Iscariot! Has his time not come?

I have used with much appreciation the appealing and scholarly book by the Mennonite theologian William Klassen.¹⁰ As indicated above, he has argued convincingly that the translations *betray*, *betrayal*, and *traitor* are simply not what the Greek term means. Rather it means *give over*, *hand over*, *turn in*.

This neutral translation is then defended by the account itself. Jesus has been telling the Twelve again and again in great detail that he must go to Jerusalem to die, and reproached Peter for not accepting the fact: it is prophesied in the Hebrew scriptures and hence is the will of God, which Jesus must fulfill. Judas is playing an indispensable role in the divine plan, and surely must know it. He himself had been prophesied already in the Hebrew scriptures (John 13:18): "The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me" (Ps. 41:10). He is just doing what Jesus tells him to do (John 13:27): "Do quickly what you are going to do." What's so wrong with that?

Of course much of this is Markan theology rather than historical fact, which is sometimes overlooked in the effort to exonerate Judas. And even Mark, while fitting Judas into the plan of salvation, does actually pronounce woe on him as well (Mark 14:21). Yet, on the other hand, one notices the bad press Mark gives to the stupid Twelve, Peter (i.e. *Satan*), and the

Holy Family, who are embarrassed by the bad impression Jesus is making as a fanatic and wanting to take him home to keep him out of circulation (though his mother does stick by him on Good Friday to the bitter end, and his brother James surfaces as a leader of the Jerusalem Church). But Christianity has rehabilitated all of them, and so it is a bit inconsistent to leave Judas Iscariot on the hook!

The argument has been made that Judas may have thought that having the official Jewish authorities investigate Jesus's claims was the appropriate thing to do, for they would surely understand his message and endorse his ministry. Yet Jesus's triple prediction of the details of Good Friday in Mark refers explicitly to "the chief priests and the scribes" as perpetrators of the evil, so that Judas would have been the most stupid of the Twelve not to know what would happen if he gave Jesus over to them. It is very difficult to interpret the canonical Gospels as being on Judas's side. Matthew and Luke do not really clean up Mark's story to exonerate Judas, and the Gospel of John is the worst of all. To be sure, Matthew and the book of Acts report Judas's remorse, hurling back the thirty pieces of silver to the Jewish authorities or buying a place to commit suicide, and then taking his own life. Does this not help some to exonerate him?

Perhaps the most fruitful way to go at giving Judas a better place in our minds and hearts is to recall what Jesus himself said about forgiveness. Not only is there the comment about those who were doing him in: "Forgive them, for they know not what they do" (emulated by the first Christian martyr, Stephen, at his stoning, Acts 7:60). And not only did he tell one of the criminals being crucified with him (Luke 23:43): "Today you will be with me in Paradise." His own teachings pointed in the same way, in saying after saying, many of which we venerate as the Sermon on the Mount (Q 6:27-38; Q 15:4-5,7; 15:8-10; 17:3-4):

Love your enemies and pray for those persecuting you, so that you may become sons of your Father, for he raises his sun on bad and good and rains on the just and unjust.

The one who slaps you on the cheek, offer him the other as well; and to the person wanting to take you to court and get your shirt, turn over to him the coat as well. And the one who conscripts you for one mile, go with him a second. To the one who asks of you, give; and from the one who borrows, do not ask back what is yours.

And the way you want people to treat you, that is how you treat them.

If you love those loving you, what reward do you have? Do not even tax collectors do the same? And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what reward do you have? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Be full of pity, just as your Father is full of pity.

Do not pass judgment, so you are not judged. For with what judgment you pass judgment, you will be judged. And with the measurement you use to measure out, it will be measured out to you.

Which person is there among you who has a hundred sheep, on losing one of them, will not leave the ninety-nine in the mountains and go hunt for the lost one? And if it should happen that he finds it, I say to you that he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.

Or what woman who has ten coins, if she were to lose one coin, would not light a lamp and sweep the house and hunt until she finds? And on finding she calls the friends and neighbors, saying: Rejoice with me, for I found the

coin which I had lost. Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels over one repenting sinner.

If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if seven times a day he sins against you, also seven times shall you forgive him.

So should we forgive Judas? Love our enemy? I do not think the efforts to argue that what he did was the right thing to do under the circumstances have proven their case. But I do think we can stop using him as a whipping boy, and seek a fairer, more forgiving relation to him.