

ABSTRACT

The Death of Judas: The Characterization of Judas Iscariot in Three Early Christian Accounts of His Death

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Three different accounts of the death of Judas Iscariot are preserved in Matthew 27:3–10, Acts 1:18–20, and fragments of Papias. The present study will argue that in the milieu of the ancient Mediterranean such death-accounts would have conveyed to the authorial audience particular character traits of Judas through established conventions. The rhetorical handbooks of the era reveal the strategies employed in the depiction of persons in general as well as in descriptions of death. By comparing these theoretical discussions with the actual practice in various types of discourse, the principal patterns of literary portraiture emerge. Using these patterns as an interpretive grid, the three early accounts of Judas' death reveal character-shaping details that are relevant to the overall plot and theological interests of each work. In Matthew, Judas is depicted as a traitor of a Davidic king and a failure as a disciple. In Acts, the portrait of Judas presents him as an apostate

apostle and a defeated enemy of God's people. In Papias, Judas is characterized as a greedy and intemperate miscreant who plots against a righteous benefactor.

The Death of Judas: The Characterization of Judas Iscariot
in Three Early Christian Accounts of His Death

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For Kayla, Jacob, Emily, and Anna

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Problem and Its Significance

Three different accounts of the death of Judas have survived from our earliest Christian literature. Matthew 27:3–10 states that Judas hanged himself after returning the betrayal fee of thirty pieces of silver. Acts 1:18–20 says that Judas died from falling and bursting on property that he had acquired with the “reward of his wickedness.”¹ According to fragments of Papias preserved in catenae and other ancient sources, Judas suffered numerous torments while still living, including enormous swelling, an accumulation of pus and worms throughout his body, and the loss of his eyesight, before dying on his own land.² Throughout most of the twentieth century these texts were found to be fertile soil in which to work with the tools of source and redaction criticism in attempts to either pursue a quest for the historical Judas, reconstruct the history of Judas traditions, or discern the theological tendencies of the authors. Such endeavors, however, tended to pay slight attention to the function of these death-accounts in their literary settings. In the latter half of the twentieth century, developments in narrative criticism have led to a renewed

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from the Bible and the Apocrypha will be from the New Revised Standard Version.

² Frag. 4 in the collection found in *The Apostolic Fathers* (trans. Bart D. Ehrman; 2 vols.; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003). For a full review of the state of the critical text of this fragment in Papias, see ch. 5 below.

focus on reading each episode in biblical narratives as integral elements of the larger piece of literature in which they are found.³ This new literary and narrative criticism has typically depended on categories developed in the modern study of literature (e.g., plot, setting, characterization), but in recent decades greater awareness of the compositional techniques and elements of discourse that were familiar to ancient authors and audiences has resulted in a more historically-informed rhetorical criticism that is shedding new light in biblical studies.⁴ Of particular interest for our project are several recent studies of ancient techniques of characterization that are yielding fresh insights in biblical literature.⁵ Building on these precedents, we propose to assess, from the standpoint of an ancient auditor, how the accounts of Judas' death in Matthew, Acts, and Papias contribute to the characterization of Judas which would have been perceived by each authorial audience, and how that characterization contributes to the religious message of each work.

³ David M. Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Mark Alan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (ed. Dan O. Via, Jr.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

⁴ George Alexander Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); John A. Darr, "Narrator as Character: Mapping a Reader-Oriented Approach to Narration in Luke-Acts," *Semeia* 63 (1993).

⁵ See John A. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992); Fred W. Burnett, "Characterization and Reader Construction of Characters in the Gospels," *Semeia* 63 (1993): 1–28; Petri Merenlahti, "Characters in the Making: Individuality and Ideology in the Gospels," in *Characterization in the Gospels* (eds. David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni; New York: T. & T. Clark International, 1999), 49–72; Mikeal C. Parsons, *Body and Character in Luke and Acts: The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006).

The proposed project is relevant for current issues in several areas of biblical scholarship, including NT exegesis, the history of early Christianity, and methodology in biblical interpretation. Exegetically, such an investigation has the potential to bring important evidence to the table in the continuing debate about whether the New Testament presents Judas as a reprehensible or sympathetic figure. Regarding the history of early Christianity, the question of how the early Christian audience would have regarded the final portraits of Judas in these early texts is important if one wishes to have an accurate historical perspective on the interpretation of the figure Judas. In this regard, the timeliness of this project is particularly appropriate given the recent discovery and publication of the *Gospel of Judas*.⁶ The availability of this long-lost document has spawned a flurry of scholarly articles and monographs regarding the figure Judas and the significance the primitive church assigned to him.⁷ A detailed, rhetorically grounded re-examination of our more familiar depictions of Judas offers to provide better insight to the dominant traditions about Judas against which the *Gospel of Judas* stands in contrast. Methodologically speaking, a careful examination of death-accounts as an element of literary portraiture in the ancient world may contribute to the emerging field of character analysis in biblical interpretation.

⁶ Rudolphe Kasser, et al., eds., *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2006).

⁷ For example, Bart D. Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot: A New Look at Betrayer and Betrayed* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); N. T. Wright, *Judas and the Gospel of Jesus: Have We Missed the Truth about Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006); Elaine H. Pagels and Karen L. King, *Reading Judas: The Gospel of Judas and the Shaping of Christianity* (London: Allen Lane, 2007).

Methodology

Our proposed method is a literary and theological approach that aims at reading with the authorial audience. The exegetical goal is to elucidate the rhetorical impact and the religious message of the respective accounts as the early Christian audience would likely have understood them. Such an approach draws on developments in contemporary literary theory and audience-oriented criticism, as well as our growing understanding of the literary and rhetorical matrix of Mediterranean culture during the early Christian period. Peter J. Rabinowitz defines the authorial audience as the hypothetical recipients envisioned by the author and implied by the text, an audience that shares certain historical and cultural knowledge with the author.⁸ The envisioned auditor is an augmentation of Wolfgang Iser's implied reader. Iser recognized that from the text one might infer a certain literary "repertoire" that the author and reader are assumed to share.⁹ It is realistic, however, to expand this minimal conception of the audience's repertoire to include beliefs and patterns of thought that can be shown to have been widespread in the auditor's historical context. The cultural, ethical, and literary expectations that readers bring to the text contribute to what Hans Robert Jauss calls the "horizon

⁸ Peter J. Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences," *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1977): 127–34.

⁹ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 53–85.

of expectations" of the audience.¹⁰ Such an approach requires not only close attention to the text at hand, but also examination of comparative literature from Greco-Roman, Jewish, and early Christian sources. The basic principle of this methodology is expressed in the question, "If the literary work fell into the hands of an audience that closely matched the author's target audience in terms of knowledge brought to the text, how would they have understood the work?"¹¹

Primary sources that are of special interest for our project include ancient works that address characterization in theory, accounts from the Mediterranean milieu that demonstrate the actual practice of literary portraiture in death, and literary evidence that some of the details of Judas' death (such as death by hanging, falling, swelling and bursting, etc.) had widely-recognized connotations. These are the kinds of historically grounded insights that will inform the exegesis. Of course, paramount importance will be placed on a close reading of the plot in which these death-accounts are embedded, with special attention to the development of the figure Judas in the story leading up to his death.

History of Research

A survey of the major studies related to Judas in the past one hundred years reveals that the principal methods of biblical criticism—such as historical, source,

¹⁰ Hans Robert Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (trans. Timothy Bahti; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 28.

¹¹ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke-Acts in its Mediterranean Milieu* (NovTSupp 107; Boston: Brill, 2003), 15.

tradition, and redaction criticism—have been applied to these three early death-accounts. As we review this body of research we will observe the main differences between previous approaches and our proposed methodology. We note here that many of the literary parallels identified under these other methods will also have a place in our study as we gather evidence to help us to reconstruct the conceptual field of the ancient Mediterranean auditor.

In 1930 Donatus Haugg produced a comprehensive study of the Judas traditions.¹² Surveying not only the Gospel accounts, but also portraits of Judas through the Middle Ages and up to the modern era, he finds four main categories into which to group the portraits of Judas: the sinner, the scoundrel, the hero, and the product of saga. When Haugg devotes attention to the death-accounts of Matthew, Acts, and Papias, however, his interest shifts from characterization to an attempt to distill the essence of historical fact. He dismisses Papias' version as unreliable oral tradition, finds Matthew to be the most historical, and regards Acts as more heavily shaped by rhetorical interests.¹³ Our current project differs fundamentally from Haugg's approach in that we will regard the details of each pericope as language to be interpreted rather than myth to be discarded.

Working as a source critic, Kirsopp Lake, in a brief article in 1933, sets the tone for the principal lines of interpretation of these three accounts during most of

¹² Donatus Haugg, *Judas Iskarioth in den neutestamentlichen Berichten* (Freiburg: Herder, 1930).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 160–89.

the twentieth century.¹⁴ Lake considers the similarity of language between the death of Judas in Matthew and the death of Ahithophel (2 Sam 17:23) to be a strong indication of literary dependence. The verbal parallels include the actions of departing (ἀπῆλθεν, 2 Sam 17:23; ἀπελθών, Matt 27:5) and hanging oneself (ἀπήγγξατο, 2 Sam 17:23; Matt 27:5). Likewise, Lake is confident that Acts 1:18 has been influenced by Wisd 4:17–19, which describes the destruction of the unrighteous by their being dashed to the ground (πρηνεῖς) as an act of divine justice. Regarding Papias' account of Judas' death, Lake is not able to identify strong verbal parallels, but suggests more generally that Papias has drawn on familiar accounts of the punishment of wicked persons, such as the death of Antiochus IV in 2 Macc 9:17–18, Josephus' accounts of the deaths of Herod the Great (*Ant.* 17.6.5) and the governor Catullus (*J.W.* 7.11.4), or the fate of Nadan in the legend of Ahikar. Lake concludes, however, that the links between the three accounts of Judas' death and any single source are not strong enough to constitute conclusive proof of literary dependence. Instead, Lake adds, "The truth probably is that there was a loose tradition of the way in which the death of a traitor ought to correspond to his offence."¹⁵ In contrast to Lake's source-critical approach, our reading with the authorial-audience will attempt to discern the function of these death-accounts in their current literary context. The parallels that Lake has identified are referred to repeatedly in the studies that follow

¹⁴ Kirsopp Lake, "The Death of Judas," in *The Beginnings of Christianity* (eds. F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake; London: Macmillan and Co., 1933), 5:22–30.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5:29–30.

him, and they will also be important elements of our analysis. In our approach, however, these literary parallels will be regarded as part of the repertoire of our audience, rather than sources from which a tradition grew. We will cast our net more widely, looking not only to Jewish sources, but also Greco-Roman literature as we endeavor to understand the rhetorical impact of the details of death in the ancient Mediterranean milieu.

The studies of J. Herber¹⁶ and Roman B. Halas¹⁷ from the 1940's attempt to harmonize these three accounts of Judas' death into a reconstruction of historical events. Heber finds Papias' account of the swelling of Judas to provide the missing link between the accounts in Matthew and Acts. In his interpretation, Judas hangs himself, his body swells due to post-mortem bloating, then the body bursts, as in Acts. Papias, he suggests, has misinterpreted this swelling as having been inflicted on the living Judas. Herber further notes that in several tribal cultures of the modern world swelling is taken as a sign of demon possession. He concludes that Papias understood the story of Judas' swelling to indicate that he was possessed by a satanic presence. Halas also offers theories of harmonization of the accounts of Matthew and Acts, but regards Papias as having been embellished by legendary material. Without substantial evidence from literature of the period, he asserts that

¹⁶ J. Herber, "La mort de Judas," *RHR* 129/130 (1945): 47–56.

¹⁷ Roman Halas, "Judas Iscariot—A Scriptural and Theological Study of His Person, His Deeds and His Eternal Lot" (S.T.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1946), 145–70.

Judas suffered divine retribution by a “horrible end, befitting his crime.”¹⁸ In contrast to both Herber and Halas, our approach does not endeavor to harmonize these accounts nor does it assume that an ancient audience would react to the details of these death accounts in the same way as a modern one. In our analysis, we will emphasize each narrative setting as the proper context for interpretation and provide evidence from antiquity regarding the rhetorical impact of the varied details on the ancient audience.

Similar to previous studies, Pierre Benoit applies tradition criticism in an attempt to distinguish the historically reliable elements and the sources that have influenced these three early accounts of Judas’ death.¹⁹ He finds in the presentation of Judas’ death by Papias echoes of a traditional conception of the appropriate death for notorious sinners. Benoit reads the possible allusion to Ahithophel (Matt 27:5) as a way of emphasizing the apostasy and despair of Judas, and he regards the echo of Wisd 4:19 in Acts 1:18 as characterizing Judas specifically in the role of the enemy of a virtuous person. He adds further that the fundamental point that all three accounts share is that there is a law of divine retribution for those who commit such sins.²⁰ Benoit’s interest in the connotations conveyed by literary allusions anticipates our interest in the rhetorical impact of literary parallels. Our study, however, will

¹⁸ Halas, “Judas”, 145.

¹⁹ Pierre Benoit, “The Death of Judas,” in *Jesus and the Gospel* (trans. Benet Weatherhead; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), 1:189–207.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:194–95.

shift the emphasis to the audience's perception rather than the author's composition, and we will provide ample evidence from primary sources in the ancient milieu demonstrating the rhetorical conditioning that would have shaped the audience's interpretation of details that echo other death-accounts.

Although Donald Senior's work on the death of Judas is primarily limited to Matthew's account, his studies provide important links in our review of the development of critical methodologies applied to the death of Judas. In a thorough redactional analysis of Matt 27:3–10, Senior concludes that this account of Judas' death supports Matthean themes in three ways: (1) Jesus is again shown to be a true prophet, since he predicted a woeful end for Judas; (2) Judas' return of the money shifts the guilt back to the chief priests; (3) the details allow Matthew to cite another fulfilled scripture.²¹ Senior's transition from redaction criticism toward narrative criticism brings with it a greater appreciation for the whole of Matthew's work, not just his distinctive tendencies. As a result, in his later work he adds that the report of Judas' death also supports Matthew's concern for faithful discipleship, though he still regards Matt 27:3–10 as "something of an aside by the narrator."²² Judas' role as a disciple is certainly paramount in his characterization in Matthew. Our approach will pursue this theme more thoroughly as we trace the plot of Matthew in order to locate Judas within that matrix. We further note that other commentators have been

²¹ Donald Senior, "The Fate of the Betrayer: A Redactional Study of Matthew 27:3–10," *ETL* 48 (1972): 372–426.

²² Donald Senior, *Matthew* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998), 317–91.

even more forceful than Senior in their statements about the relative insignificance of this passage in the overall flow of the text. Audrey Conard suggests that the death of Judas in Matthew simply functions to get Judas offstage and leave the blame squarely on the chief priests and elders.²³ Ulrich Luz goes so far as to suggest that the brevity with which the death of Judas is told indicates that the author of Matthew has little interest in the death itself.²⁴ Our investigation of the rhetorical impact of a death-account in antiquity will lead us to evidence indicating that the details of the death of a figure are significant character-shaping events—not merely asides—in the conceptual field of the early Christian period.

Several works of Hans-Josef Klauck on the Judas traditions combine his interest in the historical Judas, the tradition history, and the connotations of character in the details echoed from other texts.²⁵ His longest work on Judas draws on several parallels from Jewish literature as he presents evidence for the implications of the various elements of the report.²⁶ He regards Matthew as augmenting oral tradition with motifs from Scripture to present Judas as meeting the prototypical fate of a betrayer such as Ahithophel. According to Klauck, however,

²³ Audrey Conard, "The Fate of Judas: Matthew 27:3–10," *TJT* 7 (1991): 158–68.

²⁴ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary* (trans. James E. Crouch and Wilhelm C. Linss; 3 vols.; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001–2007), 3:471.

²⁵ Hans-Josef Klauck, *Judas: ein Jünger des Herrn* (Freiburg: Herder, 1987); Hans-Josef Klauck, "Judas Iscariot: zwischen Facten und Fiktion," in *Judas, wer bist du?* (ed. R. Niemann; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1991), 104–11; Hans-Josef Klauck, "Judas der 'Verräter'? eine exegetische und wirkungsgeschichtliche Studie," *ANRW* 26.1:717–40; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Judas un disciple de Jésus: exégèse et répercussions historiques* (trans. Joseph Hoffmann; Paris: Cerf, 2006), 101–37.

²⁶ Klauck, *Judas: ein Jünger*, 92–123.

the account in Acts combines two themes: (1) the punishment of the enemy of a righteous man, as in Wisd 4:19, and (2) the fate of those who love ill-gotten gain, a recurrent theme in Luke and Acts. Klauck interprets Papias' account to present Judas as one who meets the horrifying fate of a grossly impious person, similar to other villains in Jewish history.²⁷ Our proposed method shares Klauck's interest in the details as indicators of character traits in the portrayal of Judas, but once again we find that a source-critical approach is too limited in scope with its focus only on Jewish traditions. In addition, broader evidence is needed to establish the rhetorical conventions associated with death-accounts in the Greco-Roman world.²⁸

Hyam Maccoby's work on the role of the figure Judas in Christian anti-Semitism touches on the death of Judas as well.²⁹ Maccoby finds that our accounts of Judas' death contain echoes of stories from the Hebrew Bible, such as the deaths of Amasa and Ahithophel, as well as the fate of Cain. Maccoby asserts, however, that the allusions are superficial and that the new context in the story of Jesus is so foreign to their original context that their earlier significance has been thoroughly overridden. While we agree with Maccoby that the new narrative contexts control the interpretation of these familiar images, our reading with the authorial audience also recognizes that without clear indicators in the context to suggest to the audience

²⁷ Klauck, *Judas: ein Jünger*, 92–123.

²⁸ In later work, Klauck is interested primarily in the historical Judas. See Klauck, "Judas Iscariot," 104–11; Klauck, "Judas der 'Verräter'?", *ANRW* 26.1:717–40.

²⁹ Hyam Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil* (1st American ed.; New York: The Free Press, 1992).

that the usual connotations of these images are being subverted, the audience's previous knowledge of such stories is an inevitable ingredient in the message which would have been communicated in the early Christian milieu.

In his extensive study of the passion narratives in the Gospels, Raymond E. Brown addresses our three accounts of the death of Judas.³⁰ Brown's approach is dominated by the question of sources. He cautiously agrees that the Matthean version places Judas in the category of "the evil traitor Ahithophel." The account in Acts he regards as being heavily influenced by scriptures such as Pss 69 and 109, as well as the death of Antiochus IV in 2 Macc 9:5–10. He cites several accounts of the deaths of wicked person to conclude that Papias indicates that Judas meets the typical death of an evil person.³¹ Since our study focuses on patterns that influence the audience's reception rather than sources used by the author, we again distinguish our approach from that of Brown by considering a wider array of parallels from the milieu of early Christianity, as well as the rhetorical conventions to which the audience would have been accustomed.

William Klassen proposes that in order to understand the significance of the death of Judas, "We will need . . . to ask what point the narrators were trying to make by telling the story of Judas's demise. The manner of death is important to

³⁰ Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah, from Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (2 vols.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994).

³¹ Ibid., 2:1408–9.

answering that question."³² Although he lists several potential precedents that might shape the audience's perception of Judas in the various accounts, he does not pursue any of them with vigor. He finds the case for a connection with Ahithophel less than compelling, but suggests that themes within Matthew, Luke, and Acts raise the possibility that the account of Judas' death is presented as a warning that indicates the fate of those who defect from the community.³³ Klassen agrees, however, with the generalization that the death of Judas in Papias is in line with the deaths of other wicked persons.³⁴ In contrast to Klassen's approach, we will see that death-accounts in antiquity often contain very specific character implications and that comparative accounts may convey connotations of character to the authorial audience even when they do not correspond in every detail.

A brief study that closely matches our methodology is that of Charles Talbert who, in his commentary on Acts, draws on precedents in the ancient Mediterranean milieu to discern the impact of these death-accounts on the authorial audience.³⁵ Regarding the similarities between the death of Judas in Matthew and the death of Ahithopel as conspicuous, Talbert finds that Judas dies an appropriate death for one who betrays a Davidic king. In Acts, if one recognizes not only an allusion to Wisd

³² William Klassen, *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 171. See also William Klassen, "Judas Iscariot," *ABD* 3:1091–96.

³³ Klassen, *Judas: Betrayer*, 171–72.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 170–71.

³⁵ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Rev. ed.; Reading the New Testament; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 14–15.

4:19, but also the kind of person whose death results from the effusion of the bowels (e.g., Josephus, *J.W.* 7.11.4), then Judas is portrayed as guilty of the two-fold crime of persecuting the Righteous One and of making false accusations. Finally, Talbert concludes that the account in Papias trades on recognized punishments for traitors who make false accusations, such as Nadan in *Ahikar* and Catullus in Josephus.³⁶ Like Talbert, we will analyze these parallels as well as others for the implications of character that they would convey to the interpretation of Judas' death. In fuller detail, however, we will investigate the strategies for characterization that were advocated by the ancient rhetoricians and present a wider range of parallel details in death-accounts from antiquity as we seek to elucidate as precisely as possible the character-shaping elements that the authorial audience would likely have perceived.

Kim Paffenroth builds on his earlier study³⁷ of the sources behind these accounts of Judas death to combine this approach with a broader look at the development of Judas' character in Matthew and the Lukan writings.³⁸ Although Paffenroth offers several literary parallels which might shape one's reading of the death of Judas in Papias, little is presented for comparison with the death-accounts found in Matthew and Acts. Even the oft-cited parallel between Matthew's account and the death of Ahithophel is discounted, and heavy emphasis is placed on the

³⁶ Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 15.

³⁷ Kim Paffenroth, "The Stories of the Fate of Judas and Differing Attitudes toward Sources," *Proceedings: Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies* 12 (1992): 67–81.

³⁸ Kim Paffenroth, *Judas: Images of the Lost Disciple* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

remorse described in the text, so that Judas is found to have “a faulty concept of God and God’s forgiveness but not therefore an incomplete experience of forgiveness.”³⁹ In Luke’s account, the primary clues to the characterization shown by the death of Judas are the other punitive deaths in Acts (5:1–11; 12:20–23), so that Judas simply dies an appropriate death for a wicked person. Paffenroth’s concern for the narrative context is similar to our literary approach, but by paying greater attention to comparative material in the repertoire of the ancient auditor we both enrich and solidify our reading more thoroughly in the historical milieu.

Arie W. Zwiep comments on all three of these early death-accounts in the course of his study of the function of Acts 1:15–26 within the book of Acts.⁴⁰ The Matthean account is interpreted mainly in light of the story of Ahithophel. Judas’ death in Acts 1:18–20 is regarded as divine retribution when compared to the deaths of several biblical villains. If Wisd 4:17–19 is regarded as a source, then Zwiep concludes that Judas is being presented as one who contributes to the death of God’s Righteous One. The tradition and redaction of Papias’ account are discussed, and Zwiep concludes that Judas’ death is presented as divine retribution. Zwiep’s interest in the context of Acts results in a narrative approach that recognizes Judas as the first enemy of the disciples to die in the plot of Acts. Zwiep’s method, however, primarily employs source, tradition, and redaction criticism and is limited mostly to

³⁹ Paffenroth, *Judas*, 115.

⁴⁰ Arie W. Zwiep, *Judas and the Choice of Matthias: A Study on Context and Concern of Acts 1:15–26* (ed. Jörg Frey; WUNT 2/187; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

Jewish parallels. Our audience-oriented approach engages in a thorough investigation of the portrait of Judas in the plot of each text and identifies many more primary sources that indicate how the details of Judas' demise would have been heard within these plots.

In the current state of research, an audience-oriented project might advance the work of previous scholars in several areas. First, we have observed that some commentators raise the question of whether or not these brief reports of Judas' death have much significance in the work as a whole. Our reading with the authorial audience will show that ancient auditors were accustomed to interpreting the death of a figure as a contribution to characterization and, therefore, integral to the plot.

Second, this survey has found that the comparative material typically used as background for interpretation is generally a limited number of particular parallels derived mainly from Jewish literature. A more comprehensive investigation of the literary repertoire of the ancient auditor, especially in relation to modes of death as punishment or vindication, has the potential to identify patterns of thought that extend beyond the limited number of parallels that have thus far been identified. Greek and Roman literature has been neglected in this regard and should be taken into consideration along with the more familiar texts.

Third, we find some exegetes ready to incorporate specific details from comparative literature into the portrayal of Judas while neglecting the development of the plot, yet others give careful attention to the text but use comparative material only as a distant, general background. A reading with the authorial audience takes

advantage of exegetical possibilities raised by those focused on the text, while not discounting the impact of verbal similarities and thematic connections with other elements of the milieu. Furthermore, this methodology offers two restraints against the temptation to overstate the role of potential parallels: (1) Reading with the authorial audience concerns itself with evidence that would have been broadly available to the reader, rather than making unsustainable assumptions of what must have been in the mind of the author. (2) Because the authorial audience is primarily informed by the text at hand—through its content, compositional structures, and rhetorical shaping—the narratives themselves provide a control for discerning the message that would likely have been received by a competent reader.

Outline of the Argument

In Chapter Two we will present evidence that in antiquity an account of a person's death would have been regarded as an important factor in the overall characterization of that person, and we will then proceed to identify the principal indicators through which an ancient auditor would have been conditioned to perceive such elements. This line of investigation will begin with information from the rhetorical schools regarding the depiction of persons and the significance of the manner of death in encomium and invective. This theoretical basis will then be augmented by a broad sampling of death-accounts from Greco-Roman, Jewish, and early Christian literature. From our comparison of the rhetorical handbooks and accounts of both noble and ignoble death, we will develop a rubric to help the

modern reader to perceive the main factors which an ancient auditor would likely have perceived as indications of character in a death-account.

In Chapters Three and Four, respectively, we will apply our rubric to the accounts of Judas' death in Matthew 27:3–5 and Acts 1:18–20. Each of these chapters will begin by tracing the main elements of the plot in each body of work. We will then proceed to follow the development of the portrait of Judas within that plot. Special attention is then given to the immediate context in which each death-account occurs: the passion narrative in Matthew, and the election of Matthias in Acts. The details of each mode of death will then be analyzed according to our findings in Chapter Two, and the character connotations will be elucidated through comparative sources from the ancient Mediterranean milieu. Finally, we will consider the rhetorical impact of the resultant characterization on the flow of the narrative and in the theological message of each book.

In Chapter Five we will consider Papias' version of the death of Judas. Since only fragments of Papias' work are extant, we will begin with a detailed discussion of the state of the text. As it is not possible to present a complete narrative flow, we will identify some of the most prominent literary features of Papias' work to provide a minimal context for his depiction of the demise of Judas. His account is quite colorful in details, and we will once again apply our rubric and an array of comparative materials in order to discern the character implications of Papias' report.

Chapter Six will conclude the study by summarizing our results. We will also take this opportunity to compare the three portraits of Judas that have emerged from our study and to suggest areas for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

Death and Character: The Contribution of Death-Accounts toward the Portrayal of Persons in the Milieu of Early Christianity

We hold the following to be the attributes of persons: name, nature, manner of life, fortune, habit, feeling, interests, purposes, achievements, accidents, speeches made. . . .

Under fortune one inquires whether the person is a slave or free, rich or poor, a private citizen or an official with authority, and if he is an official, whether he acquired his position justly or unjustly, whether he is successful, famous, or the opposite; what sort of children he has. *And if the inquiry is about one no longer alive, weight must be also given to the nature of his death.* (Cicero, *Inv.* 1.24.34–35; emphasis added)

In antiquity, an account of a figure's death often functioned as more than a mere death-notice or item of morbid curiosity. Death-accounts were recognized as important elements in the overall portrayal of persons. The details of a figure's death in Greco-Roman, Jewish, and early Christian literature frequently contribute to characterization by shaping the audience's perception of such factors as a figure's ethical qualities, function in the plot, relation to other characters, and symbolic value. This practice is attested by rhetoricians and widely employed by poets, historians, and biographers of the era. Through the examination of both the theory and practice of death-as-characterization, ancient rhetorical conventions and literary patterns emerge that provide insight into how the authorial audience would have heard the early Christian accounts of the death of Judas.

The analysis that follows begins with the rhetoricians who assert the importance of death in relation to character portrayal. In this brief section it will be demonstrated that Cicero was by no means alone in his assertion in the epigraph above that the nature of a figure's death is an important source for attributes of persons. The evidence from these theoretical discussions will also provide important initial indicators of the kinds of details that are significant in death-accounts. The second, larger section of this chapter illustrates the frequent use of death-accounts as components of characterization in a wide variety of ancient sources. In addition, this sampling of primary sources also reveals that Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian literature share many of the same conventions through which a death-account conveys either good or bad character.

Death and Character in Rhetorical Education

A fruitful place to begin a study of the function of death-accounts in ancient techniques of characterization is with the collections of compositional and rhetorical exercises known as progymnasmata. These "preliminary exercises" were undertaken by youths who had completed the basic grammar education and were preparing to enter a more advanced course of study in rhetoric.¹ Four of these textbooks, composed in Greek, have survived from the Roman period.² Although some debate

¹ George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (SBLWAW 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), ix.

² Malcolm Heath, "Theon and the History of the Progymnasmata," *GRBS* 43 (2002–2003): 129; Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, ix.

continues regarding precise dates, there is broad agreement that these exercises embody a traditional curriculum that extends back to the first or second century B.C. and reflect the pedagogy of even earlier periods.³ The place of these exercises in the educational curriculum of the first century A.D. is evident in Quintilian's brief listing and endorsement of such exercises for pupils who are finishing their work under the grammarian (*Inst.* 1.9). The relevance of these collections for the present study is further enhanced because they attest not only *oral* rhetoric, but the art of *written* rhetoric as well. The *Progymnasmata* attributed to Aelius Theon of Alexandria, generally regarded as the earliest of the four extant works (ca. A.D. 50–100),⁴ asserts that "training in exercises (τῶν γυμνασμάτων) is absolutely useful not only to those who are going to practice rhetoric but also if one wishes to undertake the function of poets or historians or any other writers. These things are, as it were, the foundation of every kind of discourse. . . ." (70.26–30; Kennedy, 13).⁵ The skills modeled in the

³ James R. Butts, "The 'Progymnasmata' of Theon: A New Text with Translation and Commentary" (Dissertation, The Claremont Graduate School, 1986), 7; Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, x–xii.

⁴ Those who date this set of progymnasmata to the late first century A.D. include Butts, "Progymnasmata", 7; Michel Patillon, ed. and trans., *Aelius Theon: Progymnasmata* (2d ed.; Paris: Belles Lettres, 2002), viii–xvi; and Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, xii. The case for a later (fifth-century) date is argued by Heath, "Theon," 129–60. It is noteworthy, however, that Heath also favors reassigning the *Progymnasmata* attributed to Hermogenes to the orator Minucianus (second century A.D.), although this text is typically assigned to the third or fourth century (see Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 73). Thus, among the four extant *progymnasmata*, the point remains undisputed that the collection as a whole represents an educational curriculum that was well established in the era of early Christianity.

⁵ Citations of the Greek text of Theon refer to the critical edition found in Patillon. English translations of Theon are from Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*.

progymnasmata were building blocks that could be used in varied rhetorical and literary contexts.

In his exercises on the composition of narrative, Theon lists the properties of person as "origin, nature, training, disposition, age, fortune, morality, action, speech, (*manner of*) *death, and what followed death* (θάνατος, τὰ μετὰ θάνατον)" (78.26–27; Kennedy, 28; emphasis added). The similarities between this list and that of Cicero in the epigraph above (*Inv.* 1.24.34–35) indicate that these *loci a persona*, including the nature of a person's death, reflect established conventions. Furthermore, Cicero and Theon employ the same basic technique in two different rhetorical settings. Cicero is listing the elements of person in his explanation of how one uses character to construct a supporting argument in the confirmation portion of an oration (*Inv.* 1.14.9; 1.24.34–35). Theon, however, introduces them under the generic heading of narrative (Διήγημα), "language descriptive of things that have happened or as though they have happened" (78.16–17; Kennedy 28). Since Theon illustrates his exercises on narration with citations from Homer, Herodotus, Demosthenes, Thucydides, and others, it is clear that these elements of the depiction of persons are common to a wide range of genres.

It is not surprising, then, that when Theon deals with the construction of encomium and invective—the praise or denunciation of persons—the list of *topoi* from which to develop arguments includes many of the same items found in his general discussion of the depiction of persons in narrative. In fact, Heinrich Lausberg identifies the genre of encomium as the "connecting link" between the lists

of *loci a persona* in the rhetorical handbooks and works of biography and literary portraiture.⁶ In the discussion of encomium and invective, the elements of characterization receive a high level of systemization and more thorough explanation. Theon organizes them under three main headings: (1) "mind and character (τὰ μὲν περὶ ψυχὴν τε καὶ ἦθος)"; (2) "the body (τὰ . . . περὶ σῶμα)"; (3) things "external to us (τὰ . . . ἔξωθεν ἡμῖν ὑπάρχει)" (109.29–31; Kennedy, 50). Having identified these headings, Theon proceeds to list specific elements that fall under each category. In reviewing these lists, it is important to note that Theon abbreviates the discussion by focusing primarily on encomium, and expecting the student to perceive how the positive examples could be reversed for invective: "These are the sources of praise, and we shall derive blame from the opposites" (112.20–21; Kennedy, 52).

Regarding characterization in encomium, Theon asserts that the goods of the mind are made evident through actions that illustrate noble motives or that compare favorably with the actions of others who are noted for their noble deeds (110.7–111.3; Kennedy, 50–51). The goods of the body include "health, strength, beauty, and acuteness of sense" (110.6–7; Kennedy 50). External goods include "first, good birth, and that is twofold, either from the goodness of (a man's) city and tribe and constitution, or from ancestors and other relatives. Then there is education, friendship, reputation, official position, wealth, good children, *a good death* (εὐθανασία)"

⁶ Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Study* (eds. David E. Orton and R. Dean Anderson; trans. Matthew T. Bliss, et al.; Boston: Brill, 1998), 175.

(110.1–8; Kennedy 50; emphasis added). Again we see that the circumstances of one's death were regarded as an important element in the total portrait of a person. Furthermore, if "a good death" provides material for encomium, then a "bad" death has potential for invective.

In addition to supporting the case that death-accounts served as elements of characterization in antiquity, the rhetors' explanations of techniques for encomium and invective are relevant to the present study in several other ways that should be noted. First, the tripartite rubric of mind, body, and externals is a very helpful organizational device for the modern interpreter who wants to read with the ancient auditor. The categories are not unique to Theon. Regarding encomium, Quintilian also says, "The praise of the man himself must be based on mind, body, and external circumstances" (*Inst.* 3.7.12).⁷ Such a rule of thumb is a powerful tool for getting a handle on characterization in Greco-Roman literature, especially since the list of attributes of persons is infinitely expandable. As Quintilian himself acknowledges after discussing well over a dozen attributes of persons, "These and the like are the considerations that relate to persons. I cannot cover everything, either here or elsewhere, and I content myself with pointing out the general principles on which further inquiry should proceed" (*Inv.* 5.10.31). In the study of characterization through death-accounts it is prudent to keep in mind the three-fold rubric of mind,

⁷ Like Theon, Quintilian abbreviates his treatment of encomium and invective by devoting most of his attention to encomium and then observing, "This whole scheme will hold also for invective, but in reverse" (*Inst.* 3.7.19-22).

body, and external circumstances, since all three of these are highly important components of death narratives themselves.

Second, we should note that among these three categories primary importance is placed on the goods of the mind. Quintilian explicitly states that although matters of body and external circumstances are necessary considerations, they are "comparatively trivial" beside qualities of the mind (*Inv.* 3.7.12). In Theon, the goods of the mind receive a fuller discussion than the other two categories as he illustrates how noble actions reveal "that a person is prudent, temperate, courageous, just, pious, generous, magnanimous, and the like" (110.6–35; Kennedy, 50–51). In the examples below that illustrate the actual practice of using death-accounts as characterization, it will be appropriate to recognize that elements that indicate qualities of the mind of the figure are especially valued.

Third, we observe that the importance placed on a person's physical body and external circumstances indicates that in antiquity the total portrait of a figure included aspects of characterization that were beyond the figure's control. The modern audience may object that such factors do not speak to character, but for the ancient authorial audience such evidence would have been considered perfectly admissible.

Fourth, among the methods of encomium listed by Theon there is an additional strategy that will emerge as particularly important in the examination of death-accounts below. Theon says, "It is not without utility also to make mention of those already honored, comparing their deeds to those of the persons being praised"

(111.1–3; Kennedy, 51). The evaluative comparison, or synkrisis, of persons is discussed by all four surviving collections of progymnasmata and is a common feature in many works of various genres in Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian literature.⁸ The modern interpreter should keep in mind, therefore, that the ancient audience was conditioned by the use of synkrisis to hear character implications in the similarities and contrasts between one person's actions and another's.

A final piece of evidence from the progymnasmata illustrates both the enduring importance of death in characterization and the kinds of details that an audience might find relevant. In the *Progymnasmata* traditionally associated with the second-century A.D. figure Hermogenes of Tarsus, a text that probably dates to the third or fourth century A.D., the topics for use in encomium are again under discussion.⁹ The text includes among the external circumstances such items as relatives, friends, luck, and

. . . the manner of his death, (for example,) how he died fighting for his country; and if there was anything unusual about it, as in the case of Callimachus, because his corpse remained standing. And you will praise him because of who killed him; for example, that Achilles died at the hand of the god Apollo. (Hermogenes, 16; Kennedy, 82)

Here we see a mixture of details that vary in the degree to which they reveal the mind of the figure, but all of which, nevertheless, have the potential to contribute to the overall portrait of the person. If one "died fighting for his country," this of

⁸ See Michael W. Martin, *Judas and the Rhetoric of Comparison in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; New Testament Monographs 25; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2010), 37–90.

⁹ Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 73. For the tentative suggestion of a second-century date see Heath, "Theon," 159–60.

course indicates the ethical quality of patriotism. The death of Callimachus, whose body was so full of spears that it remained upright even though he was dead,¹⁰ and the death of Achilles at the hand of Apollo illustrate the use of the description of the body and recounting of external circumstances in order to imply further characteristics (e.g., bravery or divine status) of the figure. These examples from Hermogenes give us the scent of our quarry in the investigation that follows below.

In this section we have observed that rhetorical authorities in the era in which Christianity emerged regarded the manner of a person's death as an important element of characterization. Attention to the details of one's death was not only a feature of the highly developed arts of encomium and invective, but also featured in the narratives of poets, historians, and biographers. From the emphasis that death receives in these various genres it is evident that, even though the majority of the populace did not undergo formal rhetorical training, the typical ancient auditor, a thoroughly saturated consumer of the rhetoric of the age, would have been conditioned to expect the recounting of a person's death to say something about the character of the person, not merely report the facts. Authors, orators, and audiences shared a sense that, upon hearing the details of a figure's death, it was only natural to ask, "What kind of person would die this way?"

¹⁰ On Callimachus' death see Plutarch, *Mor.* 305C.

Death and Character in Narrative

Having examined the work of rhetorical theorists regarding characterization, our goal of understanding how the authorial audience would have understood the early Christian accounts of the death of Judas Iscariot requires us to examine the function of death-accounts embedded in various narratives. This review of primary sources from Greco-Roman, Jewish, and early Christian literature will support our project in three ways. First, the evidence will show that the use of death-accounts to reveal character is indeed a standard feature in the literature of the period. Second, the methods of characterization listed in the rhetorical exercises and handbooks will be illustrated and supplemented by examining the actual practice of death-as-characterization. By identifying the techniques and learning to recognize them in practice we will lay the foundation for our reading of the deaths of Judas with the authorial audiences. Third, categories will emerge as familiar types of death that would have been readily recognized by the authorial audience. While each account remains unique in its details (indeed, an infinite variety is possible), awareness of these common categories provides the modern reader with another point of reference for hearing the text as the ancient auditor would. In the evidence that follows, four of the most common types of death that speak to character are: (1) the glorious death of a warrior; (2) the peaceful death of the blessed; (3) the faithful death of a martyr; (4) the punitive death of a villain. The first three of these four share techniques of characterization to a high degree and will be dealt with under the heading "Noble Death." Punitive deaths share some of the same techniques but

incorporate special strategies that are distinctive. Therefore, punitive deaths will be dealt with in a separate section. These four are not the only types of noble or ignoble death, but they are prominent types that were readily recognizable and that provide ample material for identifying techniques of characterization in death-accounts.

Noble Death

Homer. Scenes of dying and death fill the *Iliad* to such a degree that it has been variously designated "the poem of death,"¹¹ "a poem of battles and death,"¹² or "the poem of life and death."¹³ In grim and gory detail the slayings of countless minor characters are told in rapid succession, and the deaths of major characters—such as Sarpedon (*Il.* 16.419–507), Patroclus (*Il.* 16.777–867), and Hector (*Il.* 22.131–404)—receive extended attention. In this context the brave death of a warrior is a noble death. Facing death courageously is an essential trait of the ideal Homeric hero, so that death-accounts contribute heavily to characterization in the *Iliad*. Even if one dies in battle, the slain soldier obtains honor by virtue of having engaged in the struggle courageously. This principle is most fully exemplified in Achilles' decision to go to Troy and fight in order to achieve glory and fame, even

¹¹ "Deshalb ist die Ilias das Gedicht vom Tod," suggests Walter Marg, "Zur Eigenart der Odyssee," *Antike und Abendland* 18 (1973): 10.

¹² "L'*Iliade* est un poème de batailles et de mort," says Jacqueline de Romilly, *La douceur dans la pensée Grecque* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1979), 3.

¹³ Jasper Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 95.

though he has been warned by his goddess-mother Thetis that doing so will cost him his life (*Il.* 9.410–16). The noble character of the Homeric heroes is revealed primarily through their willingness to confront death for the sake of their comrades and their own honor. This system of heroic honor provides the backdrop for understanding how death-accounts function as characterization in the *Iliad*.

The death of Sarpedon (*Il.* 16.419–507) provides a useful case study and may be compared fruitfully with similar patterns in the two other principal deaths, those of Patroclus and Hector. The final battle scene for Sarpedon is introduced with his brief speech shaming his comrades for fleeing, and contrasting their retreat with his willingness to face Patroclus (*Il.* 16.419–25). Having made bold claims, he then leaps "in his armour from his chariot to the ground." Patroclus does the same, and they engage "like vultures crooked of talon and curved of beak" (*Il.* 16.426–30).¹⁴

The scene then shifts to a conversation between the onlooking Zeus and Hera in which Zeus, the father of Sarpedon, contemplates rescuing Sarpedon from his fate. Hera warns Zeus that if he rescues Sarpedon, other gods will want to do the same for their favorites, and Zeus accepts her suggestion that he can still favor Sarpedon by having Death and Sleep carry his body home to Lycia for a proper funeral.

The focus returns to the battlefield where Patroclus and Sarpedon close ground. Patroclus kills Sarpedon's squire, and Sarpedon spears Patroclus' horse.

¹⁴ Except where otherwise noted, quotations of Homer are from the translation of A. T. Murray, LCL.

Sarpedon misses a second time, but Patroclus lands his spear near Sarpedon's "throbbing heart" (*Il.* 16.480–81). Sarpedon's final speech urges his kinsman Glaucus to continue the fight undaunted and to prevent the capture of Sarpedon's body (*Il.* 16.492–501). Finally, the moment of his death is told with close attention to physical details:

Even as he thus spake the end of death enfolded him, his eyes alike and his nostrils; and Patroclus, setting his foot upon his breast, drew the spear from out the flesh, and the midriff (φρένες)¹⁵ followed therewith; and at the one moment he drew forth the spear-point and the soul of Sarpedon. (*Il.* 16.502–5)

An intense battle for the possession of the body of Sarpedon follows, with the Greeks intent on stripping his armor and dishonoring the corpse. When the Greeks succeed in putting the Trojans in retreat, Sarpedon's armor is taken as booty, but Zeus intervenes and sends Apollo to take the body, bathe it, and then deliver it by Death and Sleep back to Lycia (*Il.* 16.666–83).

In the guidelines offered by the rhetorical theorists, this story is rich with character traits. The goods of the mind are of paramount importance for characterization, and a figure's final actions and final words are two of the most direct indicators of the qualities of the mind. Noble death in the *Iliad* is primarily indicated by a figure's carrying through on a decision to face one's enemies bravely, no matter the outcome. Thus Sarpedon exhorts Glaucus, "Let us go forward, whether we shall give glory to another, or another to us" (*Il.* 12.310–28). Though

¹⁵ Stanley Lombardo translates as "lungs." See Homer, *Iliad* (trans. Stanley Lombardo; Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997).

Sarpedon is slain, his unflinching engagement with Patroclus presents him as upholding the Homeric code of honor. The death-accounts of Patroclus and Hector are similarly noble in this regard. Patroclus is leading his fourth charge into the Trojans when he meets his doom (*Il.* 16.777–87), and Hector, realizing that he is without aid in his fight with Achilles, resolves to exert himself in spite of the circumstances in order to die in such a way as to be renowned in generations to come (*Il.* 22.304–5).

Two speeches of Sarpedon are incorporated into his final scene: one in which he contrasts his own honorable courage with the shameful cowardice of the retreating Lycians, and the other in which he urges Glaucus to continue fearlessly in battle and to secure the honor of his corpse. In the Homeric code of honor, Sarpedon's final words could hardly rank him more highly. Patroclus and Hector are also afforded the opportunity of last words. Patroclus uses the occasion to undermine Hector's boasts, noting that though he is slain by Hector, Hector only dealt him a fatal blow after Patroclus had first been struck by both Apollo and Euphorbus (*Il.* 16.844–54). When it is Hector's turn to die at the hands of an irate Achilles, he pleads for his corpse to be allowed to be ransomed by Priam. When Achilles tauntingly refuses, Hector attempts to trump Achilles' shameless anger by threatening to bring the wrath of the gods down on Achilles (*Il.* 16.356–60). The verbal sparring of Patroclus with Achilles depicts him as continuing the battle and upholding his honor to the last breath. Like Sarpedon, the final words of Hector and Patroclus characterize them as extremely noble figures dying heroically.

In the *Iliad*, the description of the body of the deceased also relates to characterization and matters of honor. The abundance of horrific wounds and violent deaths generates for the audience a heightened appreciation of the risks confronting the epic hero.¹⁶ Wounds received in courageous battle, though gruesome in depiction, serve to validate the noble character of the deceased. Wounds to the front of the body are honorable, while wounds to the back suggest cowardliness (*Il.* 8.93–96; 13.288–91).¹⁷ In this context, the details of the wounds to Sarpedon's body elevate his character. Patroclus' spear has entered near his "throbbing heart," yet not only does Sarpedon's heart continue to beat, but he has the strength to exhort Glaucus. This warrior does not yield his life until Patroclus literally rips it from his chest (*Il.* 16.502–5). Later, Hector fatally wounds Patroclus when he "smote him with a thrust of the spear in the nethermost belly, and drove the bronze clean through" (*Il.* 16.818–21), this being the place where wounds are most painful (*Il.* 13.569). Achilles, in turn, pierces Hector "where destruction of life cometh most speedily. . . and clean out through the tender neck went the point," leaving his windpipe intact so that he is still able to utter a final speech (*Il.* 22.324–29). These descriptions of wounded bodies contribute to characterization in at least two ways. First, the ekphrastic descriptions of the injuries serve to heighten the warrior's worth due to the extreme pain from which he does not cower. Second, one

¹⁶ Griffin, *Homer*, 90–92, 103.

¹⁷ Christine F. Salazar, *The Treatment of War Wounds in Graeco-Roman Antiquity* (ed. John Scarborough; Boston: Brill, 2000), 156–57. Salazar notes that realistically speaking the front-back dichotomy is an oversimplification. Nevertheless, in the banter of the warriors this norm is assumed.

detects in these descriptions that even when mortally wounded, these men did not yield their lives easily. This point takes on added meaning in light of the Greek belief that civic duty required one to maximize the utility of one's life and that even a soldier should not welcome death in battle too easily (cf. Plato, *Laws* 9.873c; Herodotus, *Hist.* 9.71).

A closely related issue concerns what becomes of one's body after death. A proper funeral is part and parcel of a good death and is also a prerequisite for allowing the shade of the deceased to enter Hades (*Il.* 23.62–92). Thus, intense fighting occurs over the bodies of Sarpedon and Patroclus in order to prevent the enemy from mutilating and defiling the corpses (*Il.* 16.562–67; 18.160–80). Zeus honors Sarpedon by sending Sleep and Death to rescue the corpse and carry it back to Lycia for proper rites (*Il.* 16.667–75), a scene that becomes a popular funerary icon symbolizing a good death.¹⁸ The goddess Thetis uses ambrosia and nectar to prevent flies and worms from fouling the body of Patroclus before the funeral can be conducted (*Il.* 19.23–39). In the case of Hector, even the gods are appalled by Achilles' prolonged abuse of Hector's body (*Il.* 22.395–428; 24.1–137). Aphrodite intervenes so that, in spite of being dragged behind the chariot of Achilles' for several days, the corpse remains intact, and some of Hector's wounds even close themselves (*Il.* 23.186–87, 190–91; 24.20–21, 411–24). The radical dishonor that defiling the corpse would confer on these persons is forestalled by divine

¹⁸ Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, *'Reading' Greek Death to the End of the Classical Period* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 326–27.

interventions so that the status of the heroes survives unmarred.¹⁹ The inversion of expectations dramatically suggests that, just as the bodies of these valiant figures are impervious to dishonor, so are their reputations. The divine preservation of their bodies is a powerful post-mortem tribute to their noble status in death.

A final contribution to the characterization of these heroes emerges from the suggestion in Hermogenes that in encomium one might be praised “because of who killed him; for example, that Achilles died at the hand of the god Apollo” (*Progymnasmata* 16; Kennedy, 82). The combination of gods and mortals involved in each of these deaths suggests a ranking of these warriors in relation to one another. In the case of Sarpedon, the gods do not intervene. By contrast, Patroclus and Hector continue to elude death until the gods get involved. Apollo strikes Patroclus in the back with his hand, knocking Patroclus' helmet from his head, breaking his spear, and leaving him in a daze that allows Hector to gain the advantage (*Il.* 16.786–806). Hector's defeat results from a slightly more elaborate divine intervention in which Athena disguises herself as Hector's brother Deïphobus and persuades Hector that together they can withstand Achilles (*Il.* 22.226–49). At the critical moment when Hector turns to his brother for a spear, Deïphobus is nowhere to be seen, and Hector realizes that the gods have entrapped him to his doom (*Il.* 22.294–305). The degree of involvement of the gods in bringing about the deaths of these heroes contributes to the portrait of the status of each. Sarpedon is

¹⁹ Jean-Pierre Vernant, "A 'Beautiful Death' and the Disfigured Corpse in Homeric Epic," in *Oxford Readings in Homer's Iliad* (ed. Douglas L. Cairns; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 332–41.

killed by Patroclus without divine intervention, but Patroclus' death at the hands of Hector involves help from Apollo. Hector's death ranks even more highly since it requires a divine ruse in addition to the prowess of Achilles. Finally, at the apex of this trajectory stands Achilles, who, as noted by Hermogenes above, is slain by the hands of Apollo himself (cf. *Il.* 22.359–60).

In the cases of Sarpedon, Patroclus, and Hector we have three deaths that are depicted as noble in relation to the value system of the Homeric warrior. The elements that contribute to characterization in each death account include final actions, final words, description of the wounds that cause death, the fate of the body after death, the identity of the slayer, and the role of the gods in bringing about the death. While all of these are noble deaths, the characterization of each figure is nuanced by the particular details of each death.

In the *Odyssey* another form of noble death is attested, at least in prospect. The prophet Tiresias foresees that after enduring many trials, the gods will grant Odysseus a peaceful death: "And death shall come to thee thyself far from the sea, a death so gentle, that shall lay thee low when thou art overcome with sleek old age, and thy people shall dwell in prosperity around thee" (*Od.* 11.134–37; cf. 23.281–84). Odysseus' faithful swineherd Eumaeus also extols the virtues of such a death when he idealizes his homeland as a place where there is no famine or disease, but where people grow old and are then shot by the gentle arrows of Apollo and Artemis (*Od.* 15.403–414). Whereas the *Iliad* takes place on the battlefield, the *Odyssey* turns toward home and domestic concerns. In the latter context, a noble death is marked

by long-life, prosperity, absence of suffering or disease, and being surrounded by one's family. To die in such circumstances is evidence of divine favor—the death of the blessed.

Herodotus. In the first book of the *Histories* of Herodotus, the wise man Solon of Athens attests the two forms of noble death that we have already observed in Homer, and he also argues that how one dies is an essential consideration in evaluating one's life. While on a ten-year tour of the world, Solon comes to Sardis, where the Lydian King Croesus asks him what man above all others Solon would regard as the most blest (*Hist.* 1.30). Solon's answer comes in three stages. He gives first prize to Tellus of Athens, because of his prosperity, family, and glorious death in battle followed by a grand public funeral (*Hist.* 1.30). Unsatisfied, Croesus asks whom Solon would place second. Solon names Cleobis and Biton, who were rewarded for their service to Hera with "the best boon that a man may receive" (*Hist.* 1.31). Namely, they lay down to sleep in a shrine and never rose again, dying quietly at the peak of youthful strength and beauty. Solon's failure to rank Croesus above these others because of his royal wealth and prosperity frustrates Croesus, but Solon asserts that while one may be fortunate in life, true blessedness cannot be assessed until death.

If then such a man besides all this shall also end his life well, then he is the man whom you seek, and is worthy to be called blest; but we must wait till he

be dead, and call him not yet blest (ὄλβιον), but fortunate (εὐτυχέα)²⁰. . . . We must look to the conclusion of every matter, and see how it shall end, for there are many to whom heaven has given a vision of blessedness, and yet afterwards brought them to utter ruin. (Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.32)

In the words of Solon, then, the circumstances of one's death are paramount in assessing the life of the person as a whole, especially in relation to divine favor.

There are strong indications that Herodotus agrees with Solon's view. In the first place, Herodotus devotes a great deal of space to the dialogue between Solon and Croesus, allowing Solon to make his case in lengthy detail. Furthermore, although Croesus rejects Solon's advice for the time being, later Croesus is captured by Cyrus and placed atop a large pyre to be burned alive, where he recalls Solon's words. Come to this end, Croesus utters Solon's name three times, acknowledging the truthfulness of Solon's assessment of life (*Hist.* 1.85–92). Not only does Croesus attest the wisdom of Solon, but Cyrus, after inquiring who it is that Croesus calls upon in the face of death, is so moved by the story of Solon's assessment of the vicissitudes of life that he orders the fire to be extinguished and Croesus saved. Thus, the wisdom of Solon proves true in the life of Croesus and is acknowledged by two great kings. Through Solon, Herodotus upholds the view that death is an essential element in assessing the portrait of a person and that good deaths are

²⁰ "The terms for human well-being that recur in the dialogue are four: ὄλβος, εὐτυχία, εὐδαιμονία, μακαρίζω; but the fundamental distinction is between permanent 'happiness' (ὄλβος) and transient good luck (εὐτυχία)," David Asheri, et al., *A Commentary on Herodotus: Books I-IV* (eds. Oswyn Murray and Alfonso Moreno; trans. Barbara Graziosi, et al.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 97.

characterized by glorious victory or blessed peace, as well as the attendant circumstances of health, beauty, prosperity, and the presence of family.

Diodorus Siculus. Diodorus Siculus gives a further example of noble death when he recounts in detail the final minutes of the Theban general Epaminondas. Epaminondas is mortally wounded in combat, but he is still alive when he is carried back to the camp (*Library of History* 15.87.5–6). The physicians determine that as soon as the point of the spear is removed, he will die. In a scene reminiscent of the deaths of Sarpedon and Hector, who stubbornly cling to life and utter their final speeches even after having been mortally wounded, Diodorus emphasizes the "supreme courage" with which Epaminondas faced death as evident through his final words:

First summoning his armour-bearer he asked him if he had saved his shield. On his replying yes and placing it before his eyes, he again asked, which side was victorious. At the boy's answer that the Boeotians were victorious, he said, "It is time to die," and directed them to withdraw the spear point. His friends present cried out in protest, and one of them said: "You die childless, Epameinondas," and burst into tears. To this he replied, "No, by Zeus, on the contrary I leave behind two daughters, Leuctra and Mantinea, my victories." Then when the spear point was withdrawn, without any commotion he breathed his last. (*Library of History* 15.87.6).

Through Epaminondas' last words the death-account emphasizes the noble mind of the patriotic and courageous warrior who expresses no concern for himself, but single-minded concern for the welfare of his nation.

The case of Epaminondas in Diodorus also provides vivid evidence of the influence of the practice of encomium on characterization in historical writing.

Immediately after recounting Epaminondas' last breath, Diodorus launches into an encomium, saying, "For us who are wont to accord to the demise of great men the appropriate meed of praise, it would be most unfitting, so we think, to pass by the death of a man of such stature with no word of note" (*Library of History* 15.88.1).

Diodorus proceeds to compare Epaminondas with other famous figures of that generation and to insist that Epaminondas surpassed them all in the combination of virtues that he possessed. After this synkrisis, Diodorus closes the section with a tidy summary that casts the death of Epaminondas as a fitting capstone for the character of his life: "So Epaminondas, whose valour was approved among all men, in the manner we have shown met his death" (*Library of History* 15.88.4). When one's life and one's death reveal a consistent set of virtues, then the question of character is a closed case.

A death-account, however, may also be employed to redeem a figure whose reputation is in doubt. Diodorus defends the character of the Athenian general Themistocles who was accused of corruption and ostracized by the Greeks, resulting in his exile among the Persians. During the exile of Themistocles, Xerxes planned an assault on Greece and invited Themistocles to join him. After securing oaths from Xerxes that the Persians would not go to war against Greece without him, Themistocles gave his own life for the safety of his homeland. Diodorus relates,

And when a bull had been sacrificed and oaths taken, Themistocles, filling a cup with its blood, drank it down and immediately died. They add that Xerxes thereupon relinquished that plan of his, and that Themistocles by his voluntary death left the best possible defence that he had played the part of a

good citizen in all matters affecting the interest of Greece. (*Library of History* 11.58.3)

Not all accounts of the death of Themistocles are as generous (see Plutarch, *Them.* 31:3–5), but the point to be made here is that Herodotus recognized that death-accounts carry such significance that he could use this story about Themistocles as strong evidence of the Athenian's true character. In addition, these examples illustrate again the use of final words and final actions to reveal character, and that courage and patriotism are marks of a noble death.

Jewish Scriptures. The Scriptures of Israel do not typically find honor in the deaths of Jewish warriors. A notable exception is the death of Samson who, by sacrificing himself, killed more Philistines in his death than all those he had killed in his life (Judg 16:23–31).²¹ As a rule, however, in the Jewish Scriptures, the righteous are vindicated in battle, and failure before one's enemies is a shameful indicator of unfaithfulness in Israel (e.g., Num 14:39–45; Josh 7:11–12). This perspective is in sharp contrast to the *Iliad*, for example, where the gods cause first one favorite and then another to either triumph or suffer defeat and death. Instead, the deaths of many of the heroes of the Jewish Scriptures are similar to the peaceful deaths predicted for Odysseus, idealized by Eumaeus, and enjoyed by Cleobus and Biton in the examples above.

²¹ The battlefield deaths of Saul and Jonathan (1 Sam 31; 1 Chron 10) are discussed in a special section on suicide in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

A relatively simple but stylized form of these types of death-accounts is especially prominent in the Pentateuch. The deaths of Sarah and Abraham are paradigmatic:

Sarah lived one hundred twenty-seven years; this was the length of Sarah's life. And Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. . . . After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. The field and the cave that is in it passed from the Hittites into Abraham's possession as a burying place. (Gen 23:1–2, 19–20)

This is the length of Abraham's life, one hundred seventy-five years. Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, the field that Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with his wife Sarah. (Gen 25:7–10)

These accounts have a tone of quiet, peaceful death, with no mention of disease or violence, and emphasis on long-life, proper burial, and being attend by one's family. This pattern is followed in the death-accounts of Ishmael (Gen 25:17), Isaac (Gen 35:28–29), Joseph (Gen 50:26), and Aaron (Num 20:24–29). In some cases the form is expanded, as in Jacob's testamentary blessing of his children (Gen 49:1–33) or the extraordinary vigor of Moses and his burial by the Lord himself (Gen 34:1–8). This type of death-account extends into the Deuteronomic History, as evident, for example, in the deaths of Joshua (Josh 24:29–30; Jdg 2:8–9), Gideon (Jdg 8:32), and Samuel (1 Sam 25:1).

Apocrypha. The dominant form of good death in the Jewish Scriptures continues to provide a standard model in later Jewish literature, as in the deaths of

Tobit (Tob 14:2, 11), Judith (Jud 16:23–25), and Mattathias (1 Macc 2:69–70). The significance of these kinds of death-accounts had an impact on the Jewish wisdom tradition as well: "Their bodies are buried in peace, but their name lives on generation after generation" (Sir 44:14). In this trajectory, how one dies is equivalent to divine testimony about the character of one's life:

For it is easy for the Lord on the day of death to reward individuals according to their conduct. An hour's misery makes one forget past delights, and at the close of one's life one's deeds are revealed. Call no one happy before his death; by how he ends, a person becomes known. (Sir 11:26–28)

The pattern of a peaceful death, at the end of a long life, surrounded by one's family, and followed by a proper burial concurs with the Hellenistic tradition above describing the beautiful death of the blessed. A miserable death conveyed the opposite judgment.

In the Maccabean literature, however, the glorious death of a warrior also clearly emerges. For example, Eleazar, son of Mattathias and brother of Judas Maccabeus, is remembered for his dying foray into the ranks of the Seleucid forces:

Now Eleazar, called Avaran, saw that one of the animals [an elephant] was equipped with royal armor. It was taller than all the others, and he supposed that the king was on it. So he gave his life to save his people and to win for himself an everlasting name. He courageously ran into the midst of the phalanx to reach it; he killed men right and left, and they parted before him on both sides. He got under the elephant, stabbed it from beneath, and killed it; but it fell to the ground upon him and he died. (1 Macc 6:43–46)

In this death-account the combination of final actions and the circumstances in which they take place reveal the courage and patriotism of Eleazar. The valor of Eleazar is attested not only in his attacking an elephant, but in the further emphasis

that it is the biggest and most heavily armored one, and that slaying it requires him to die along with it. This latter detail calls to mind the noble death of Samson. In this death-account, the external circumstances are of paramount importance for conveying the virtue of the death.

In the death of Judas Maccabeus (1 Macc 9:5–23) the scene is set by the observation that the Jewish forces are vastly outnumbered by the enemy and the rebel ranks are beginning to slip away. When Judas musters the remaining troops they urge him to withdraw until their forces are stronger.

But Judas said, "Far be it from us to do such a thing as to flee from them. If our time has come, let us die bravely for our kindred, and leave no cause to question our honor." . . . The battle became desperate, and many on both sides were wounded and fell. Judas also fell, and the rest fled. Then Jonathan and Simon took their brother Judas and buried him in the tomb of their ancestors at Modein, and wept for him; they mourned many days and said, "How is the mighty fallen, the savior of Israel!" Now the rest of the acts of Judas, and his wars and the brave deeds that he did, and his greatness, have not been recorded, but they were very many. After the death of Judas, the renegades emerged in all parts of Israel; all the wrongdoers reappeared. (1 Macc 9:10, 17–23)

This death-account is a rich combination of techniques orchestrated to emphasize the nobility of Judas Maccabeus. First, his last words stress courage, patriotism, and honor. Second, the circumstance of being greatly outnumbered underscores the courage of Judas and his troops, but in combination with the assertion that "many on both sides were wounded and fell" the prowess of Judas as a general is enhanced. Third, the description of his funeral communicates both blessedness and honor through his burial in his ancestral tomb, the extended period of mourning, and the language borrowed from David's lament over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:19).

Fourth, the line alluding to "the rest of the acts of Judas" echoes the standard obituary of a king (cf. 1 Kgs 11:41; 14:19, 29; 15:7, etc.). Fifth, the quality of his leadership is indicated by the decline in conditions after his death.

In the Maccabean literature a third form of noble death comes to prominence: martyrdom.²² The noble character demonstrated by such a death is explicitly revealed in the death of Eleazar the scribe (2 Macc 6:18–31). After the defiling of the Temple by Antiochus IV, further measures are taken to attempt to force the Jews to violate their religious law and participate in honoring the Greek gods. Eleazar is among those who must either eat unclean food or die:

Eleazar, one of the scribes in high position, a man now advanced in age and of noble presence, was being forced to open his mouth to eat swine's flesh. But he, welcoming death with honor rather than life with pollution, went up to the rack of his own accord, spitting out the flesh, as all ought to go who have the courage to refuse things that it is not right to taste, even for the natural love of life. (2 Macc 6:18–20)

When urged by those in charge of the sacrifice to save his life by simply pretending to eat unclean food, he rejects this proposal on the grounds that he must still answer to God, even if he escapes death, and that one of his age should set for the younger generation "a noble example of how to die a good death willingly and nobly for the revered and holy laws" (2 Macc 6:28). This response only increased the hostility of his persecutors, and finally,

²² The precise definition of *martyr* is a matter of some debate. As simply a method of organization, here we regard death in battle as death of a warrior rather than of a martyr, even if the battle is undertaken for religious reasons. For more on this debate see Jan Willem van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 2–8.

When he was about to die under the blows, he groaned aloud and said: "It is clear to the Lord in his holy knowledge that, though I might have been saved from death, I am enduring terrible sufferings in my body under this beating, but in my soul I am glad to suffer these things because I fear him." So in this way he died, leaving in his death an example of nobility and a memorial of courage, not only to the young but to the great body of his nation. (2 Macc 6:30–31)

The last words of Eleazar reveal the most important attributes of the mind of a martyr: the deliberate and unwavering choice of death over disobedience. The qualities of courage and religious devotion are further enhanced by the severity of the physical abuse to which his body is subjected and by his refusal of the compromise offered by his captors.

Early Christian Literature. For the Christian community the principal noble death was, of course, the crucifixion of Jesus, a death acknowledged as "a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (1 Cor 1:23). A great deal of the material of the Gospels—such as Jesus' predictions of his own death, the repeated pronouncements of his innocence during his trials, the miraculous signs that accompany his crucifixion, his death, his resurrection, and the claims of fulfilling Scripture—can be construed, in part at least, as counter-testimony aimed at overturning the negative connotations of death by crucifixion.²³ This reframing of the hideous death of crucifixion is concisely done in Luke 23:44–47:

²³ For a survey of the connotations associated with crucifixion, see L. L. Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians 1-4 in the Comic-Philosophic Tradition* (JSNTSup 293; New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 129–44. Also, Joel Marcus, "Crucifixion as Parodic Exaltation," *JBL* 125 (2006): 73–87.

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent."

The external circumstances of midday darkness and the rending of the veil function as divine testimony to the character of Jesus. In addition, his last words not only present him as one who accepts death bravely, but, by echoing Ps 31:5, casts him in the role of one who has been unjustly persecuted by the unrighteous. Finally, the centurion's praising God and declaring Jesus' innocence suggest the conclusions that the authorial audience was expected to derive from the details of the death-account.

The treatment of the death of Jesus in the Gospels reveals several important features of death-as-characterization in the milieu of the NT. First, it was commonplace for ugly deaths to be interpreted as indicating foul character (cf. Luke 13:1–5). Second, there were strategies available for leading an audience to re-evaluate their assumptions about the significance of an apparently ignoble death by looking at other indicators of character.²⁴ Third, if other factors of characterization were successful in overturning the negative judgment regarding character, then the ugliness of the death itself reversed its function and served to vilify the perpetrators and to elevate the character of the victim.

²⁴ As another example of such a strategy, Christine Salazar observes that the widespread tradition that Alexander the Great died of a fever, an ignoble death for such a warrior, seems to have been compensated for in biographers by their giving an unusual amount of attention to the description of his scars from wounds received in battle. See Salazar, *Treatment*, 185–86, 208.

With Jesus' death as the paradigm, it follows that in early Christian literature the dominant form of noble death is neither the glorious slaying of a warrior, nor the quiet passing of an aged saint, but the faithful suffering of a martyr. In particular, echoes of the death of Jesus abound. For example, the account of the stoning of Stephen uses the last words and the circumstances of his death to characterize Stephen as one who closely imitated Jesus, thus presenting him as an exemplary disciple:

Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died. (Acts 7:58–60)

It is difficult to miss the favorable synkrisis with the death of Jesus when this passage is compared to Luke 23:46: "Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.'²⁵ Not only is Stephen depicted as a person possessing tremendous courage and grace, but he is a disciple who succeeds in emulating his teacher.

In the non-canonical Christian literature of the second century, accounts of martyrs' deaths flourish and develop into a form that is heavy with miracle legends and moral exhortations. Nevertheless, they continue to exemplify features of death-as-characterization that are shared with the wider milieu. In the first place, the

²⁵ The familiar line, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing," from Luke 23:34 is not supported in the earliest mss. Given the other strong affinities between the death of Stephen and the death of Jesus, it seems likely that the later mss and the martyrdom of Stephen reflect an early oral tradition about Jesus.

entire genre of martyrdom presupposes that how one dies reveals character. In these accounts, the goods of the mind as revealed through words and actions remain of paramount importance. Certain recurring elements of the type-scene fall into this category, such as showing kindness toward one's captors (*Mart. Pol.* 7.2; *Acts Paul* 30.4–5), welcoming the opportunity to die for the faith (*Ign. Rom.* 5.2; *Mart. Pol.* 14.2), and bold replies to the captors along with exhortations to nearby disciples (*Mart. Pol.* 9.3; 10.1; *Acts Peter* 36).

Depictions of the body are also shaped to reveal attributes of the person. In particular, the horrors of torturous deaths exalt the courage of the martyrs (see esp., *Ign. Rom.* 5.3) and, conversely, indicate the base character of their tormentors. Further examples include the description of Polycarp's body amid the flames as "not like burning flesh but like baking bread or like gold and silver being refined in a furnace" (*Mart. Pol.* 15.2), or the report that when Paul was beheaded milk spurted from his severed neck (*Acts Paul* 11.5). In the broad category of "external circumstances," miraculous indications of divine approval are common (*Mart. Pol.* 15.2–16.1; *Acts Paul* 31–39). Finally, the details of Jesus' death, as well as the examples of former martyrs, are constantly mentioned or echoed in the circumstances that attend the deaths of martyrs (*1 Clem.* 5:1–3; *Ign. Eph.* 12.2; *Rom.* 5.3; *Mart. Pol.* 1.1–2; 6.2; 7.1–3; 8.2; 16.1; *Acts Peter* 40). Although some of the particulars are unique to Christianity, the general categories and techniques of characterization in death-accounts are shared with the wider culture.

Summary. In the examples of noble deaths above we have identified three common subcategories: (1) the glorious death of the hero; (2) the peaceful death of the blessed; (3) the faithful death of the martyr. The *topoi* used in encomium—goods of the mind, goods of the body, and external circumstances—have proven to be useful guides for identifying elements of characterization in death-accounts, with the addition of a fourth *topos*, comparison with other well-known deaths. Some of the common elements of discourse that provide the content for these *topoi* are final actions, final words, the physical details of the death, the fate of the body, the identity of the slayer, and evidence of divine approval. The specific factors that qualify a death as noble exhibit some variety across Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Christian literature, but all of them value a death that demonstrates courage in the face of personal suffering, loyalty to one's peers, piety toward deity, and emulation of worthy forbears.

Punitive Death

Talion. The belief that true justice is served when the punishment corresponds to the crime was ubiquitous in antiquity, appearing in ancient legal texts from the Code of Hammurabi to the Twelve Tables of Rome.²⁶ Among the Greeks the rule, "If one suffers what one did oneself, it is true justice," is attributed to the Pythagoreans (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 5.5.3; cf. Ps.-Aristotle, *Mag. mor.* 1.33.13).

²⁶ See Joachim Hengstl and Artur Völkl, "Talion," *DNP* 11:1231–33.

Aristotle notes the case of the statue of Mityls at Argos that fell from its pedestal, striking and killing the man responsible for Mityls' death, and comments, "Such events do not seem to be mere accidents" (*Poet.* 9.11–13). In the Jewish Scriptures the phrase "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" is foundational in the Law (Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20). In the prophets, Psalms, and wisdom literature, God's punishment of the wicked is frequently expressed in terms of talion (e.g., Isa 3:11; Jer 17:10; Ps 9:15–16; Prov 21:13). In early Christian literature divine justice is often described as God paying back all persons in kind for their deeds (Matt 6:14–15; Rom 2:6; 2 Thess 1:6–7; Rev 16:6; 20:13; 2 *Clem* 11:6). The examples below indicate that ancient authors and audiences were keen to find appropriate justice in the deaths of notorious figures. As a result, these death accounts richly reflect character.

Homer. When Odysseus returns home to find suitors of his wife daily devouring his flocks and herds, he waits until the opportune moment to avenge himself, then begins the slaughter while they are sitting at the feast table.

Antinous, the most obnoxious of the suitors, is the first to be killed:

Now he [Antinous] was on the point of raising to his lips a fair goblet, a two-eared cup of gold, and was even now handling it, that he might drink of the wine, and death was not in his thoughts. . . . But Odysseus took aim, and smote him with an arrow in the throat, and clean out through the tender neck passed the point; he sank to one side, and the cup fell from his hand as he was smitten, and straightway up through his nostrils there came a thick jet of the blood of man; and quickly he thrust the table from him with a kick of his foot, and spilled all the food on the floor and the bread and roast flesh were befouled. (*Od.* 22.9–21)

The description of the wound caused by the arrow—"clean out through the tender neck passed the point"—is word-for-word the same as the description of the injury Achilles' spear inflicts on Hector.²⁷ Here the effect is quite the opposite, however. The crux of the contrast rests on the quality of mind that each of the figures has previously demonstrated by word and deed. Whereas in the Iliad the physical trauma and gore of the fatal injury are the result of Hector's resolve to die gloriously, death is the furthest thing from the mind of Antinous. Instead of a beautiful death, Antinous dies an ugly one. In graphic, poetic justice Antinous spurts blood instead of gulping wine.

The emphasis on the suitors' voracious consumption of Odysseus' goods is further drawn into the death account with the added detail of the spilling of the food on the floor. A similar connection between transgression and the transgressor's death is made in the next death-scene, in which Eurymachus, having also been struck by an arrow from Odysseus, fell over the table "and spilt upon the floor the food and the two-handled cup" (*Od.* 22.84–86). Not only do these foul characters meet a foul death, the circumstances of the death are appropriate to their crimes. As Odysseus explains, "These men here have the fate of the gods destroyed and their own reckless deeds, for they honoured no one of men upon the earth, were he evil or good, whosoever came among them; wherefore by their wanton folly they brought on themselves a shameful death" (*Od.* 22.413–16). In light of what the narrative has

²⁷ " . . . ἀντικρὺ δ' ἀπαλοῖο δι' αὐχένος ῥ' ἔλυσθ' ἀκωκή" (*Il.* 22.327; *Od.* 22.16).

already indicated regarding the minds of these suitors, the details in the death-account—such as the time and place of death, the nature of the wounds, the final actions, and the identify of the slayer—gratify the audience with deaths that are appropriate for these figures. These greedy gluttons who have taken up residence in Odysseus' home in pursuit of his wife and estate receive their comeuppance.

Herodotus. Several death accounts in Herodotus illustrate the principle that "the gods do greatly punish great wrongdoing" (*Hist.* 2.120; cf. 5.56). For example, Pheretime, a queen of Cyrene, suffers a foul death because of her excessive cruelty. Pheretime was particularly brutal in the manner in which she executed citizens of Barce who had killed her son: "Pheretime took the most guilty of the Barcaeans, when they were delivered to her by the Persians, and set them impaled round the top of the wall; she cut off the breasts of their women and planted them round the wall in like manner" (*Hist.* 4.202). The gory details of these deaths say more about Pheretime than about the Baracaeans, as is made quite clear in the report of Pheretime's own death: "But Pheretime fared ill too, and made no good ending of her life. For immediately after she had revenged herself on the Barcaeans and returned to Egypt, she died a foul death; her living body festered and bred worms: so wroth, it would seem are the gods with over-violent human vengeance" (*Hist.* 4.205). Being eaten alive by worms is so terribly ugly that Herodotus regards it as the work of the gods. In this case, the correspondence between crime and punishment is simply that a horrible crime deserves a horrible punishment.

Justice in due measure can also take more specific forms. Herodotus says that on one occasion the Egyptians showed Cambyses a calf that they regarded as Apis born in animal form. In derision, Cambyses struck the calf in the thigh, and the calf subsequently died from the wound. Later, as Cambyses is mounting his horse, he accidentally wounds himself in the thigh with his own sword. Herodotus observes that this is "the same part where he himself had once smitten the Egyptian god Apis" (*Hist.* 3.64). The wound becomes gangrened, and Cambyses eventually dies from it (*Hist.* 3.66). The type of injury and part of the body injured provide the connection between crime and punishment, so that the crass impiety of Cambyses is emphasized in his death.

In other instances Herodotus makes the connection between crime and punishment relate to the location where death occurs. For example, when the Greeks had repelled the Persians back into Asia, Xerxes' viceroy Artayktes is crucified at the place where Xerxes had bridged the Hellespont:

So they carried Artayktes away to the headland where Xerxes had bridged the strait . . . and there nailed him to boards and hanged him aloft; and as for his son, they stoned him to death before his father's eyes.

This done, they sailed away to Hellas, carrying with them the tackle of the bridges to be dedicated to their temples, and the rest of the stuff withal. (*Hist.* 9.120–21)

The location of Artayktes execution was also mentioned earlier in the *Histories* when the construction of the bridge is undertaken (*Hist.* 7.33–34). Thus, the death of Artayktes is associated with the building and destroying of the bridge and constitutes part of the frame of Herodotus' account of the Persian invasion of

Europe.²⁸ While the viceroy is guilty of crimes of his own, he also represents the invaders. The location of his death supports Herodotus' larger thesis that there are divinely ordained boundaries that ought not to be transgressed.²⁹

Implication of justice may also be heard in symmetrical circumstances, as in the assassination of Candaules (*Hist.* 1.8–12). Candaules, the king, boasted of the beauty of his wife to his most trusted bodyguard, Gyges. Against Gyges' objections, Candaules forced Gyges to hide in a certain place in the royal bedchamber in order to prove the beauty of his wife by having Gyges view her naked. The queen realizes Gyges presence, but says nothing at the time. Instead, she speaks privately to Gyges and orders him either to kill himself or kill Candaules, and Gyges agrees to the murder. The queen arranges for the assassination to take place in circumstances similar to the original crime: "You shall come at him from the same place whence he made you see me naked; attack him in his sleep. . . . and she gave him a dagger and hid him behind the same door" (*Hist.* 1.11–12). The same accomplice is hiding in the same room, behind the same door, only this time the victim is the king instead of the queen, the motive is revenge instead of pride, and the weapon is a dagger instead of the eyes. The correspondence in circumstances suggests that the death of Candaules is appropriate for his crime.

²⁸ Deborah Boedeker, "Protesilaos and the End of Herodotus' 'Histories' " *Classical Antiquity* 7 (1988): 42–45; Ove Strid, "Voiceless Victims, Memorable Deaths in Herodotus," *CQ* 56 (2006): 399–400.

²⁹ Boedeker, "Protesilaos," 47–48; Strid, "Voiceless," 399.

These examples from Herodotus show the variety of ways in which the death of a notorious figure could provide a fitting end. The general belief is that an ugly death of a notorious figure is divine retribution. The more heinous the crime, the more horrific the death. The location of the death, the cause, the part of the body affected, and the general circumstances are some of the details in a death account that might be used to make the connection between punishment and crime and, consequently, between death and character. When one compares these categories to the three-fold rubric used in encomium and invective—mind, body, and external circumstances—it is the latter two categories that dominate these punitive deaths in Herodotus. The ignoble quality of the mind has usually already been demonstrated in the earlier narrative.

Diodorus Siculus. Diodorus also includes several accounts of deaths he regards as retributive justice. For example, he reports that the Greek admiral Pausanius was guilty of agreeing to betray the Greeks to Xerxes and of adopting the luxurious lifestyle of the Persians. When it is discovered that Pausanius is a traitor, he hides in the shrine of Athena in Sparta, where he subsequently dies of starvation after his countrymen walled up the entrance (*Library of History* 11.44–46). Because Pausanius adopted an extravagant lifestyle, his death by starvation was "the punishment he deserved" (*Library of History* 11.46.4).

In another account in which transgressors take refuge in a shrine, Diodorus says that about five hundred Phocians, who had shared in the plundering of the

shrine at Delphi, on a later occasion fled for refuge into a nearby shrine of Apollo (*Library of History* 16.58.4–6). An unattended fire nearby spread into the rushes that surrounded the shrine and consumed it, so that "through some divine Providence they met with the punishment temple-robbers deserve" (*Library of History* 16.58.5–6). Diodorus then adds the wry comment, "Indeed it became apparent that the gods do not extend to temple-robbers the protection generally accorded to suppliants" (*Library of History* 16.58.6).

Diodorus' fondness for this kind of poetic justice is illustrated even more fully when he reports that some of the women who received as gifts articles of jewelry stolen from Delphi "met the punishment befitting their impiety" (*Library of History* 16.64.2). One woman who wore a necklace previously worn by Helen of Troy became a tramp who "flung her beauty before any who chose wantonly to abuse it," and another who wore the necklace of Eriphyle was burned alive in her house by her son, a similar fate to that of the necklace's previous owner (*Library of History* 16.64.2; cf. Parthenius 25.3). Diodorus concludes, "Those who had effrontery to flout the deity met just retribution in the manner I have described at the hands of the gods" (*Library of History* 16.64.2–3).

In Diodorus' accounts of the deaths of Pausanias and the Phocians we find that punitive death-accounts may feature reversals that reflect the vices of the victims, such as gluttons dying of starvation or those who violate temples not being protected by taking refuge in temples. Diodorus also alludes to precedents set in

well-known retributive deaths in order to show how a particular death constitutes appropriate justice.

Suetonius. In a similar vein, Suetonius reports that within three years of the assassination of Julius, all of his assailants died unnatural deaths, either through execution, shipwreck, battle, or by taking their own lives "with the self-same dagger with which they had impiously slain Caesar" (*Jul.* 89). Galba on one occasion ordered a soldier to be allowed to starve to death because that same soldier had charged a comrade an exorbitant price for leftover rations (*Galb.* 7). On another occasion Galba had the hands of a dishonest moneylender cut off and nailed to his counter (*Galb.* 9), and Claudius is reported to have had the hands of a forger amputated (*Claud.* 14–15). These cases attest again the prevalence of the principle of talion and the tendency to find it fulfilled in the general circumstances as well as specific details.

Plutarch. Plutarch's *The Delay of the Divine Vengeance* (*De sera numinis vindicta*) illustrates a variety of ways in which the fate of a notorious figure could be interpreted as appropriate to the crime. The basic thesis of Plutarch's protagonist in this dialogue is that it is more important that divine punishments be fitting in time and manner than that they be swift (*Sera* 553D). To illustrate this type of justice, Plutarch alludes to the incident of the statue of Mityas, noted above as cited by Aristotle, and also to the necklace of Eriphyle, mentioned by Diodorus (*Sera* 553D; 553E). Plutarch also offers the circumstance of Callippus who, having orchestrated

the murder of a friend, is himself murdered by friends using the same dagger (*Sera* 553D). In recounting this event in his *Life of Dion*, Plutarch observes, "Callippus did not long remain a scandal to fortune and the gods, as though they had no eyes for a man who won leadership and power by so great impiety, but speedily paid a fitting penalty" (58.6–7).

Deaths of villains could also recall precedents, as Plutarch demonstrates in recounting the death of Sulla. Having lived a profligate lifestyle, Sulla dies slowly from a disease of the bowels that developed into a mass of worm-riddled flesh (Plutarch, *Sull.* 36). Plutarch concludes the account of Sulla's death with a list of persons who had suffered similar fates. Not all of these figures are villainous, but Plutarch draws special attention to the figure Eunus, a runaway slave, magician, and rebel who died with similar symptoms (*Sull.* 36).³⁰ The tendency to interpret death-accounts against the background of the deaths of well-known figures is again shown to be an element that would have shaped the ancient auditor's interpretation of death as characterization.

Jewish Scriptures. In contrast to the quiet death and proper burial of the godly in the Scriptures of Israel, deaths of the impious often include graphic details about the manner of death. Particularly gruesome examples include the story of the Israelite and Midianite woman who are both pierced with the same spear during the

³⁰ Of Eunus, Diodorus Siculus comments that he was captured and imprisoned, after which his flesh was consumed with worms, and "he met such an end as befitted his knavery" (*Library of History* 34/35.2.23).

act of fornication (Num 25:8), Ehud's stabbing of Eglon (Jdg 3:15–23), Jael's assassination of Sisera (Jdg 4:21–22), Abimelech's crushed skull (Jdg 9:53–57), the decapitation of Goliath (1 Sam 17:51), Jezebel's being devoured by dogs (2 Kings 9:35), and Jehoram's bowel disease (2 Chron 21:18–19). Just as there is a general pattern in the Jewish Scriptures that a peaceful death typically concludes a godly life, so also vivid details of a violent death are usually reserved for ungodly figures. The repugnancy of the death suggests a foul character that one would not want to emulate.

In other cases, there are clear connections between crime and punishment.

Divine judgment is attested in the manner of death of Nadab and Abihu:

And Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, each took his censer, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered unholy fire before the Lord, such as he had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. (Lev 10:1–2)

The instrument of sin becomes the instrument of execution. A similar situation occurs when Haman is hung on the gallows that he had built for Mordecai (Esth 7:10). In later rabbinic materials (see Mishnah below) correspondences between punishment and crime that are not so obvious will be found in death-accounts in Israel's Scriptures, indicating again the tendency to read death as speaking to character.

Apocrypha. The decapitation of Holofernes at the hands of Judith (Jud 13:3–9) and the pain, worms, and stench in the death-account of Antiochus IV (2 Macc 9:5–12) follow in the trajectory of the gruesome deaths in the Jewish Scriptures.

Likewise, explicit connections are made between the instrument of sin and the instrument of punishment. According to Wisd 11:15–16, because the Egyptians worshipped irrational creatures, God sent irrational creatures to punish them, "so that they might learn that one is punished by the very things by which one sins." In Jub 4:32, Cain is killed when a stone house falls on him. The text asserts that this is proper retribution since Cain killed Abel with a stone.

The location of the death, as we have seen above, also provides a point of correspondence between crime and punishment. Mattathias kills an apostate Jew on the pagan altar on which the idolater is about to offer sacrifice (1 Macc 2:23–26). Andronicus, the lieutenant of Antiochus IV, is put to death in the very place where he had killed the high priest Onias, provoking the comment, "The Lord thus repaid him with the punishment he deserved" (2 Macc 4:38). The temple-robber Lysimachus, a corrupt deputy high priest, is killed near the treasury (2 Macc 4:39–42).

Other instances bring upon the perpetrators the very harm they had done to others. For example, Nicanor, who had brought slave-traders to make merchandise of the Jews, is forced to flee without "his splendid uniform and made his way alone like a runaway slave across the country" (2 Macc 8:35). The demise of Antiochus IV also shares in this type of retribution. After boasting that he would go to Jerusalem and make it a cemetery, the text relates, "As soon as he stopped speaking he was seized with a pain in his bowels, for which there was no relief, and with sharp internal tortures—and that very justly, for he had tortured the bowels of others with

many and strange afflictions" (2 Macc 9:5–6). His continued pride leads, literally, to his fall:

Yet he did not in any way stop his insolence, but was even more filled with arrogance, breathing fire in his rage against the Jews, and giving orders to drive even faster. And so it came about that he fell out of his chariot as it was rushing along, and the fall was so hard as to torture every limb of his body. Thus he who only a little while before had thought in his superhuman arrogance that he could command the waves of the sea, and had imagined that he could weight the high mountains in a balance, was brought down to earth and carried in a litter, making the power of God manifest to all. And so the ungodly man's body swarmed with worms, and while he was still living in anguish and pain, his flesh rotted away, and because of the stench the whole army felt revulsion at his decay. Because of his intolerable stench no one was able to carry the man who a little while before had thought that he could touch the stars of heaven. Then it was that, broken in spirit, he began to lose much of his arrogance and to come to his senses under the scourge of God, for he was tortured every moment. And when he could not endure his own stench, he uttered these words, "It is right to be subject to God; mortals should not think that they are equal to God." (2 Macc 9:7–12)

In addition to being tortured as he had tortured others, his punishment is interpreted as directly related to his sin of pride. Thinking himself a god, he becomes intolerable to mortals, even to himself. 2 Maccabees 9:28 reports his death: "So the murderer and blasphemer, having endured the more intense suffering, such as he had inflicted on others, came to the end of his life by a most pitiable fate, among the mountains of a strange land."

Further examples illustrate the application of measure-for-measure punishments to the part of the body with which one sins. In 2 Macc 14:33 Nicanor raises his hand in an oath against the Temple, and in 15:5 he boasts that his own sovereignty is as great as that of the God of the Jews. After he is killed in battle against the Jews, Judas Maccabeus not only cuts off Nicanor's head, but also his arm

and tongue with which he had boasted against God (2 Macc 15:30–33). Ptolemy IV Philopator is prevented from entering the Holy of Holies by a stroke from God that paralyzes him and leaves him speechless (3 Macc 2:21–24). Specifically, he is accused of "insolence and audacity" (3 Macc 2:21).

The Mishnah. In the Mishnah the interpretation of punishments is guided by the rule, "With what measure a man metes it shall be measured to him again" (*m. Sot.* 1:7). This rabbinic text then proceeds to demonstrate the application of this principle in several cases. For example, the trial by ordeal of the suspected adulteress (Num 5:11–31) includes the disheveling of the hair of the accused (Num 5:18) which is interpreted by the rabbis as appropriate treatment of one who "bedecked herself for transgression." In addition, if the woman is guilty of adultery, when she drinks the bitter water the Lord will cause "her thigh to sag and [her] belly to distend" (Num 5:21 NJPS). These symptoms are appropriate to her offense because "she began transgression with the thigh first and afterward with the belly" (*m. Sot.* 1:7). Similarly, it is concluded that Samson's eyes are put out by the Philistines because through his eyes Samson was guilty of lust (*m. Sot.* 1:8; cf. Judg 14:1; 16:1, 21). Absalom's head being caught in the limbs of a tree is interpreted as just punishment for vanity with regard to his luxurious hair (*m. Sot.* 1:8; cf. 2 Sam 14:25–26; 18:9). The rabbinic exegesis goes even further to comment that the ten young men who assaulted Absalom pierced him with ten spear heads in requital for his intercourse with David's ten concubines, and that the three darts through

Absalom's heart correspond to the three hearts that Absalom stole—"the heart of his father, the heart of the court, and the heart of Israel" (*m. Sot.* 1:8; cf. 2 Sam 18:13–15).

Early Christian Literature. Death as divine punishment also appears in the New Testament. The deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11) and the death of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:21–23; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 19.345–50) are explicitly presented as divine retribution. In the former case the suddenness of the death shows divine involvement, and in the latter case the horror of being eaten by worms echoes the traditions of the death of Antiochus IV. In addition to sharing a common fate, Agrippa and Antiochus IV shared the transgression of elevating themselves to divine status.

In relation to Judas Iscariot, it is of interest to note that his death becomes paradigmatic for deaths of infidels. Without explaining the details, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 6 says that those who betrayed Polycarp would "suffer the punishment of Judas himself." Later, Athanasius draws on the account of Judas' death in Acts in order to characterize Arius in the same mold as Judas: ". . . urged by the necessities of nature [Arius] withdrew, and suddenly, in the language of Scripture, 'falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst,' and immediately expired as he lay, and was deprived both of communion and of his life altogether."³¹

³¹ Athanasius, *Ep. Serap.* 54.4 (*NPNF*² 4:565).

Summary. It is clearly the case that many ignoble deaths in antiquity were presented as punitive deaths in which the death shows due punishment corresponding to the crime. Not only does a gruesome death indicate foul character, but sometimes the details of the death bear correspondence to the particular crimes or vices of the villains. The part of the body receiving the mortal wound, the instrument of death, the location, and a limitless variety of other circumstances of the death are appealed to in order to demonstrate that justice has been requited. A particular manner of death may also call to mind notorious figures of the past and imply a similarity of character traits. Still other instances defy classification but illustrate the pervasiveness of the impulse to find a satisfying correspondence between crime and punishment. It is clear that if other indicators in the narrative have depicted the person as a villain, then the death account is likely to be especially ripe with negative characterization.

Conclusions

It seems clear that in the milieu of early Christianity, death-accounts would have been widely regarded as potential sources for characterization. In addition, one is able to identify several recurring elements in the Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian sources that would have shaped in the mind of the ancient auditor the character of the figure under consideration. These include: (1) evidence of the mind of the figure as revealed through speech, decision, or deliberate action; (2) descriptions of the body, particularly in relation to the cause of death, descriptions of

injuries or diseases, and what happens to the body after death; (3) any other circumstance in the death-account that offer a point of connection with the other details of the figure or with the narrative as a whole; (4) echoes of, or comparisons with, the deaths of other figures; (5) evidence that the death is appropriate requital for crimes committed.

To the question "What kind of person would die this way?" we now give more specific form, such as: What do the final words and actions of the deceased figure indicate about the mind? How would the ancient audience have reacted to the descriptions of the physical cause of death, the state of the corpse, and the final treatment of the body? What are the character implications of other details that have been included in the death-account? Who else died in a similar manner? Given all that we know about this figure in the narrative, does the death account provide a capstone of characterization or reveal something surprising? Are there elements in the death narrative that lend themselves to interpretation according to the rule of talion? And finally, does the death-account conform to a conventional type of death, such as that of a noble warrior, one divinely favored, a martyr, or a villain? Armed with these kinds of questions, we will proceed to investigate the accounts of the death of Judas in Matt 27:3–10, Acts 1:18–20, and the fragments of Papias.

CHAPTER THREE

The Death of Judas according to Matthew 27:3–5

When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented (μεταμεληθείς) and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. He said, “I have sinned by betraying 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. (Matt 27:3–5)

Matthew’s account of the death of Judas has great potential for shaping the authorial audience’s portrait of the figure Judas for several reasons. First, this brief account is rich in the kinds of details that we observed in Chapter Two as indicative of character: indications of Judas’ state of mind, description of his body and the manner of his death, external circumstances, echoes of other death-accounts, and connections between his death and his crime. Second, Matt 27:3–5 is paramount in Matthew’s depiction of Judas because it is the last of five passages in which Judas is singled out, and thus constitutes the final stroke in the portrait of Judas in this Gospel. Third, the placement of this pericope within the trial sequence confronts the audience with the details of the death of Judas at the height of the dramatic tension, just as the sentence of death is being rendered on Jesus.¹ Fourth, while there is a

¹ Many commentators have regarded the death of Judas as somewhat of an intrusion in the trial sequence. See Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew* (IBC; Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1993), 313; Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah, from Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (2 vols.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1:637; Nils A. Dahl, “The Passion Narrative in Matthew,” in *The Interpretation of Matthew* (ed. Graham N. Stanton; Studies in New Testament Interpretation; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 54; Donald

high degree of similarity among the Synoptic Gospels in all other passages mentioning Judas, Matt 27:3–5 is unique in early Christian literature.

There are four passages in Matthew that mention Judas prior to the account of his death: the list of the Twelve Apostles (10:2–4),² Judas' bargain with the chief priests (26:14–16),³ the Last Supper (26:20–25),⁴ and the arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane (26:46–50).⁵ We observe that after Judas is identified as one of the Twelve in Matt 10:4 he is not singled out by name again until the passion narrative, where he then emerges as a principal figure in the climax of events. Therefore, we first direct our attention to the development of the plot in Matthew, with special consideration of the role of the Twelve, since these features of the narrative set the stage for the actions of Judas in chs. 26 and 27. A close examination of the characterization of Judas in his three appearances in Matthew 26 will follow. Then, the contribution of the death-account to the overall portrait of Judas will be assessed under the guidelines developed in our previous chapter. Finally, the impact of this characterization on the immediate context in the narrative as well as the contribution of the figure Judas to the purposes of the Gospel as a whole will be evaluated.

Senior, *Matthew* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998), 317; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary* (trans. James E. Crouch and Wilhelm C. Linss; 3 vols.; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001–2007), 3:467.

² par. Mark 3:16–19/Luke 6:13–16

³ par. Mark 14:10–11/Luke 22:3–6

⁴ par. Mark 14:17–21/Luke 22:21–23

⁵ par. Mark 14:42–45/Luke 22:47–48

The Plot of Matthew: A Tale of Two Kingdoms

There has been significant debate about the structure of Matthew, especially concerning the impact of the large discourses on the shape of the whole.⁶

Fortunately for our purposes, the fact remains that, “Whatever else Matthew’s Gospel may be, it is a narrative with a beginning, middle, and end.”⁷ Narrative critics, therefore, have been able to achieve some consensus on the main lines of the plot. Two main features readily identified are (1) the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leadership and (2) the inconstancy of the relationship between Jesus and the disciples.⁸ Judas participates in both subplots, so we turn our attention to tracing their development from the start in order to understand his role more clearly.

*Matt 1:1–4:22*⁹

The beginning of Matthew emphatically asserts that Jesus is the Messiah, the Davidic King, and the Son of God, supporting these claims with strong narrative arguments. The preamble (1:1) and genealogy (1:2–17) connect Jesus to the Abrahamic and Davidic promises, as well as the overall salvation history of the

⁶ For an overview and critique of the major theories regarding the structure of Matthew, see W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988–1997), 1:58–72.

⁷ Jack Dean Kingsbury, “The Plot of Matthew’s Story,” *Int* 46 (1992): 347. Likewise, Luz, *Matthew*, 1:9.

⁸ Mark Alan Powell, “The Plot and Subplots of Matthew’s Gospel,” *NTS* 38 (1992): 198–204; M. Eugene Boring, *NIB* 8:114–18.

⁹ Section divisions largely follow those of Luz, *Matthew*.

Jewish Scriptures.¹⁰ Jesus' claim to be God's chosen representative is further defended by a variety of forms of divine testimony: fulfillment quotations from the Jewish Scriptures (1:22–23; 2:5–6, 15, 17–18, 23), the testimony of angels (1:20–21; 2:13), the appearance of a star (2:1–2), the message of John the Baptist (3:11–15), and a voice from heaven (3:16–17). These kinds of evidence will continue to be offered throughout the Gospel, but their concentration at the beginning of the story supplies the authorial audience with affirmation that Jesus is the Christ and the divinely authorized Son against whom all other figures in the story must be evaluated.

In response to Jesus, two character-groups begin to materialize. On the one hand, he has opponents. These include not only Satan (4:1–11), but also Jewish authorities such as King Herod (2:3, 16–17) and the chief priests and scribes who assist Herod (2:4–5). On the other hand, Jesus begins to proclaim the arrival of the kingdom of God (4:17) and to gather a community of disciples around him (4:18–22). Although little else has been revealed at this point about the opponents or the disciples, by the end of this first section these two groups are contextualized within the larger conflict between God and Satan.¹¹

¹⁰ Frank J. Matera, "The Plot of Matthew's Gospel," *CBQ* 49 (1987): 241, 244.

¹¹ Mark Alan Powell, "The Plot and Subplots of Matthew's Gospel," *NTS* 38 (1992): 198–204; M. Eugene Boring, *NIB* 8:114–18.

Matt 4:23–11:30

Jesus' ministry of healing and preaching begins to attract large crowds (4:23–25), but he insists that those who would be his disciples must uphold the highest standards of righteousness and submit to him as the authoritative teacher (chs. 5–7). He makes a sharp distinction between his followers and the Pharisees, renouncing their righteousness as inferior (5:20), supplanting their interpretations of the Law with his own interpretations and expansions (5:21–48), and denouncing the religious elite as “hypocrites” (6:2, 5, 16).

Not only is there tension between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees, but his disciples also find it difficult to understand him and to measure up to his demands. In 8:21–22, a disciple asks permission to go and bury his father but is rebuked by Jesus. Then in 8:23–27, when the disciples in the boat are afraid during the storm, Jesus charges them with having “little faith.” Furthermore, when he calms the storm, their lack of comprehension is evident when they ask, “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?” (8:27).

Jesus' actions quickly bring him into even greater conflict with the chief priests and Pharisees. He asserts himself as a miracle-worker, exorcist, and forgiver of sins (chs. 8–9). In response, the scribes and Pharisees accuse him of blasphemy (9:3), question his association with sinners (9:11), object to his disdain for tradition (9:14), and charge that he casts out demons by the power of Satan (9:34). Jesus' assessment of the chief priests is reflected in the statement that the crowds are “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (9:36). Frequently in the

Jewish Scriptures leaders such as kings and priests are referred to as shepherds of the people,¹² so that the assertion that the people are “without a shepherd” indicts the Jewish leaders as failures.

In response to the unmet need for shepherds, Jesus commissions the Twelve.¹³ He shares with them his authority to exorcise demons and heal diseases (10:1–7), and in so doing establishes a new circle of leadership that rivals the chief priests and scribes. He warns his followers to expect strong persecution in “their synagogues” (10:17–18) and betrayal by closest relatives (10:21–22). He insists that allegiance to him must supersede all other loyalties, even at the cost of one’s own life (10:37–39). Jesus’ prayer in 11:25–27 characterizes the rift between the scribes and the disciples as ultimately grounded in the will of the Father, who has “hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and . . . revealed them to infants” (11:25).

In this section, therefore, two rival communities are clearly distinguished. The disciples participate in the ministry and authority of Jesus, and they have sided with the kingdom of God. Even though they are immature in understanding and faith, God is revealing himself to them. The chief priests and Pharisees, on the other

¹² See J. Jeremias, “ποιμήν, ἀρχιποίμην, κτλ,” *TDNT* 6:487–88.

¹³ Matthew uses the term “apostles” only once (10:2), whereas the phrase “twelve disciples” appears frequently (10:1; 11:1; 20:17; 26:20). This observation, along with other features of Matthew’s handling of the Twelve, supports Luz’s conclusion that the Twelve are principally portrayed in Matthew in their role as disciples. Hereafter, while acknowledging that the Twelve are a distinct subset of Jesus disciples, we use the terms *Twelve* and *disciples* as synonyms, congruent with the usage of Matthew. See further Ulrich Luz, “The Disciples in the Gospel according to Matthew,” in *The Interpretation of Matthew* (ed. Graham N. Stanton; Studies in New Testament Interpretation; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 99–109.

hand, are hypocrites who scorn the Messiah and persecute the disciples. In so doing, they have sided against the kingdom of God.

Matt 12:1–16:20

In ch. 12 the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees sharpens, and there is greater separation of the disciples from Israel at large, with several instances of Jesus' taking the disciples away from the crowds or opponents (13:36; 13:53; 14:13; 14:34; 15:21; 16:13).¹⁴ After disputes about the Sabbath, the Pharisees "conspire to destroy him" (12:14). Jesus performs an exorcism, and they again charge that he casts out demons by the power of Satan (12:24; cf. 9:34). Jesus responds to this accusation by portraying the conflict between him and the Pharisees as a manifestation of the clash between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan (12:25–32). Schism is inevitable, and he brooks no quarter for the undecided, asserting, "Whoever is not with me is against me" (Matt 12:30).

Events in chs. 13–14 show the disciples to be making some progress but also remaining vulnerable. For example, Jesus' interpretation of the parable of the Sower suggests that even among those who receive the message of Jesus, there is still the danger that persecution, the cares of the world, or the temptation of wealth will cause them to fall short (13:18–23). After further instruction by Jesus, the disciples affirm that they now understand the parables (13:51). Jesus' encouraging words about the abilities of a well-trained scribe seem to support the disciples' claim that

¹⁴ Luz, *Matthew*, 1:9.

they are making progress (13:52). This mixture of growth and weakness is illustrated further in 14:22–33, another scene in which the disciples are in a boat during a strong wind (cf. 8:23–27). Buffeted by the wind and seeing Jesus walking toward them on the water, they are afraid, until he calls to them and comforts them. Emboldened, Peter asks permission to join Jesus and approaches Jesus on the water, but he becomes afraid and sinks. Once again Jesus chastises him for his “little faith.” In contrast to the earlier storm at sea, after which the disciples wondered who Jesus might be, now they worship him and say, “Truly you are the Son of God” (14:33).

Along with this deeper insight on the part of his followers, in this unit we also observe that the hostility of the Pharisees and Sadducees toward Jesus increasingly threatens the fledgling disciples. Initially, the disciples were questioned about the conduct of Jesus (9:11), but in the course of the rising tension between the two camps, the disciples themselves become the target of the criticisms (12:1–2; 15:1–2). When Jesus strongly rebuffs the Jewish leaders, calling them hypocrites and accusing them of violating the Law (15:3–9), the disciples are sensitive to the harshness of Jesus’ words and ask, “Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?” (15:12). The disciples do not yet perceive just how sharp the break is between Jesus and the Jewish leadership. This lack of insight on the part of the disciples is further illustrated when Jesus uses parables to warn the disciples against following the Pharisees and Sadducees, but the disciples fail to grasp the point of the parables (15:13–15; 16:6–7). Again Jesus rebukes them for

their dullness and “little faith” (15:16; 16:8), but after his explanation they understand (16:12).

The scene at Caesarea Philippi (16:13–28) concludes this section in which the schism between Jesus and the Jewish leadership has become sharp, and differentiation between the disciples and the crowds has increased. Peter’s confession that Jesus is “the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (16:16) is a stark contrast to the guesses made by the people (16:14). This insight is from the Father and is foundational to the identity of the new community, now referred to more concretely as “my church” (16:18). Furthermore, Jesus promises spiritual authority (“keys of the kingdom”) to the disciples, such that the will of heaven will be expressed through them (16:19).

At the conclusion of this section, the opposition between the community around Jesus and the Jewish leadership is even more clearly seen as a manifestation of the clash between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Jesus is the divinely authorized representative and embodiment of the kingdom of God. The scribes and Pharisees oppose Jesus for sinful reasons, and therefore side with the kingdom of Satan. They have failed in their role as interpreters of the Law and shepherds of God’s people. The disciples are slowly moving closer to the perspective of Jesus, and they are increasingly distant from the Pharisees. Nevertheless, they are still vulnerable to the influence of the opposition, whether through persecution of the Jewish leaders or temptation by Satan.

Matt 16:21–20:34

This section of Matthew (16:21–20:34) introduces a new phase of the plot in which the conflict with the Jewish leaders recedes somewhat and there is increased teaching about community life within the church.¹⁵ The entire section is bound together by the new revelation that Jesus' mission includes suffering and dying in Jerusalem. Jesus continues to repeat this message (16:24; 17:12, 22–23; 20:18–19) as he leads the disciples by stages toward Jerusalem (19:1; 20:17, 29). The lesson that Jesus' suffering and death is an example of self-sacrifice to be imitated by the disciples forms an *inclusio* bracketing the main body of this section (16:24–26; 20:25–28). Therefore, the passion predictions become a springboard that propels the demands of discipleship to new heights.

Nowhere in the Gospel of Matthew is the contrast between Jesus' teaching and the understanding of the disciples more evident than in Matt 16:21–23. Having correctly identified Jesus as the Messiah, Peter objects to the new revelation that Jesus' mission will include dying in Jerusalem at the hands of the chief priests (16:22). When Jesus rebukes Peter and calls him "Satan," the underlying conflict between God and Satan is again in evidence (16:23). Jesus then proceeds to make his most vivid demand thus far, insisting that those who want to be his disciples must also commit themselves to follow him by taking up their own crosses (16:24–26).

¹⁵ Luz, *Matthew*, 1:9.

Frequently in this section, episodes of conflict with the opponents or failure on the part of the disciples resolve into opportunities to teach the disciples. Their inability to exorcise an evil spirit due to “little faith” garners a rebuke, but also becomes an opportunity for instruction about the value of even small faith (Matt 17:14–20). The large discourse of ch. 18 begins with a question about greatness, and results in lessons on humility and forgiveness within the church. Jesus’ reply to the Pharisees on the sensitive issue of divorce astonishes the disciples, but leads to additional private instruction for them (19:3–12). Likewise, on the question of wealth the disciples find Jesus’ doctrine hard to accept, and he provides additional clarification (19:16–26). Their attempt to prevent children from approaching Jesus draws further teaching about the true nature of the kingdom (19:13–15), as does the request of the mother of the sons of Zebedee and the resulting indignation from the other disciples (20:20–28).

A new rhythm characterizes this section. The conflict with the Jewish leaders continues in the background, but in the foreground is the disciple-making cycle of new teaching by Jesus, confusion on the part of the disciples, and clarification that opens the way for the disciples to move closer to the viewpoint of Jesus.

Matt 21:1–25:46

In ch. 21 the conflict with the Temple leadership returns to center stage. Jesus enters Jerusalem to the praise of the crowds (21:1–11). He reclaims the Temple, driving out the moneychangers and allowing the blind and lame to be

brought to him there for healing (21:12–14). In the parable of the Vineyard, Jesus asserts that the chief priests and Pharisees have lost their place in God’s kingdom: “The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom” (21:43). After this indictment, they begin to look for an opportunity to arrest Jesus, but are cautious because of the crowds who regard Jesus as a prophet (21:46). Their attempts to trap him by his own words are unsuccessful (22:15; cf. 22:23, 34–35).

The two main subplots are clearly seen in the discourses of chs. 23–25 as Jesus pronounces divine disfavor on the present generation of Jewish leadership and offers strong warnings to the disciples in view of future judgment.¹⁶ In ch. 23 the disciples are warned against the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, and the bulk of the discourse is a blistering denunciation of these enemies. In chs. 24–25 the theme turns toward teaching the disciples what to expect in the last days and exhorting them toward faithfulness. In particular, the parables that constitute 24:1–25:46 stress the need for vigilance in order to succeed as disciples.

Matt 26:1–28:20

The situation at the beginning of the passion narrative stands thus with Jesus, his enemies, and his disciples: (1) Jesus defends the kingdom of heaven, battling its opponents and nurturing and exhorting the disciples. He has come to Jerusalem to fulfill the will of God by being handed over to his enemies. (2) The chief priests and

¹⁶ Boring, NIB 8:429.

Pharisees reject Jesus and, therefore, the kingdom of heaven. Their persecution presents a major threat to the faithfulness of the disciples, and they are looking for a way to seize Jesus without causing the crowds to riot. (3) The disciples continue to follow Jesus despite the dangers and their own misgivings. Jesus' relationship with them is not principally about conflict, however, but is "a story of teaching and learning, of misunderstanding and of understanding, of failure and new beginning."¹⁷

These three elements of the plot provide the dramatic framework for understanding the major events of the passion narrative¹⁸ and the actions of the figure Judas, who emerges in ch. 26 (for the first time, other than his mention in the list of the Twelve) to assist the chief priests in arresting Jesus. Details of how the plot affects the characterization of Judas in the passion narrative will be discussed below. In preparation we outline here the main units of Matt 26–28.¹⁹

Matthew 26:1–16 moves in a series of four scenes in rapid succession, as the focus shifts back and forth between gatherings around Jesus and gatherings of the chief priests. Jesus informs the disciples that he will be crucified during the Passover (26:1–2). The chief priests and elders agree to kill Jesus, but not during the Passover because the people might riot (26:3–5). At Bethany, a woman anoints Jesus with

¹⁷ Luz, *Matthew*, 1:11.

¹⁸ Dale C. Allison offers additional reasons why the passion narrative should be regarded as the climax of Matthew, noting that due to the amount of additional material in Matthew (compared to Mark) exegetes are often led to look for Matthew's main themes elsewhere. See Dale C. Allison, "Anticipating the Passion: The Literary Reach of Matthew 26:47–27:56," *CBQ* 56 (1994): 701–14.

¹⁹ For the subsections of Matt 26–28 we primarily follow Luz, *Matthew*, 3:viii–ix.

expensive ointment, and the disciples object to such extravagant wastefulness. Jesus corrects the disciples and uses the event to point toward his imminent burial (26:6–13). Judas goes to the chief priests and offers to help them arrest Jesus, thus alleviating some of the problem of a public arrest (26:14–16). In these episodes from Matt 26:1–16 the two subplots that developed earlier in the gospel continue. The sharp distinction between Jesus and the Pharisees is emphasized by the abrupt scene-shifting. The struggle for faith and understanding that has become so characteristic of the disciples is brought into sharp relief against the background of the devotion and insight of the woman at Bethany. A new development in the plot occurs, however, with Judas’ going to the chief priests.

In Matt 26:17–29, the focus remains on Jesus in his relationship with the disciples. Jesus instructs the disciples to prepare the Passover meal (26:17–19). At the meal, Jesus predicts that one of the Twelve will betray him (26:20–25). The theme of vulnerability is again prominent as each disciple says, “Surely, not I.” Woe is pronounced on the betrayer, and Judas is singled out. In the last unit of this subsection, Jesus interprets the Passover cup in terms of his death as a sacrifice for sins and anticipates sharing the cup anew in the Father’s kingdom (26:26–29). This subsection, as well as the next, is dominated by the foreknowledge and determination of Jesus in carrying out the will of the Father, and his strength stands in sharp contrast to the weakness of the disciples.

The setting moves in Matt 26:30–56 to the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane, where the misunderstanding and weakness of the disciples is juxtaposed with the

foreknowledge and strength of Jesus in three scenes. Jesus warns that they will all desert him, but he plans to meet with them in Galilee after he is raised (26:30–35). Jesus prays fervently that the Father’s will be done, while the disciples sleep due to weakness of the flesh (26:36–46). Judas arrives with a mob to arrest Jesus, a disciple is rebuked by Jesus for attempting to defend Jesus with a sword, and finally all the disciples forsake him (26:47–56). While the subplot of the difficulty of discipleship is stressed at an even higher pitch in these three episodes, the hopeful words of Jesus in this subsection point toward a resolution of the tension between Jesus and the frequently faltering disciples: Though they continue to be weak, he will return to them, forgiving and sustaining them.

The characterization of the conflict between Jesus and the chief priests as a manifestation of the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan also resurfaces here in Jesus’ statement that the Father would send twelve legions of angels if he requested it (26:54). The battle lines are clearly demarcated, and Jesus is handed over to the enemy.

In Matt 26:57–27:10, the first two verses of this subsection highlight clearly the two levels of tension in the plot: Jesus is arrested and taken before the assembly of the scribes and elders (26:57), and Peter is outside in the courtyard “in order to see how this would end” (26:58). Jesus’ trial before the Jewish leaders results in a sentence of death and the physical abuse of Jesus (26:59–68; 27:1–2). Peter’s denials of Jesus lead to bitter weeping (26:69–75). Judas’ betrayal of Jesus leads to remorse and suicide (27:3–10). The account of Judas’ death is the subject of much discussion

below, but we observe here that, just as Judas stands in unique relation to both subplots, so his ending is unique.

The disciples are out of view in Matt 27:11–31, and the conflict between Jesus and the chief priests is in focus. With irony, the identification of Jesus with the kingdom of God appears in the accusation that he claims to be the King of the Jews and in the mocking of Jesus as king by the Roman soldiers (27:27–31). In the central section (27:15–26), Pilate and his wife both attest the innocence of Jesus (27:19, 23, 24). In contrast, the sinful motives and bloodguilt of the chief priests and elders are emphasized (27:18, 25).

Matthew 27:32–61 shows the conflict between the enemies of Jesus and the divine achieving its apex in two contrasting units (27:32–44; 45–54). In the first, the derision of Jesus as the King of the Jews and the Son of God continues. In the second, divine testimony in support of Jesus' claims occurs in the forms of midday darkness, the rending of the veil in the Temple, and the resuscitation of dead persons. The significance of these events is verbalized through the centurion's statement, "Truly this man was God's Son!" (27:44). In contrast to those who abused and mocked Jesus, disciples (not from among the Twelve) give care to the body of Jesus and place it in a tomb (27:57–61).

The final subsection of the passion narrative, Matt 27:62–28:20, is another series of four scenes in which the community of the Pharisees is contrasted with the community of Jesus. First, the chief priests ask that the tomb of Jesus be guarded so that the disciples cannot steal the body and claim that Jesus is raised (27:62–66).

Second, angels at the tomb inform female disciples that Jesus has been raised, and then Jesus appears to them as they go to tell the other disciples (28:1–10). Jesus’ reminder that he will meet with them in Galilee, even though the eleven are conspicuously absent from the tomb, continues his pattern of enduring the disciples’ shortcomings. Third, the Jewish leaders commission the soldiers to say that the body was stolen, and thus establish a falsehood as one community’s conclusion regarding Jesus (28:11–15). Finally, Jesus meets with the Eleven in Galilee, where “they worshipped him; but some doubted,” and he entrusts the disciples with the Great Commission (28:16–20).

In this last section we observe the resolution of the two subplots in Matthew. The conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees results in a schism between their community and the community of Jesus. These two communities separate and assert irreconcilably different views of Jesus. The tension between Jesus and the disciples is not completely ameliorated, since doubt still exists even among the Eleven. The final solution to this difficulty follows the pattern already established: In spite of weakness and vulnerability, the growth of the new community is characterized by trust in Jesus’ authority, the forgiveness represented in baptism, devotion to Jesus’ teaching, emphasis on obedience, and the reassurance of the abiding presence of Jesus. This conclusion bears out that we have correctly identified two of the major subplots of Matthew, and within this literary framework we now move to examine the characterization of Judas in events leading up to the account of his death.

Judas in Matthew 26: A Foot in Both Camps

As we begin to look at the details revealed about Judas in Matthew 26, it is interesting to observe that two elements of the portrait of Judas Iscariot are consistently emphasized in the first four of his five appearances in Matthew. These two contrasting characteristics are (1) Judas is the betrayer (ὁ παραδούς) and (2) he is one of the Twelve. In the first passage that mentions Judas (10:4), he is named last in the list of the Twelve, and he is then further identified as “the one who betrayed him.” In the second passage, “one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, ‘What will you give me if I betray him to you? . . . And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him” (26:14). The account of the Last Supper stresses that Jesus was at the table “with the Twelve” when he made the shocking announcement, “One of you will betray me” (26:20–21). Finally, in the garden “Judas, one of the Twelve” is twice designated simply as “the betrayer” (26:46–48). These two aspects of the portrait of Judas provide the most explicit and consistent elements of the characterization of Judas through Matthew 26. Therefore, a brief examination of each term individually and also the effect of their constant juxtaposition are essential to understanding the characterization of Judas in the First Gospel.

The verb *παραδίδωμι* is defined in BDAG as “to convey someth. in which one has a relatively strong personal interest, *hand over*, *give (over)*, *deliver*, *entrust*.”²⁰

²⁰ BDAG, 761.

In the passages dealing with Judas, the term is appropriately translated as *betray*, meaning, “To give up to, or place in the power of an enemy, by treachery or disloyalty.”²¹ Παραδίδωμι is quite common in the LXX (occurring approximately 250 times) and frequently refers to handing someone over to an enemy.²² This image is well-suited to the two-kingdoms polarization that undergirds the plot of Matthew. Judas is instrumental in the conveyance of Jesus from the circle of those who participate in the kingdom of God, into the hands of those who opposed God’s kingdom.²³

Regarding the repeated identification of Judas as one of the Twelve, we first note that the number twelve has special significance in salvation history as an emblem of the totality of God’s people.²⁴ This connection is made explicit in Matt 19:28: “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’ ” The Twelve were

²¹ “betray v.,” *Oxford English Dictionary* (2d ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). Cited 8 July 2009. Online: <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/cgi/entry/50021209>. William Klassen argues that *betray* is an inaccurate translation since the term implies treachery and deceit, whereas Jesus expected Judas to do what he did. Here Klassen’s attempt to reconstruct historical events seems to have intruded on the Matthean narrative. The connotations of deceit and violation of trust are quite evident in the case of Judas. His asking for money in exchange for assisting in the arrest of Jesus, watching for an opportunity, asking “Surely not I?” at the Last Supper, and arranging the sign of a kiss would likely be heard by the authorial audience as treachery and deceit on the part of Judas. See William Klassen, *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 42–57.

²² E.g., Gen 14:20; Exod 23:31; Num 21:3, 34; Deut 1:27; 2:24, 30; 19:12; Judg 4:7.

²³ The term παραδίδωμι appears about 30 times in Matthew, including the arrest of John (4:12), predictions of the persecution of disciples (10:17, 19, 21; 24:9, 10), Jesus’ predictions of his own arrest/betrayal (17:22; 20:18, 19), and the transfer of Jesus from one authority to another after his betrayal (26:2; 27:2, 18, 26).

²⁴ K. H. Rengstorff, “δώδεκα, κτλ,” *TDNT* 2:321–28.

privileged to receive authority to cast out demons and heal the sick (10:1). They receive private instruction away from the crowds and enjoy an exclusive audience with Jesus on other special occasions, such as the Last Supper (e.g., 20:17; 26:20). They constitute Jesus' inner circle to whom he entrusts his mission at the end of the Gospel (Matt 28:16–20).

Matthew's regular reference to Judas as one of the Twelve, when conjoined with the constant assertion that Judas is the one who betrayed Jesus, results in a rhetorical strategy designed to arouse utmost contempt for a traitor. In his discussion of invective, the ancient rhetorician Aelius Theon instructs his students that one could heighten the emotional impact of a *topos* such as treason by emphasizing the special relationship of the traitor to the betrayed: ". . . for a traitor deserves anger, but much more when he is a general . . . Amplification of wrongs should derive from such things."²⁵ Theon uses a political example, and Matthew, with good compositional technique, applies the method to the circle of disciples. Judas, one of the Twelve, handed Jesus over to his enemies. The honor Judas would have received as one of the Twelve is inverted by this device, so that an attribute that would normally be considered noble in the perspective of the Matthean audience now serves to amplify the magnitude of his crime. With the effect of Matthew's constant reference to Judas' status as one of the Twelve now identified, we proceed

²⁵ Theon, 109; Kennedy, 45.

to look at the additional evidence of Judas' character presented in the three episodes involving him in Matthew 26.

Matt 26:14–16

In Matt 26:14–16 Judas is further characterized through actions, words, and the narrator's comments about his intentions. The three scenes immediately preceding this pericope all contribute to the significance of Judas' conduct here. First, in Matt 26:1–2 Jesus announces to his disciples that after two days, at the Passover, he will be "handed over to be crucified." Jesus has been warning his disciples that he would be put to death in Jerusalem at the hands of the chief priests, elders, and scribes (Matt 16:21; 17:22–23; 20:18–19), but the prediction that these events will occur within two days brings urgency to the plot. After this dire warning, the setting immediately shifts to the consultation of the chief priests and elders at which they conspire to kill Jesus (26:3–5). The juxtaposition of these two scenes emphasizes the sharp distinction between Jesus and his opponents, giving added poignancy to the statement, "Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests" (26:14). The two opposed groups have been separated spatially as well as religiously, but the movement of Judas to the presence of the chief priests marks his shift in identity from the circle around Jesus to the camp of the opponents.

In addition to his action, the words of Judas in 26:15 make an indelible contribution to the audience's perception of him. Only two individually named

disciples speak in Matthew—Peter and Judas.²⁶ Judas' first words are "What will you give me if I betray him to you?" (Matt 26:15). Greed, a temptation that Jesus has repeatedly warned his disciples about,²⁷ appears as the primary motive for Judas.²⁸ The bite of these words is felt even more keenly because they occur immediately after the "very costly" gift of the woman at Bethany (Matt 26:7), further contrasting Judas with true disciples.²⁹ It is also noteworthy that in Mark 14:10–11, when Judas arranges with the chief priests to betray Jesus, the reader is not explicitly told that Judas asked for money. Instead, when he offered to betray Jesus, they "promised to give him money" (Mark 14:11). Assuming the priority of Mark, Matthew further emphasizes the motive of greed by reporting the request for money as direct speech from Judas.

The final comment about Judas in 26:14–16 is that "from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him." While providing a segue to the Passover supper, this description of Judas' state of mind also renders him a sinister figure and key player as the plot intensifies and moves toward its climax.

²⁶ Arlow J. Nau, *Peter in Matthew: Discipleship, Diplomacy, and Dispraise—With an Assessment of Power and Privilege in the Petrine Office* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 72–73.

²⁷ Matt 6:19–21, 24; 13:22; 19:23–24.

²⁸ Hans-Josef Klauck, "Judas der 'Verräter'? eine exegetische und wirkungsgeschichtliche Studie," *ANRW* 26.1:725.

²⁹ John Paul Heil, *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus: A Narrative-Critical Reading of Matthew 26–28* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 28; Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Socio-Political and Religious Reading* (JSNTSupp 204; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 503. The treatment of the anointing at Bethany in John 12:3–6 makes this implication explicit by stating that it was Judas in particular who objected to the extravagance of the gift and that he was motivated by his own thievery.

In the scene of the Last Supper (26:20–25) the words of Jesus, the disciples, and Judas all contribute to the darkening portrait of Judas. In addition to observing once again that the betrayer comes from among the Twelve, Jesus further underscores the violation of the circle of disciples with his statement that one who shares his bowl is the betrayer (Matt 26:23). While the audience knows that one of the Twelve would betray Jesus, from the standpoint of the disciples themselves this announcement is a shocking revelation.³⁰ In great dismay the Eleven ask, “Surely not I, Lord?” Their sincerity and self-doubt makes the duplicity of Judas even more striking when he asks, “Surely not I, Rabbi?”

In addition, the variation in the wording of the question sets Judas apart from the Eleven. They say, μήτι ἐγώ εἰμι, κύριε; but Judas says, μήτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ῥαββί. For the Eleven, Jesus is “Lord,” but for Judas, Jesus is “Rabbi” or “Teacher.” Not only does the parallel structure of the two sentences serve to highlight the contrast in terms, but the linguistic shift from Greek to Aramaic gives the shift further emphasis. The transliterated Aramaic term ῥαββί appears four times in Matthew, twice on the lips of Judas (Matt 26:25, 49) and twice in Matt 23:7–8 where Jesus identifies the term as a favorite title among the scribes and Pharisees and forbids the disciples from taking the title to themselves. Throughout Matthew the scribes,

³⁰ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:461.

Pharisees, and those who come to test Jesus address him as “Teacher,”³¹ but those who address him as “Lord” are always either those who are explicitly designated as disciples³² or those outsiders who come demonstrating great faith in him.³³ As a result, Judas’ addressing Jesus as ῥαββί instead of κύριε, as the other disciples do, further reinforces Judas’ affiliation with the chief priests rather than the disciples.³⁴

Another important element of characterization in any narrative is the response of others to the actions of a particular figure.³⁵ The most direct assessment of the character of Judas in the entire Gospel occurs in Jesus’ response to the actions of Judas in Matt 26:24: “The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.” In Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic literature, visions of judgment frequently raise the lament that it would have been better for the damned soul never to have been born.³⁶ Jesus’ judgment of Judas is a proleptic pronounce-

³¹ διδάσκαλε: Matt 8:19; 12:38; 19:16; 22:16, 24, 36.

³² Matt 8:21, 25; 14:28, 30; 16:22; 18:21; 26:22.

³³ Matt 8:2, 6, 8; 9:28; 15:22, 25, 27; 17:15; 20:30, 31, 33.

³⁴ Cf. Arie W. Zwiep, *Judas and the Choice of Matthias: A Study on Context and Concern of Acts 1:15–26* (ed. Jörg Frey; WUNT 2. Reihe 187; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 41.

³⁵ “A character-shaping section is an incident in which the implied reader is given enough information, most often by means of a response, to be able to attach one or more attributes to the disciples,” as observed by Richard A. Edwards, “Characterization of the Disciples as a Feature of Matthew’s Narrative,” in *The Four Gospels, 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck* (eds. F. Van Segbroeck, et al.; Louvain: Louvain University Press, 1992), 1311.

³⁶ 1 En. 38:2; 2 En. 41:2; 4Ezra 4:12; 7:[62–64], 46–47 [116–17]; Gk. Apoc. Ezra 1:6, 21–24; 5:8–9, 14; Apoc. Sedr. 4:1–2; Herm. Vis. 23.6; Apoc. Paul 42; Apoc. Pet. 3:4. See further Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (NovTSup 93; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 139–40.

ment that shows the foreknowledge of Jesus. Similarly, in Matt 26:32 he foretells that the disciples will all desert him, and that he will meet with them in Galilee after his resurrection. If the audience has confidence in the prophetic authority of Jesus, then it seems likely at this point that they would perceive Judas as one who, though pitiable, will pay the ultimate penalty for his sins.³⁷

Matt 26:45–50

The fourth scene in which Judas is singled out in Matthew is the betrayal scene in Gethsemane. Twice in this scene (26:46, 48) Judas is simply referred to as the “betrayer,” suggesting that whatever else Judas has been, this title now adequately identifies him.³⁸ One final time he is referred to as one of the Twelve, but immediately thereafter he is associated with a different group: “While he [Jesus] was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priests and the elders of the people” (Matt 26:47). Judas is described as arriving with an armed mob. The image conveys Judas’ profound shift in allegiance from the circle of disciples to the chief priests and elders. He once again greets Jesus as “Rabbi,” then kisses him as a sign indicating which man is to be arrested. The gross duplicity in this act can hardly be overstated.

In summary, the characterization of Judas in Matthew 26 stresses that he was one of the Twelve and that he shifted his loyalty to the enemies of Jesus. The only

³⁷ Brown, *Death*, 1:640–41.

³⁸ Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 513.

motive revealed is greed. The despicable nature of his course of action is underscored by his deception in asking “Surely not I, Rabbi?” and in the kiss in the garden. He is most often referred to as the “betrayers,” and Jesus’ assessment of him is that it would have been better for him never to have been born. The depiction of Judas leading up to the death-account in Matt 27:3–5 portrays him as outside the circle of discipleship, shameful in character, and damned in the afterlife. In relation to the conflict between Jesus and the chief priests, Judas has sided against Jesus, and therefore against the kingdom of God. Regarding the subplot of the struggle of the disciples to understand and follow Jesus, Judas has failed. With such a strongly evil characterization, one would expect the death-account to provide a fitting end for such a villain. On the other hand, if the death-account is to overturn this characterization, it must communicate a clear image of his rejection of the Pharisees and return to discipleship, display honorable conduct, and provide a strong indication that Jesus’ words of woe were not absolute.

The Death of Judas in Matthew 27:3–5: Between Two Worlds

As we have observed, in the four scenes where Judas is mentioned in Matthew 10 and 26, Judas has consistently been identified as both one of the Twelve and the betrayer. It is of no small consequence, then, that when Judas is introduced again in Matt 27:3–10, he is no longer referred to as one of the Twelve, but simply as the one

who betrayed Jesus.³⁹ The last of the three scenes in Matt 26 vividly describes Judas in the company of an armed crowd sent from the opponents of Jesus, revealing openly his choice of loyalties. Matthew 27:3 follows suit by dropping the designation, “one of the Twelve.” This significant change in the way in which Judas is identified suggests that the Matthean account of the death of Judas is consistent with the trajectory established by earlier indications of Judas’ character. The details of the death account, however, need to be examined carefully in order to determine how this capstone scene shapes the audience’s perception of the whole. To illuminate the character-shaping elements of the account, we will apply appropriate categories of evidence from among those discerned in Chapter Two: (1) evidence of the mind, (2) descriptions of the body, and (3) details for which other deaths provide precedent.

The Mind of Judas

We established in Chapter One that in the milieu of early Christianity the attributes of the mind were of paramount importance for revealing character in death-accounts. The qualities of the mind may be revealed implicitly, through a figure’s words, actions, and decisions, or explicitly, through the narrator’s direct comments. In Matt 27:3–5, all of these techniques contribute to the portrait of Judas.

³⁹ Brown, *Death*, 1:638; Anthony Cane, *The Place of Judas Iscariot in Christology* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 48.

The most direct statement regarding the mind of Judas occurs in the participle μεταμεληθείς (Matt 27:3), translated variously as “repented” (NRSV), “seized with remorse” (NIV), “felt remorse” (NASB), and “filled with remorse” (NJB). Matthew’s typical word for religious repentance is μετανοέω,⁴⁰ therefore the use of the term μεταμέλομαι has been understood by many interpreters as a signal that the repentance Judas experiences here is of a different nature, as reflected in the renderings found in the NIV, NASB, and NJB above.⁴¹ On the other hand, in the broader scope of Hellenistic literature the two terms are sometimes used synonymously.⁴² The lexical glosses for both μεταμέλομαι and μετανοέω include the emotional connotation of regret and the volitional aspect associated with a change of one’s mind or purpose.⁴³ As a result of this high degree of semantic overlap, several interpreters have concluded that Matthew’s choice of μεταμέλομαι provides no basis for regarding Judas’ repentance as inferior to, or less redemptive than, the repentance so highly valued elsewhere in Matthew.⁴⁴ On the other side of the issue

⁴⁰ Matt 3:2; 4:17; 11:20, 21; 12:41; cf. μετάνοια, Matt 3:8, 11.

⁴¹ Pierre Bonnard, *L'Évangile selon Saint Matthieu* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2002), 393; Alexander Sand, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1986), 547; Larry Chouinard, *Matthew* (Joplin, Mo.: College Press Publishing Company, 1997); Wolfgang Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (eds. Erich Fasher, et al.; THKNT 1; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1998), 468.

⁴² O. Michel, “μεταμέλομαι, ἀμεταμέλητος,” *TDNT* 4:629.

⁴³ LSJ, 1114–15; BDAG 639–40.

⁴⁴ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:561; David Daube, “Judas,” *California Law Review* 82 (1994): 95–97, esp. n. 6; Kim Paffenroth, *Judas: Images of the Lost Disciple* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 111; Luz, *Matthew*, 3:470; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1150.

are those who agree with O. Michel that μεταμέλομαι connotes remorse in which "a man sees the bitter end of sin," but does not necessarily act in such a way as to become more pleasing to God, so that μετανοέω is the proper verb for a change in which one not only regrets sin but "breaks free from it."⁴⁵ Although Michel concedes that the distinction between the two terms is not always maintained in Hellenistic usage, he concludes that in Matt 27:3, "The reference here is to remorse, not repentance. Thus, Judas sees that his action was guilty, and he gives way under the burden."⁴⁶

It is evident that, given the range of meanings associated with μεταμέλομαι, determining how the Matthean audience would likely have understood the nature of Judas' change of heart calls for close attention to the vocabulary of repentance in the Gospel of Matthew and other early Christian literature. Furthermore, in order to evaluate the nature of Judas' repentance, one must examine the full set of indicators in Matt 27:3–5 that contribute to the portrait of Judas.

First, one observes that μετανοέω and the cognate noun μετάνοια are traditional terminology in the synoptic summaries of the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus.⁴⁷ In Matthew, however, μετανοέω receives especially heavy emphasis. Whereas Mark and Luke summarizing the preaching of John as βάπτισμα

⁴⁵ O. Michel, "μεταμέλομαι, ἀμεταμέλητος," *TDNT* 4:626–29. Cf. Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1985), 105, esp. n. 83; Audrey Conard, "The Fate of Judas: Matthew 27:3–10," *TJT* 7 (1991): 163; Hare, *Matthew*, 313–14; Brown, *Death*, 638–39; Wiefel, *Matthäus*, 468.

⁴⁶ O. Michel, "μεταμέλομαι, ἀμεταμέλητος," *TDNT* 4:628–29.

⁴⁷ John the Baptist: Matt 3:2; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3. Jesus: Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15.

μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3), Matthew fronts the demand for repentance and renders it as an imperative in direct speech: μετανοεῖτε· ἡγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matt 3:2). The proclamation of Jesus is summarized in exactly the same terms (Matt 4:17), further imprinting this memorable précis in the mind of the Matthean audience. In effect, for Matthew μετανοέω constitutes a one-word summary of conversion to discipleship. This connotation is evident in Matt 3:2 by the absorption of Mark's emphasis on baptism into Matthew's simple command of repentance. Similarly, Matt 4:17 has the single imperative μετανοεῖτε whereas the parallel in Mark 1:15 has μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε. There can be little doubt that μετανοέω is an especially important term in the vocabulary of the Matthew. It captures the essence of conversion.

We further observe that throughout the Gospel of Matthew as well as the rest of the NT μετανοέω is uniformly a good thing, whereas μεταμέλομαι is not always good (2 Cor 7:8; Heb 7:21 [Ps 110:4 LXX]; cf. Rom 11:29). While these terms share the core meaning “to have a change of heart,” it is necessary to appeal to the overall context of a particular case in order to determine the precise nature of the change. The fine distinctions that these terms allow one to make (between grief, regret, and repentance) are reflected in 2 Cor 7:8–10:

For even if I made you sorry (ἐλύπησα) with my letter, I do not regret (μεταμέλομαι) it (though I did regret [μετεμελόμην] it, for I see that I grieved [ἐλύπησεν] you with that letter, though only briefly). Now I rejoice, not because you were grieved (ἐλυπήθητε), but because your grief (ἐλυπήθητε) led to repentance (μετάνοιαν); for you felt a godly grief (ἐλυπήθητε), so that you were not harmed in any way by us. For godly grief (λύπη) produces a

repentance (μετάνοιαν) that leads to salvation and brings no regret (ἀμεταμέλητον), but worldly grief (λύπη) produces death.

Paul experiences regret (expressed by μεταμέλομαι) because of the strained relationship with the Corinthians, but this emotion does not result in a change of his purpose or action. The Corinthians experience the emotion of grief (λύπη) that, fortunately, results in repentance (μετάνοια), but had it been worldly grief instead of godly grief, it would have resulted in death. In this passage, the emotions of grief and regret are distinguished from thorough repentance, and one is also reminded that experiencing these emotions does not always lead to a good outcome. Paul also finds the language flexible enough to allow him to contrast μετάνοια with the privative form ἀμεταμέλητος without contradicting himself.

Returning to the evidence in the First Gospel itself, we note that there are two other occurrences of μεταμέλομαι in Matthew, both within the context of the parable of the two sons (Matt 21:28–32). In this parable, the first son initially refuses his father's orders to go and work in the vineyard, but "later he changed his mind (μεταμεληθείς) and went" (Matt 21:29). Jesus then uses the term again when he applies the parable to the chief priests and elders: "You did not change your minds (μετεμελήθητε) and believe him [John]" (Matt 21:32). Because the use of μεταμέλομαι in Matt 21:29, 32 is associated with the repentance commanded by John the Baptist, some commentators argue that the use of the term to describe Judas in Matt 27:3

should be heard as equivalent to μετανοέω.⁴⁸ Having observed, however, that the latter term is part of the traditional vocabulary associated with the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus, one might argue that the term μεταμέλομαι is used in Matt 21:29 instead of μετανοέω precisely because within the setting of the parable itself the change of heart being described, while a positive one, is not a conversion to Christian discipleship. Furthermore, whereas μετανοέω is used as an epitome of the divine demand in Matt 3:2 and 4:17, when the parable is applied to the chief priests and elders in Matt 21:32 μεταμέλομαι does not stand alone but is used in conjunction with πιστεύω, to yield the expression “change your minds and believe.” Because μεταμέλομαι does not have the same strong connotations of discipleship that μετανοέω has, the additional term πιστεύω is essential for clarification. In evaluating Judas’ depiction in Matt 27:3–5, the question of whether or not Judas truly repents is an ambiguous question because there are varied nuances in the concept of repentance. A more precise way of evaluating the characterization of Judas would be to ask whether or not in his final scene Judas thinks, acts, and speaks as one who has returned to the path of proper discipleship as envisioned by Matthew.

Working under this rubric, we observe that the participle μεταμεληθείς is actually the second in a series of four verbals (ἰδῶν . . . μεταμεληθείς . . . ἔστρεψεν . . . λέγων) describing actions of Judas in Matt 27:3–4. In relation to ἰδῶν, the initial participle, μεταμεληθείς expresses result. In relation to the following indicative and

⁴⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:561; Nolland, *Matthew*, 1150.

participle (ἔστρεψεν . . . λέγων) μεταμεληθείς is causal. The change that comes over Judas results from his seeing that Jesus is condemned to die. He attempts to absolve his guilt by going to the priests, making restitution, confessing his sin, and declaring Jesus' innocence. His confession—"I have sinned by betraying innocent blood"—recalls Jesus' assertion at the Last Supper: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."⁴⁹ Unfortunately for Judas, while he perceives his guilt in relation to Jesus' "innocent blood," he does not recognize the forgiveness available through Jesus' blood. His confession is accurate, but it falls short of a return to discipleship. He does not look to Jesus for redemption, nor attempt to return to that community, nor make the more specific confession that Jesus is the Messiah or the Son of God. His effort to rid himself of guilt and his confession of Jesus' innocence have more in common with Pilate and his wife (Matt 27:19, 23, 24) than with either the chief priests or the disciples. These actions and words drive a wedge between Judas and the community with which he has allied himself (the chief priests and Pharisees), as they are neither willing to admit sin nor acknowledge Jesus' innocence. Their rejection of Judas' confession illustrates the widespread sentiment in the ancient world that traitors are loved by those they aid until the deed is done; afterward they are despised:

Antigonus was not alone, then, in saying that he loved men who offered to betray, but hated those who had betrayed; nor yet Caesar, in saying of the Thracian Rhoemetaces, that he loved treachery but hated a traitor; but this is a very general feeling towards the base on the part of those who need their

⁴⁹ Heil, *Death*, 68.

services, just as they need certain wild creatures for their venom and gall; for while they feel the need of them, they put up with them, but abhor their vileness when they have obtained from them what they want. (Plutarch, *Rom.* 17.3–4)

Having already separated himself from the community of Jesus, Judas finds himself in the no-man's-land between the two kingdoms.

It seems clear that this sequence of events—Judas' realization of the death-sentence for Jesus, his change of heart, the return of the silver, and his confession—function together to indicate a remorseful mind.⁵⁰ Judas' suicide, of course, is an even more profound expression of the same emotion, but in order to understand the fuller contributions to characterization that are implied in this mode of death it is necessary to survey suicide by hanging in the milieu of the ancient Mediterranean.

The Body: Suicide by Hanging

Interpreters correctly regard the report of Judas' suicide by hanging as the capstone of his characterization. The conclusions reached, however, have often been at opposite ends of the spectrum due to differing ethical opinions with regard to suicide. On the one hand, if one reads through the lens of later orthodoxy regarding suicide, as Augustine developed it in his fifth-century *The City of God*, then one assumes that suicide is sin and that Judas “passed from this life chargeable not only

⁵⁰ The complementary effect of this series of actions has been noted since antiquity: Origen, *Cels.* 2.11 (*ANF* 4:435). See also: Brown, *Death*, 1:636–39; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (WBC 33B; Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 812; Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 522; Cane, *Place*, 48; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew*, 3:470.

with the death of Christ but with his own.”⁵¹ In our reading with the authorial audience, however, it is not at all clear that every instance of suicide would have been regarded as sinful or that Judas’ self-hanging would have been heard as simply one final act of disobedience. Jewish literature from the era is replete with suicides that are ambiguous or considered noble. Samson’s suicide is generally regarded as noble (Judg 16:28–30), but the death of King Saul is notoriously complex, being presented as both divine punishment and an occasion for great lamentation by David (1 Sam 28:16–19; 31:4–5; 2 Sam 1; 1 Chr 10:4–5, 13–14). The gruesome suicide of Razi (2 Macc 14:37–46) is expressly viewed as a noble death. Josephus presents Jewish arguments both for and against suicide when faced with Roman enslavement (*J.W.* 3.8.5; 7.8.6–7). Philo reports that a delegation of devout Jews threatened mass suicide in order to prevent the Roman governor from erecting a statue of himself in the Temple (*Embassy* 2.234–36). The rabbinic literature records opinions that take a dim view of suicide (*m. Sanh.* 10.2; *Sem.* 2.1; *Gen. Rab.* on 9:5) and also that extend hope to suicides in certain cases (*b. Ketub.* 103b; *b. Ta’an* 29a; *Gen Rab.* 65.22; *Abod. Zar.* 18a). It is evident that a Jewish audience, even a Jewish-Christian audience, would not necessarily have viewed all suicides as inherently sinful.

At the other end of the spectrum are those interpreters who too readily adopt the popular conception that in the larger Mediterranean context of the Roman era suicide was always regarded as noble, and therefore conclude prematurely that Judas’

⁵¹ Augustine, *Civ.* 1.17 (*NPNF*¹ 2:12). A modern example of this interpretation is Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992), 695.

final act would be understood as virtuous.⁵² An informed student can no longer make such a generalization due to the thorough cataloging of the large number of ancient texts that attest the diversity of Roman views on the subject. Modern researchers such as Yolande Grisé,⁵³ Miriam Griffin,⁵⁴ Anton van Hooff,⁵⁵ and Timothy Hill⁵⁶ have effectively demonstrated that suicide in Roman society is viewed with variety. Evaluating a particular case of suicide from the ancient perspective requires attention to details such as the circumstances leading up to the decision, the motive, the state of mind of the victim, and the method chosen.⁵⁷

The suicide of Judas is told quite briefly—"He went and hanged himself" (Matt 27:5)—but suicide by hanging in the Mediterranean milieu of Matthew's audience carries with it distinctive connotations of shame, curse, and despair. The evidence of these negative associations spans several centuries and appears in Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Christian literature.

From the earliest days of Greek literature, death by hanging (not limited to suicide) has been regarded as a shameful death. In Homer's *Odyssey*, after Odysseus

⁵² E.g., A. G. Moeser, "The Death of Judas," *TBT* 30 (1992): 150–51; David Reed, "'Saving Judas'—A Social Scientific Approach to Judas's Suicide in Matthew 27:3–10," *BTB* 35 (2005): 51–59.

⁵³ Yolande Grisé, *Le suicide dans la Rome antique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982).

⁵⁴ Miriam T. Griffin, "Philosophy, Cato, and Roman Suicide," *Greece & Rome* 33 (1986): 64–77, 192–202; Miriam T. Griffin, "Suicide," *OCD* 1453.

⁵⁵ Anton J. L. van Hooff, *From Autothanasia to Suicide: Self-Killing in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

⁵⁶ Timothy Hill, *Ambitiosa mors: Suicide and the Self in Roman Thought and Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁵⁷ Grisé, *Le suicide*, 17–18.

returns home and finds that several of his servant women have brought reproach on his house by their promiscuous behavior, he orders his son Telemachus to take the women out and execute them with the sword. Telemachus says, “Let it be by no clean death that I take the lives of these women,” and instead of using the sword he hangs them on a string of nooses (*Od.* 22.462–64). Nicole Loraux comments that beginning from this passage death by the rope is seen as “the impurest of deaths.”⁵⁸ Euripides reveals a strong distinction between the blade and the noose as methods of suicide through his version of Helen, whom he portrays as falsely defamed and innocent of the charge of adultery. She contemplates suicide due to her many misfortunes, and she debates within herself regarding the appropriate method: “To die were best. How then with honour die? Unseemly is the noose ‘twixt earth and heaven: Even of thralls (δούλοις) ‘tis held a death of shame. Noble the dagger is and honourable, and one short instant rids the flesh of life” (Euripides, *Helen* 298–301). Helen is reunited with her husband and spared, but in Euripides’ *Hippolytus* Phaedra is not so fortunate. Torn between her virtue and an inflamed passion for her stepson Hippolytus, shamed and scorned, in despair she hangs herself. As her husband Theseus laments her death, he refers to her suicide by hanging as a “desperate deed” and “violence unhallowed” (*Hippolytus* 814–15). When in Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women* the members of the chorus threaten to hang themselves at the images of the gods if their request for aid is not met, the king

⁵⁸ Nicole Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman* (trans. Anthony Forster; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 15.

responds that this would be a “pollution . . . beyond all range of speech” (*Suppl.* 473).

Despair and shame are so often stressed in the contexts of self-inflicted hangings that one might refer to it as the “death of the desperate.”⁵⁹ In Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Jocasta hangs herself in a frenzy of emotion and abject misery when she discovers that she has unwittingly married her long lost son, Oedipus, who himself killed his own father in ignorance (1235–65; cf. *Antigone* 49–54). Herodotus recounts the story of Mycerinus’ daughter who, having been molested by her father, “strangled herself for grief” (*Hist.* 2.131). Aristotle postulated that certain physiological conditions could produce “unreasonable despondency,” thus explaining “the prevalence of suicide by hanging amongst the young and sometimes amongst older men too” (*Prob.* 954b35, cf. 955a5). Seneca the Elder describes a case in which a man attempted suicide by hanging after losing his estate, wife, and children, but after being rescued by a passer-by he argues that to die in this manner was an appropriate course of action “for a man encompassed by misery” (*Controversiae* 5.1; cf. 8.1). Livy recounts the case of Fulvius Flaccus, who heard a false rumor that his sons had died: “Grief and fear together overwhelmed the father’s mind; slaves who entered his bedroom in the morning found him hanging in a noose,” and so he “died a disgraceful death” (Livy 48.28.10–12).

⁵⁹ Hooff, *From Autothanasia*, 68.

In the *Aeneid*, the connotations of shame and despair are vividly described in the account of Amata's suicide, and Virgil explicitly labels her death by hanging as an ugly death. Amata, queen of Latium and wife of King Latinus, had encouraged Latinus to go to war with Aeneas. The results were catastrophic for her and her people:

When from her palace the queen sees the foe approach, the walls assailed, flames mounting to the roofs, yet nowhere Rutulian ranks, no troops of Turnus to meet them, alas! she thinks her warrior slain in combat, and, her mind distraught by sudden anguish, cries out that she is the guilty source and spring of sorrows, and uttering many a wild word in the frenzy of grief, resolved to die, rends her purple robes, and from a lofty beam fastens the noose of a hideous death (*nodum informis leti*). (Virgil, *Aen.* 12.595–603)

The text of Servius' fourth-century commentary on *Aen.* 12.603 relates several ancient traditions in explaining the import of Virgil's phrase, *nodum informis leti*:

To be sure, you must know that there was an ordinance in the priestly books that if one killed oneself with a noose, that one was cast out unburied. Hence it is properly called a "hideous death," as a form of disgraceful death. Since no death is more repugnant than this one, we accept that the poet also speaks to the queen's honor. Cassius Hemina says, however, that when Tarquinius Superbus compelled the people to build the sewer, and because of the injustice many killed themselves by hanging, he ordered their bodies to be affixed to crosses. Then for the first time it was considered a disgrace to commit suicide in that manner. And Varro says that for those who hanged themselves, for whom proper funeral rites did not take place, little masks were hung in imitation of the sacrifices for the dead. Thus, Virgil is shown to agree with Varro and Cassius that the one who put on the noose died a hideous death.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Author's translation from Servius, *Servii Grammatici qui feruntur in Vergilii carmina commentarii* (ed. Georg Thilo and Hermann Hagen; 3 vols.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1878–1902). Cited 3 November 2010. Online: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc= Serv.+A.+12.603>: "sane sciendum quia cautum fuerat in pontificalibus libris, ut qui laqueo vitam finisset, insepultus abiceretur: unde bene ait 'informis leti,' quasi mortis infamissimae. ergo cum nihil sit hac morte deformius, poetam etiam pro reginae dignitate dixisse accipiamus. Cassius autem Hemina ait, Tarquinius Superbus, cum cloacas populum facere coegisset, et ob hanc iniuriam multi se

Servius is an antiquarian, preserving the old pagan beliefs that are in their twilight since Christianity has become the official religion of the empire.⁶¹ The sources and figures he refers to—*pontificalibus libris*, Cassius Hemina (2nd cent. B.C.), Tarquinius Superbus⁶² (6th cent. B.C.), and Varro (1st cent. B.C.)—are offered as verification of his claim that in the earlier era the corpses of suicides by hanging were regarded as taboo in Roman religion. Servius' comments imply that the ignominy of suicide by hanging is fading in the fourth century A.D., and that the practice of leaving hanged bodies unburied has not been followed for some time. Nevertheless, his evidence suggests a trajectory of tradition that connects myth, religious ordinance, rites for the dead, and the social scale of honor and shame in the era of Virgil.

suspendio necarent, iussisse corpora eorum cruci affigi. tunc primum turpe habitum est mortem sibi consciscer. et Varro ait, suspendiosis, quibus iusta fieri ius non sit, suspensis oscillis, veluti per imitationem mortis parentari. docet ergo Vergilius secundum Varronem et Cassium, quia se laqueo induerat, leto perisse informi.” This passage from Servius is available in French translation in J. L. Voisin, “Pendus, crucifiés, *oscilla* dans la Rome païenne,” *Latomus* 38 (1979): 422-50. The text of Servius as we have received it is probably a compilation of the comments of Servius and another fourth-century commentator, Donatus, whose comments Servius likely utilized in addition to offering his own observations, according to G. P. Goold, “Servius and the Helen Episode,” *HSCP* 74 (1970): 102-17.

⁶¹ Justus F. Holstein, “Rites and Rituals as Prescribed by the Roman Religion according to the Commentary of Servius on Vergil's Aeneid” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1915), 1. Cited 19 October 2010. Online http://books.google.com/books?id=pLQUAAAAYAAJ&ots=BI_PtjXcvU&dq=holstein%20aeneid&pg=PP8#v=onepage&q&f=false.

⁶² Pliny the Elder attributes this action to Tarquinius Priscus, the father or grandfather of Tarquinius Superbus. Pliny stresses that the shame of enduring their terrible working conditions was held in check by the plebians' shame at what might happen to their bodies after death (*Nat.* 36.24.107-8).

In the centuries just before and after the turn of the era, one continues to find evidence that death by hanging was viewed as an unclean death with the potential to contaminate or curse people, places, or objects that came in contact with it. An inscription from Sassina reports that a certain citizen who donated the land for a public cemetery stipulated that neither gladiators nor those who had hanged themselves could be buried there.⁶³ Another inscription from Puteoli specifies among the duties of the public undertaker that the corpses of those who hang themselves are to be removed within one hour of discovery.⁶⁴ Pliny the Elder comments that wine made from a vine near where someone has been hanged is considered unclean and unfit for libation to the gods (*Nat.* 14.23.119). In a discussion about trees that are unlucky or cursed, Pliny also says, "Cremutius states that the tree from which Phyllis hanged herself is never green" (*Nat.* 16.45.108). Plutarch mentions that in his day there is a site near Melite where the bodies of those executed by the state as well as the nooses and garments of those who hang themselves are disposed (*Them.* 22).

There is also evidence that in some circles when meals were held honoring the dead it was forbidden to mention those who had hanged themselves. Artemidorus Daldianus (2nd cent. A.D.) says that a certain man dreamed that his name was forgotten. Subsequently he was convicted of crimes against the state and

⁶³ *CIL* 1.1418 = *CIL* 1².2123 = *CIL* 9.6528; see J.-L. Voisin, "Apicata, Antinous et quelques autres," *MEFR* 99 (1987): 278.

⁶⁴ *AE* 1971, 88, II.22–23; see Voisin, "Apicata," 278.

committed suicide in shame. “Being without honor and a fugitive, he hanged himself and ended his life, so that he had no name even in death. For such people alone are not called on by their relatives at the meals given for the dead” (Artemidorus Daldianus, *Onir.* 1.4). This custom is also attested in Justinian’s *Digesta* through a source preserved in Ulpian: “As Neratius [1st–2nd cent. A.D.] says, it is not customary to mourn enemies of the state, men found guilty of treason, those who have hanged themselves, or men who have committed suicide not out of weariness with life but through a guilty conscience” (*Dig.* 3.2.11.3). We observe also in this list of unmourned deaths that suicide by hanging is sandwiched between those executed as traitors and those who kill themselves because of a guilty conscience, suggesting that this form of suicide implies guilt. Accounts of self-hangings upon being convicted of a crime or having one’s vice revealed are common.⁶⁵

The themes of shame, despair, and curse also appear in Jewish accounts of suicide by hanging. In the story of Tobit, the figure Sarah has been widowed seven times and is accused by one of her servants of being the murderer of these men. In distress, she contemplates suicide:

On that day she was grieved in spirit and wept. When she had gone up to her father's upper room, she intended to hang herself. But she thought it over and said, “Never shall they reproach my father, saying to him, ‘You had only one beloved daughter but she hanged herself because of her distress.’ And I shall bring my father in his old age down in sorrow to Hades. It is better for

⁶⁵ Seneca the Elder, *Contr.* 8.4; Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings* 5.8.3; Plutarch *Cato Major* 10.6; *Mor.* 840F; Suetonius, *Aug.* 65.2.

me not to hang myself, but to pray the Lord that I may die and not listen to these reproaches anymore.”

She chooses to live with reproach rather than suffer the greater reproach that hanging herself would bring.

The Torah stipulated that the body of one who has been convicted of a crime and executed by stoning was to be hanged until sundown, adding that anyone whose body was hung on a tree was under God’s curse (Deut 21:22–23). The ignominy of the hanging corpse sparked rabbinic debate over just which offenses required this additional disgrace, whether to hang one with face towards the gallows or away from the gallows, and whether or not women should be hanged at all (*m. Sanh.* 6.4). In relation to suicide, Josephus mentions the custom of leaving the bodies of suicides exposed until sunset (*J.W.* 3.8.5.377–79). Philo describes hanging as an “unclean death” (*Aet.* 20), and when a particularly impious man hangs himself, Philo regards it as fitting that “so polluted and impure a person might not die by a pure and unpolluted death” (*Mut.* 62).

In the Jewish social matrix, as well as the larger Mediterranean milieu, suicide by hanging is considered an unclean, shameful death. It implies an emotional state of abject despair, and the hanged body is considered to be under a divine curse. Such a death stands in sharp contrast to those cases of suicide that have resulted in the popular misunderstanding that suicide itself was upheld as noble in Greco-Roman culture. For example, when Socrates drinks the hemlock in Plato’s *Phaedo*, the pathos is entirely different. Socrates is presented as a victim of the state, who is

given no choice except to die, but who maintains a calm, philosophical outlook vis-à-vis the tears of his friends. The characterization of Socrates would be quite different if he had been complicit in a plot that brought about the death of an innocent person, and then in remorse he had gone out and hanged himself. Similarly, the noble suicide of Cato Uticensis, valued so highly in Roman society that the memorization of Cato's dying speech was a school exercise (Seneca, *Ep.* 74.6), would not likely have been perceived by the ancient audience as a precedent for the case of Judas.⁶⁶ Cato is not guilty of any great crime. He is calm and deliberate in his planning, including reading from the *Phaedo*. He values freedom highly and chooses death by his own blade rather than life under Caesar. Plutarch assesses the whole by commenting that any stains on Cato's reputation were removed by the manner of his death (*Cat. Min.* 73.3). The death of Judas follows a manifestly different type, one that implies shame rather than honor, despair rather than noble thought, and guilt rather than atonement.

Death according to Precedent

What kind of person dies the way Judas died? Of the suicides in Jewish tradition, the one that has most often been compared with Judas' death is that of Ahithophel, the only case of suicide by hanging in the Jewish Scriptures.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ The most detailed account of Cato's suicide is found in Plutarch, *Cat. Min.* 70–73.

⁶⁷ Kirsopp Lake, "The Death of Judas," in *The Beginnings of Christianity* (eds. F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake; London: Macmillan and Co., 1933), 5:29; Christian Wolff, *Jeremia im Frühjudentum und Urchristentum* (eds. O. von Gebhardt and A. von Harnack; TU 118; Berlin:

Ahithophel is a close counselor of David's who becomes a traitor and offers support to the regime of Absalom (2 Sam 15–17). When Ahithophel's advice was rejected by Absalom, Ahithophel went home, "set his house in order and hanged himself" (2 Sam 17:23). In the Septuagint, the same verb, ἀπάγω, is used for the death of Judas in Matt 27:5 and that of Ahithophel. The only other occurrence of the term in the LXX is in Tob 3:10, noted above. Beyond the similarities of suicide by hanging and the accompanying vocabulary, there are a few circumstantial similarities as well. Both had been within the intimate inner circle of one whom they later betrayed. Both are ultimately rejected by those to whom they had defected, and in both cases this rejection is the turning point on which their decision to commit suicide hinges.

Suspending judgment for the moment on whether or not the authorial audience would have specifically called to mind the death of Ahithophel in the reading of the death-account of Judas,⁶⁸ the manner in which ancient interpreters regarded the death of Ahithophel provides some insight into how the ancient audience would have understood a traitor's suicide by hanging. In rabbinic

Akademie Verlag, 1976), 162; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Judas: ein Jünger des Herrn* (Freiburg: Herder, 1987), 96; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:565–66; Timothy W. Berkley, "O.T. Exegesis and the Death of Judas," *Proceedings, Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies* 14 (1994): 37; Brown, *Death*, 1:643–44, 656–57; 2:1406–8.

⁶⁸ Several scholars conclude that too much has been made of the use of the same verb in the two stories, and that there is no deliberate allusion to Ahithophel: Willem C. van Unnik, "The Death of Judas in Saint Matthew's Gospel," *ATHRSup* 3 (1974): 49–51; Joachim Gnllka, "Das Matthäusevangelium," *ANRW* 2:443; Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 812; Klassen, *Judas: Betrayer*, 170; Paffenroth, *Judas*, 114.

tradition, Ahithophel becomes one of the perennial paradigms of a wicked person.⁶⁹ The consensus of the rabbis is that his suicide does not atone for his sins, and Ahithophel is explicitly named as one who has no place in the world to come.⁷⁰ For his Roman audience, however, Josephus augments the death-account of Ahithophel with echoes of the death of Cato Uticensis. Josephus says that because Ahithophel perceives that David will soon be returning to power, “it was better for him to remove himself from the world in a free and noble spirit than surrender himself to David to be punished for having in all ways helped Absalom against him” (*Ant.* 7.9.8.229). The absence of emotional language in the account in 2 Samuel, and Josephus’ interest in appealing to Roman culture, result in this positive spin. Nevertheless, Josephus cannot ignore the crime of treachery and the ignominy of self-hanging which most Jewish authorities attribute to the death of Ahithophel, so that in the end he also asserts that Ahithophel was “his own judge” who “sentenced himself” to such a death (*Ant.* 7.9.8.229).

We find the large number of similarities between Judas and Ahithophel to have likely been irresistible for the Matthean audience, and we conclude with Klauck that the statement that Judas hanged himself would have called to mind the death of

⁶⁹ Often paired with Doeg, who gave Saul secret information about David's whereabouts (1 Sam 21–22), Ahithophel and Doeg are characterized as sinning by uttering false words, promoting bloodshed, and sanctioning incest. See *Gen. Rab.* 32.1; 38.1; *Num. Rab.* 18.17; 19.2; *b. Sot.* 21a.

⁷⁰ *m. Sanh.* 10.2; *b. Hag.* 15b; *Gen. Rab.* 32.1; *Eccl. Rab.* 10.2. Only a minor opinion extends hope to Ahithophel in the life to come: *b. Sanh.* 104b–5a.

Ahithophel and classified Judas' death as the archetypal death of a traitor.⁷¹ In addition, therefore, to depicting Judas as meeting an appropriate death for a self-condemned traitor, the Matthean presentation of Jesus as a Davidic king is also strengthened (Matt 1:1; 2:2) by the similarities between the betrayers of Jesus and David.⁷²

Another familiar death-scene with strong parallels to that of Judas in Matt 27:3–5 is Virgil's story, quoted above at length, of the death of Amata, the Latin queen (*Aen.* 12.593–603). In addition to her suicide by hanging, several elements that contribute to the pathos of her story are similar to that of Judas. The queen is complicit in a plot to manipulate King Latinus into rejecting peace with Aeneas, with results that are disastrous beyond anything she ever envisioned. Looking out from her palace window, she beholds her city ablaze and the enemy storming the walls. She believes (falsely) that her champion, Turnus, is dead. The description of her final emotional state bears repeating for comparison with Judas: "[H]er mind distraught by sudden anguish, cries out that she is the guilty source and spring of sorrows, and uttering many a wild word in the frenzy of grief, resolved to die, rends her purple robes, and from a lofty beam fastens the noose of a hideous death" (*Aen.* 12.603). Like Amata, Judas had his own moment of realization of guilt when he "saw that Jesus was condemned" (Matt 27:3). Both figures also confess their guilt

⁷¹ Klauck, *Judas: ein Jünger*, 95–96.

⁷² Boring, 8:484; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Rev. ed.; Reading the New Testament; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 15; Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 523.

and make gestures of remorse (Amata rends her garment; Judas returns the money). They share a pattern of treachery, guilt, despair, and suicide by hanging.

What kind of person dies the way Judas died? Judas' emotional state of frantic guilt contrasts with the contemplative mind of Socrates and the freedom from tyranny sought by Cato. Judas' suicide does not fit the model of a noble Roman death. Rather, he dies the ignoble death of one whose scheming has resulted in calamitous consequences and who no longer perceives—perhaps incorrectly—any hope of rescue. Although his suicide is an indicator of the depth of his sorrow, the common view of suicide by hanging as an unclean death makes it highly unlikely that the Matthean audience would have understood Judas' actions to have constituted a return to discipleship or a reversal of Jesus' declaration in Matt 26:24, "It would have been better for that one not to have been born." Throughout the Gospel of Matthew a wide range of responses to Jesus are noted, and the minimum level of acceptable allegiance is decidedly high.⁷³ In the section below, a comparison of Judas' words and actions to those of another disciple who has a gross failure during the passion narrative, but who is clearly restored to the circle of disciples, provides further confirmation that Matthew's account of the death of Judas agrees with his earlier characterization of him as a despicable figure.

⁷³ Matt 7:21–23; 8:19–22; 10:32–39; 13:18–23; 16:24–26.

Judas and Peter

The remorse experienced by Peter and Judas is ripe for comparison, not only because these two accounts are separated by a mere two verses, but also because they are the only two disciples singled out for mention by name in Matthew's passion account.⁷⁴ In addition, in ch. 26 Jesus had made predictions about both of these disciples, and now those predictions have been fulfilled. It is only natural that the audience would compare the sins of Peter and Judas, as well as their reactions to the realization of enormous guilt in their disloyalty to Jesus.

A review of the points of similarity and contrast between Peter and Judas yields two distinct profiles of discipleship that are relevant to the subplots of conflict with the Pharisees and the vulnerability of the disciples. First, both Peter and Judas are guilty of disloyalty to Jesus, but the details of each infidelity show the mind of Judas to have made a genuine shift in allegiance in contrast to Peter's momentary lapse of courage. For example, Peter's denials occur under extreme duress and in spite of noble intentions. Judas, however, under no compulsion other than his own greed, seeks out the opponents of Jesus, proposes a bargain with them, and maintains this course of action across several scenes, including his feigning allegiance to Jesus at the Last Supper and betraying him with a kiss in the garden.

⁷⁴ Donald Senior, "The Fate of the Betrayer: A Redactional Study of Matthew 27:3-10," *ETL* 48 (1972): 376-78; Wiefel, *Matthäus*, 466. Senior goes so far as to suggest that Matthew, who otherwise follows the Markan structure very closely here, supplies the Judas account in order to fill a "lacuna" created by Mark's failure to show the fulfillment of Jesus' prediction in Mark 14:18/Matt 26:24 of a terrible fate for Judas.

Second, the catalyst for Peter's remorse is fundamentally different from that of Judas. When the cock crows, Peter immediately remembers Jesus' prediction, "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times" (Matt 26:75). This flashback recalls the scene in which Peter asserted his absolute loyalty to Jesus and brings into sharp relief Peter's lofty intentions and his abysmal performance. In contrast, Judas' remorse occurs only when he sees that Jesus is actually condemned to die. Peter is moved by conscience; Judas, by consequences. The mind of Judas is not equal in tenderness to the mind of Peter, and the audience is left in doubt as to whether or not Judas would have regretted his actions if Jesus had received a less severe judgment.

A third distinction between Peter and Judas lies in the matter of to whom they turn in their guilt. Peter goes out and weeps alone, and Judas goes to the chief priests and elders to return the blood-money and to confess his sin. Commentators have occasionally suggested that Judas' mistake was in going to the chief priests in order to seek absolution rather than seeking out Jesus.⁷⁵ This interpretation needs to be more precisely nuanced, given that Judas has no access to Jesus⁷⁶ and that Peter does not seek out Jesus either.⁷⁷ Approaching Jesus, while important in Matthew, is not an option in these two scenes due to the logic of the narrative. Instead, in this

⁷⁵ Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew*, 108; Brown, *Death*, 1:641; Boring, 8:484.

⁷⁶ This is true whether Jesus is simply in custody or if one considers Judas' going to the priests to take place after the crucifixion. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:561.

⁷⁷ Luz, *Matthew*, 3:470.

section of the passion narrative, proximity to the opponents of Jesus becomes the focus of spatial relationships. After Jesus is arrested, Peter follows him “at a distance,” a narrative indication of strained discipleship.⁷⁸ He puts himself in a vulnerable position by entering into the courtyard of the high priest and sitting with the guards there (26:58). When the cock crows, and he remembers what Jesus had predicted about him, “He went out and wept bitterly.” Peter’s going out, away from those allied with the chief priests, punctuates his repentance and marks the end of his association with the opponents.⁷⁹ Judas, however, moves in the opposite direction when he realizes his guilt. He goes to the chief priests and the elders in the Temple, to confess his sin and return the money. Jesus had reproached the Pharisees as those who make their disciples “twice as much a child of hell” as themselves (Matt 23:15), and who “tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to help them” (Matt 23:4). Judas’ course of action proves to be a truly fatal mistake, as the priests to whom he confesses also share in his sin and offer him neither aid nor hope.

Finally, Peter and Judas are contrasting figures in regard to the resolution of their remorseful feelings. The statement that Peter “went out and wept bitterly” (26:75) leaves his status in relation to the circle of disciples unresolved until the reunion of the Eleven with Jesus in Galilee (28:18). Although Peter has to wait until

⁷⁸ Heil, *Death*, 57–58.

⁷⁹ Heil, *Death*, 66. Heil also suggests that this “going out” is also a further, final step separating Peter from Jesus. This interpretation, however, is contrary to Peter’s evident repentance. In the scene of Peter’s denial, it is his proximity to the opponents that is of paramount importance.

after the resurrection to be restored, the pattern that Jesus has established with the disciples allows for failure to be followed by correction and growth. This cycle is characteristic of discipleship in Matthew, and Peter's actions fit this pattern. Judas' suicide, however, is not congruent with the Matthean model of conversion or discipleship.⁸⁰ While it expresses remorse, it does not demonstrate faith in Jesus or understanding of Jesus' teaching. As a result, when Matt 28:16 says that *eleven* disciples met with Jesus in Galilee, it is simultaneously an affirmation of Peter's continuance and Judas' perdition. The predictions of Jesus regarding Judas (26:20, 24) and Peter (26:32, 34) have both been fulfilled.

The Function of the Figure Judas in the Gospel of Matthew

There is a strong scholarly consensus that the authorial audience of the Gospel of Matthew consists primarily of Christian Jews who are in conflict with non-Christian Judaism over such matters as the messiahship of Jesus, the interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures, and the identity of the people of God.⁸¹ The two subplots that we have delineated—the sharp schism between Jesus and the Pharisees, and the struggle of the disciples to understand, trust, and remain loyal to Jesus—cohere well with the consensus regarding the situation of the audience. If one superimposes our reading of the plot onto this image of the audience, two of the major purposes of the

⁸⁰ Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew*, 108; Bonnard, *Matthieu*, 393.

⁸¹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 696–97; Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 124; Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 31–33; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Decision Making in Matthew* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 1–7.

Gospel of Matthew seem to be to promote greater differentiation between the Jewish Christian community and the Jewish non-Christian community, and to present a model of discipleship that combines the demand of highest allegiance to Jesus with a realistic viewpoint that shows disciples overcoming misunderstanding, doubt, and even disloyalty by accepting instruction and continuing in the community where Jesus is present.

The depiction of Judas in Matthew supports these purposes by providing several examples of inappropriate conduct that lead to miserable consequences. First, Judas' offer to exchange Jesus for money illustrates a moral failure in a disciple. As illustrated in the parable of the Sower in Matthew 13, there are a number of inadequate responses to Jesus. Judas fits the category of the thorny soil, which represents "the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word and it yields nothing" (13:22).

Second, he reveals the fate that one can expect who pretends to be faithful but is actually a betrayer. The community of Matthew was likely already experiencing what was described on the lips of Jesus in Matt 10:21: "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death." The ignoble death of Judas and Jesus' lament—that it would have been better for Judas never to have been born—stand as a deterrent against betrayal.

Third, Judas demonstrates the folly of compromising on the messiahship of Jesus. Whereas the other disciples address Jesus as "Lord" at the Last Supper, Judas

only addresses him as “Rabbi” (Matt 26:22, 25). Even his confession that Jesus is innocent (Matt 27:4) does not rise above the level of the assessment of Pilate and Pilate’s wife (Matt 27:19, 23, 24).⁸² The First Gospel does not allow room for any compromise in the Matthean community that would attempt to maintain unity between the new movement and the synagogue by claiming nothing more than that Jesus was a rabbi or an innocent victim of political violence.

Fourth, Judas’ demise shows the folly of depending on the Jewish priesthood to facilitate forgiveness rather than finding it in the Christian community. Because Judas is described as remorseful, Paffenroth concludes that Judas’ final scene in Matthew is among the “most hopeful traditions about Judas.” Paffenroth proceeds to suggest that Matthew’s account of Judas’ death presents Judas as having “a faulty concept of God and God’s forgiveness but not therefore an incomplete experience of repentance.”⁸³ Within Matthew’s view of discipleship, however, one must choose between loyalty to the old religious authorities and loyalty to Jesus. Repeatedly the Gospel depicts the priesthood and Temple leadership as corrupt. In remorse, Judas goes to the priests and confesses his sin, only to be rebuffed: “What is that to us? See to it yourself” (Matt 28:5). As a result, Judas is in the desperate position of being pricked in conscience, guilty under the Law, estranged from the circle of disciples, and rejected by those priests with whom he has sided and to whom were entrusted the souls of Israel for shepherding. The new locus of divine authority and forgive-

⁸² Cf. Brown, *Death*, 1:659–60; Wiefel, *Matthäus*, 467.

⁸³ Paffenroth, *Judas*, 111, 115.

ness lies in the community of Jesus (Matt 1:21; 9:6; 16:19; 26:28). Judas feels remorse, and he seeks absolution, but he fails to find it because he defected from the fellowship of the disciples and returned to the enemies of the Messiah.

Conclusions

Recalling the patterns of noble and ignoble deaths discerned in Chapter Two, the suicide of Judas in Matt 27:3–5 certainly does not qualify as a noble death. Instead, in the Mediterranean milieu, this account would be heard as an ignoble death providing a fitting end for a betrayer. Having attempted to participate in both communities for his own advantage, in the end he finds himself desperately needing aide, but alienated from both groups. The mind of Judas is revealed to be remorseful to the point of despair through the narrator's direct statements, as well as Judas' final words and actions. The final glimpse of the body of Judas—hanged in suicide—also communicates shame, guilt, and despair. Unfortunately, however, his remorse and resulting actions do not meet the Matthean criteria of true repentance and a return to discipleship. When compared to other well-known suicides, the overall circumstances of Judas' death in Matthew 27:3–5 fit the pattern of those who reap the consequences of their own treacherous machinations, not the pattern of those whose suicides are noble or redeeming. Jesus' statement that it would have been better for Judas if he had never been born is supported by the death-account.

Within the plot of Matthew, this characterization of Judas contributes to the message of this Gospel regarding the Pharisees as Jesus' enemies and the disciples as

weak and vulnerable. Judas' final interaction with the Pharisees contributes to their characterization as hypocrites and failed shepherds of Israel. They offer no help or hope to Judas when he confesses his sin to them, and though they share Judas' guilt, they express no remorse. As a failed disciple, Judas stands as a warning to those members of the Matthean community who might consider conspiring or compromising with the enemies of the church. When one considers the pattern of the disciples' weakness being remedied by Jesus' strength throughout Matthew, then the despair of Judas in his death also attests his failure to grasp the essence of discipleship. In this regard, the contrast between Judas and Peter would provide the Matthean community with both a warning and an encouragement for those who have wavered under the pressure from non-Christian Jews to abandon the new faith.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Death of Judas according to Acts 1:18–20

(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.) “For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his homestead become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it;’ and ‘Let another take his position of overseer.’ ” (Acts 1:18–20)

According to the features we identified in Chapter Two as elements of death-accounts contributing to characterization in the ancient Mediterranean milieu, Acts 1:18–20 is rich with implications for the Lukan portrait of Judas. As in our chapter on the death of Judas in Matthew, in order for us to perceive the image of Judas that would be conveyed to the authorial audience, it is helpful to trace the main lines of the plot in which the death-account is embedded. In contrast to Matthew, however, Luke’s account of the death of Judas stands at the beginning of his second book, rather than at the end of his Gospel. The question arises as to whether or not the audience of Acts would have heard the depiction of Judas in Acts 1 in close relation to the characterization of Judas in Luke’s first volume.

Although it has been customary since Henry Cadbury’s *The Making of Luke-Acts*¹ to treat these books as two halves of one work, recently Mikeal C. Parsons, Richard Pervo, and Kevin Rowe have made a strong case that the earliest audiences

¹ Henry Joel Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927).

of Luke and Acts regarded these two books as individual works published some years apart.² The fields of textual criticism and early canonical criticism figure prominently in their arguments. They note that the unique textual tradition of Acts, with its significantly longer “Western” recension, would seem to suggest a transmission history independent of Luke’s Gospel from a very early period.³ In addition, none of the early manuscripts or canonical lists put Luke and Acts together as though they were being read as a continuous whole.⁴ Instead, these lists suggest that Acts would typically have been heard in relation to multiple gospels. Indeed, the introduction to his Gospel (Luke 1:1–4) makes it evident that Luke recognized that his audience was aware of many (πολλοί) other “gospels.”⁵ Furthermore, Luke and Acts both stand on their own as independently intelligible narratives.⁶ Indeed,

² Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); C. Kevin Rowe, "History, Hermeneutics and the Unity of Luke-Acts," *JSNT* 28 (2005): 131–57; C. Kevin Rowe, "Literary Unity and Reception History: Reading Luke-Acts as Luke and Acts," *NTS* 29 (2007): 449–57; Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 12–14. For arguments in favor of continuing to treat Luke and Acts as a unified whole, see Loveday Alexander, *Acts in Its Ancient Literary Context: A Classicist Looks at the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: T. & T. Clark International, 2005), 207–29; Luke Timothy Johnson, "Literary Criticism of Luke-Acts: Is Reception-History Pertinent?," *JSNT* 28 (2005): 159–62; Patrick E. Spencer, "The Unity of Luke-Acts: A Four-Bolted Hermeneutical Hinge," *Currents in Biblical Research* 5 (2007): 341–66. A helpful summary of the debate listing numerous resources on both sides is provided by Michael F. Bird, "The Unity of Luke-Acts in Recent Discussion," *JSNT* 29 (2007): 425–48. Several of these seminal articles along with additional studies may be found collected in Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher Kevin Rowe, *Rethinking the Unity and Reception of Luke and Acts* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2010).

³ Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 10; Parsons, *Acts*, 13.

⁴ Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 8–13; Rowe, "History," 151; Rowe, "Literary," 454–55; Parsons, *Acts*, 12–14.

⁵ Rowe, "Literary," 453.

⁶ Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 45–83; Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 19.

the plot leading to Jesus' betrayal and death in the Gospel has achieved its climax at the end of Luke, and Acts must necessarily formulate its plot in somewhat different terms.⁷ Parsons, Pervo, and Rowe do not deny a special relationship between Luke and Acts (they concede common authorship and multiple thematic ties), but they challenge those approaches to Luke and Acts that assume the authorial audience received the entire body of work as one literary whole.

Granting that Luke and Acts were probably received as independent works published some years apart, there are good reasons for concluding that the initial audience of Acts would have heard it as a “sequel” to Luke.⁸ First, Acts 1:1–2 mentions Luke’s “first book” and implies that the audience has “read, and presumably understood, the Gospel.”⁹ Second, even though Acts has its own plot and theological concerns, several of the “narrative threads which continue to dangle” at the close of the Gospel are resolved in Acts.¹⁰ For example, Acts 1 renews the promises in the Gospel that the baptism of John would be supplanted by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5), that the disciples themselves would receive power from heaven (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8), and that the message of the kingdom

⁷ Jack Dean Kingsbury, “The Plot of Luke’s Story of Jesus,” *Int* 48 (1994): 377. See further Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 45–83.

⁸ Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking*, 83, 123; Kingsbury, “Plot of Luke’s Story,” 377; Richard I. Pervo, “Israel’s Heritage and Claims upon the Genre(s) of Luke and Acts: The Problems of a History,” in *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel* (ed. David P. Moessner; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1999), 136–37; Parsons, *Acts*, 3, 14–15; Pervo, *Acts*, 20.

⁹ Rowe, “History,” 138–39.

¹⁰ Mikeal C. Parsons, *The Departure of Jesus in Luke-Acts: The Ascension Narratives in Context* (JSNTSup 21; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 93–96.

would spread abroad into the Gentile world (Luke 3:6; 24:47; Acts 1:8). The remainder of Acts shows the fulfillment of these promises.¹¹ A third indication that Luke's audience would have regarded Acts as a sequel to Luke is the large number of structural and sequential parallels between Luke and Acts that would have increased the tendency to recall the content of Luke while considering Acts.¹² While we accept the conclusion that Acts has a separate transmission history and its own distinctive literary purpose, these features support the view that the Gospel of Luke is "the primary narrative for structuring Acts" and that Acts "follows up the basic plot of the Third Gospel."¹³ Luke is aware that his gospel is not the only one in the literary repertoire of his audience, but the prefaces to his Gospel and to Acts suggest that he expected his audience to give priority to his version of the life of Jesus over other "gospels," which he apparently deemed insufficient for the needs of his audience in some regard.¹⁴ As a sequel, Acts has its own plot and purpose, but the interpretation of these—including the characterization of certain figures who appear in both books—are shaped by the prior reading of the Gospel of Luke.

¹¹ Jacques Dupont, *The Salvation of the Gentiles: Essays on the Acts of the Apostles* (trans. John R. Keating; New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 17–18.

¹² Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (SBLMS 20; Missoula, Mont.: Scholar's Press, 1974), 15–23; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Rev. ed.; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), xxiv–xxv.

¹³ Parsons, *Acts*, 14.

¹⁴ Mikeal C. Parsons, *Luke: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 45–47; Parsons, *Acts*, 3, 14.

These conclusions regarding the pre-canonical relationship between the Gospel of Luke and Acts suggest the following approach to hearing the death-account of Judas in Acts 1:18–20 with the authorial audience. First, we begin by tracing the plot of the Third Gospel and analyzing the characterization of Judas in that setting. Although the information about Judas in the Gospel of Luke is parallel to that in the other Synoptics, attention to Luke’s particular rendering of Judas will help us to approach the account in Acts with pre-conditioning similar to that of the authorial audience. Second, we examine the plot of Acts. It is no small feature to observe that, although Judas plays a villainous role in Luke’s account of the death of Jesus, Judas’ death is not recounted until Acts. The plot of Acts apparently call for these additional details to now be mentioned, and discerning the plot may help us to determine the elements of Judas’ character that Luke wants to emphasize by giving the details of Judas’ demise. Third, Acts 1:18–20 will be examined in the context of Acts 1 and under our rubric for characterization in death-accounts. Finally, we will relate the literary and theological contributions of Luke’s account of Judas death in relation to book of Acts, as well as Luke’s overall body of work.

The Plot of Luke: The Conquering King

In Luke, Jesus is the Son of God and Messiah-King who has come to fulfill the promises and prophecies of salvation contained in Israel’s Scriptures. As he proclaims the good news of the kingdom of God and performs deeds of power, two character-groups emerge in reaction to him: opponents and disciples. At the human

level, the primary conflict is between Jesus and the Jewish leaders, variously designated as Pharisees, Sadducees, chief priests, and lawyers.¹⁵ The disciples also sometimes find themselves in tension (though seldom open conflict) with Jesus as he schools them in the ways of the kingdom. In the metaphysical realm, the controversies that erupt around Jesus are shown to be manifestations of the cosmic conflict between the Son of God and Satan. Luke begins by introducing Jesus in the loftiest of terms, and proceeds by stages to show the increasing hostility from his opponents that results in Jesus' violent death. At the same time, by telling of Jesus' fulfillment of Scripture, his miracles, his exoneration at trial, and ultimately his resurrection, Luke maintains that Jesus succeeds in his mission.¹⁶

In Luke 1:1–4:15¹⁷ divine utterances are the principal means for setting great expectations for Jesus.¹⁸ He is the Messiah (1:11; 2:26), heir of David (1:32–33, 69), and Son of God (1:31–35), who has come to fulfill the promises to Abraham of salvation for Israel and light to the Gentiles (1:55, 68–79; 2:10, 29–32). It is a salvation with a vengeance, however, which entails not only the exaltation of the

¹⁵ Kingsbury, "Plot of Luke's Story," 370.

¹⁶ As Allan McNicol observes, the auspicious claims of Luke 1–2 in a book intended to instill confidence (Luke 1:4) points the audience toward a triumphal interpretation of the suffering that Jesus endures later in the book. See Allan J. McNicol, "Rebuilding the House of David : The Function of the Benedictus in Luke-Acts," *ResQ* 40 (1998): 25–38.

¹⁷ Section divisions for the Gospel of Luke largely follow those of Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Revised ed.; Reading the New Testament; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2002).

¹⁸ Predictions of "future greatness" were an element of childhood stories in ancient biographies: Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 15–17. Birth announcements and commissioning scenes from the Jewish Scriptures also provide background for theological elements of this section: see Josef Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1977), 128–29.

righteous, but also the humiliation of the wicked (Luke 1:51–53; 2:34). The scenes of his baptism and temptation again emphasize Jesus' identity as the Son of God and reveal that he is filled with the Holy Spirit (3:22; 4:1; cf. 4:14, 18, 34, 40) and in conflict with Satan who claims authority over the kingdoms of the world (4:5–6).

In Luke 4:16–9:50, Jesus enters into his public ministry as God's agent for overthrowing the works of Satan by announcing the good news of the forgiveness of sins and the release of the oppressed (4:18–19). Jesus' ministry of healing is a demonstration of this mission as he sets free those held captive by Satan (e.g., 4:33–36, 40–41; 5:17–26; 6:17–19; 9:37–43; cf. 13:16).¹⁹ Jesus begins to recruit disciples whom he will train to continue his mission (5:1–11). At the same time, his miracles and pronouncements of forgiveness soon result in staunch opposition from the Jewish leaders who question his authority (5:17–26, 29–32, 33–39; 6:1–5, 6–11).²⁰ In contrast to Jesus, who fulfills the purposes of God, these opponents are described as having “rejected God's purpose for themselves” (7:30).²¹ After a series of conflicts with the Pharisees and teachers of the law, Jesus selects twelve disciples whom he designates as apostles (6:12–16). Their selection, on the heels of intense conflict with the old spiritual leaders, implies the rejection of the old leadership and their

¹⁹ Susan R. Garrett, "Exodus from Bondage: Luke 9:31 and Acts 12:1–24," *CBQ* 52 (1992): 661–62.

²⁰ On the significance of the dispute about authority in Luke see Kingsbury, "Plot of Luke's Story," 371–72.

²¹ Kingsbury, "Plot of Luke's Story," 370.

replacement with these twelve.²² His interactions with his disciples alternate in emphasis between their preparation to carry on his mission (6:20–26; 8:1, 9–18; 9:1–6) and their formation as disciples (6:27–49; 8:22–25; 9:12–17, 18–27).²³

Luke 9:51–19:44 is widely recognized as a travel narrative in which Jesus continues his ministry of teaching and healing while making his way toward Jerusalem.²⁴ As he approaches the city where he will suffer and die, his conflict with the Pharisees and scribes becomes sharply caustic, and his warnings to his disciples become more ominous (9:57–62; 10:10–12; 12:4–5; 14:25–33). One of Jesus' strongest indictments of his opponents occurs in the Beelzebul controversy (11:14–23) in which he presents himself as the conqueror of Satan, and the Pharisees as Satan's allies. For Jesus' disciples, the journey becomes an opportunity for going out on their own to carry out the mission. Their success prompts Jesus to say, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning" (10:18). These glimpses of Satan remind the audience that behind events at the human level there is a spiritual conflict underway.

²² R. Alan Culpepper, *NIB* 9:136; Francois Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50* (ed. Helmut Koester; trans. Christine M. Thomas; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 208–10.

²³ Charles H. Talbert, "Discipleship in Luke-Acts," in *Discipleship in the New Testament* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 62–73.

²⁴ There is some debate over the precise ending of the travel narrative, but the presence of this ancient literary device in the heart of the Gospel of Luke is broadly acknowledged. For example, some regard Luke 19:27 as the proper conclusion of the travel narrative: see Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SP 5; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992), 14, 163–65; Robert H. Stein, *Luke* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 296–97. For a thorough review of interpretive approaches to Luke's central section and the various options for its endpoint, see David P. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 21–30.

Jesus' arrival at the Temple in Jerusalem marks the transition into the final section of Luke (19:45–24:53), which falls neatly into three units: controversial discourses in the Temple (19:45–21:38), the passion narrative (22:1–23:56), and resurrection appearances (24:1–53). Intense verbal sparring with the Jewish religious leaders causes them to look for a means to kill Jesus (19:47–48; 20:19–20). At the beginning of the passion narrative in Luke 22–23, however, the plot is gridlocked because the chief priests and scribes fear the people and have not found a way to seize Jesus privately (22:2). Satan breaks the impasse by entering Judas, who arranges with the Temple leaders “to betray him [Jesus] when no crowd was present” (22:3–6). Jesus' trial and execution at the instigation of the chief priests and scribes is shown to be entirely unjust (23:2–4, 14–16, 22; 23:47). God vindicates Jesus by raising him from the dead (24:1–12). His suffering and death, Jesus explains, were not a defeat, but a necessary fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures in order to establish the new order (22:17–20; 24:13–35, 44–47). After commissioning his disciples to be his witnesses, he ascends into heaven (24:48–53).

Judas in the Gospel of Luke

In the Gospel of Luke there are four passages in which Judas is specifically mentioned: Jesus' naming of twelve disciples as apostles (6:13–16),²⁵ Judas' conferring with the chief priests and agreeing to betray Jesus to them (22:3–6),²⁶

²⁵ par. Matt 10:2–4/Mark 3:16–19

²⁶ par. Matt 26:14–16/Mark 14:10–11

Jesus' announcement at the Last Supper that one of those at the table with him would betray him (22:21–23),²⁷ and the scene at the Mount of Olives in which Judas approaches Jesus to kiss him (22:47–48).²⁸ As the parallel passages in Mark and Matthew indicate, these four scenes are part of the common synoptic tradition. Therefore, in comparison to our earlier chapter on the Gospel of Matthew, it is inevitable that there be in our present chapter some repetition of literary parallels, rhetorical analysis, and, of course, the traits of Judas.

We begin by observing that in all of Luke's scenes depicting Judas, two fundamental elements of Judas' character are repeatedly emphasized: (1) Judas' status as one of the Twelve and (2) his role as a traitor. In the list of the Twelve in Luke 6:13–16, last in the roll stands "Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor (προδότης)" (6:16). In Luke 22:3–6, when the Jewish leaders are frustrated in their plans to seize Jesus, Luke says that Judas, "one of the twelve . . . conferred with the chief priests and officers of the temple police about how he might betray him to them." Though Judas is not identified by name in the third scene (22:21–23), his dual roles as a member of Jesus' inner circle and as the betrayer are prominent: "The one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table" (22:22). When the crowd arrives in Gethsemane to arrest Jesus, Luke again feels compelled to emphasize Judas' membership in the circle of the Twelve by commenting that, "the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them" (22:47).

²⁷ par. Matt 26:20–25/Mark 14:17–21

²⁸ par. Matt 26:46–50/Mark 14:42–45

As we observed in our earlier chapter on Matthew's characterization of Judas, the constant juxtaposition of Judas' apostleship with his role as a traitor employs a rhetorical device recognized in the ancient Mediterranean milieu as a means of amplifying the invective against villains. In his handbook of basic rhetorical exercises, Theon labels this strategy a "compound *topoi*."²⁹ To illustrate, Theon observes that "a traitor (προδότης) deserves anger, but much more when he is a general."³⁰ The traitor is a stock villain in Greco-Roman rhetoric, listed by Theon along with other commonly recognized evildoers: "tyrant, traitor (προδότης), murderer, profligate."³¹ Invective is sharpened by the contrast between the shameful actions of a traitor and the expectations attached to a noble office, such as being a general, or in Judas' case, his position as an apostle. Every glimpse of Judas in the Gospel of Luke emphasizes both his apostolic role and his act of treason, a rhetorical move that would arouse strong animosity toward Judas.

Luke 6:16

Luke's shaping of the synoptic tradition behind Luke 6:16 calls for special attention. All three Synoptic Gospels imply a negative evaluation of Judas by placing him last in the list of the Twelve and immediately noting that he is the one who

²⁹ Theon, 109; Kennedy, 45.

³⁰ Theon, 109; Kennedy, 45.

³¹ Theon, 106; Kennedy, 43.

betrayed Jesus (Matt 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16).³² Luke is unique, however, in his use of the noun *προδότης* (traitor) to describe Judas: Ἰούδαν Ἰσκαριώθ, ὃς ἐγένετο προδότης (Luke 6:16). Matthew and Mark both use forms of *παραδίδωμι* (hand over, betray): Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης ὁ καὶ παραδούς αὐτόν (Matt 10:4); Ἰούδαν Ἰσκαριώθ, ὃς καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτόν (Mark 3:19). In fact, *παραδίδωμι* is the typical term used in connection with the betrayal and arrest of Jesus, occurring 57 times in this regard,³³ including the subsequent descriptions in Luke of Judas' action against Jesus (Luke 22:4, 6, 21, 22, 48). In contrast, *προδότης* is rare in the NT, appearing only three times: our present passage (Luke 6:16); Stephen's charge that the Jewish leaders have become "betrayers (*προδότες*) and murderers" of God's Righteous One (Acts 7:52); and a vice list in 2 Tim 3:2–4. Likewise, in the LXX *παραδίδωμι* is extremely common, occurring about 250 times, while *προδότης* only appears 4 times, and only in the Maccabean literature.³⁴ The relative infrequency of the term *προδότης* and the vituperative contexts in which it appears in Jewish and early Christian literature suggest that the introduction of Judas in Luke 6:16 is the most condemnatory among the Synoptics. To go further, Luke chooses a construction that offers a more decisive conclusion regarding Judas' outcome. By saying that Judas ἐγένετο προδότης, Luke moves beyond describing the actions of Judas and makes a direct assertion

³² Hans-Josef Klauck, "Judas der 'Verräter'? eine exegetische und wirkungsgeschichtliche Studie," *ANRW* 26.1:723.

³³ William Klassen, "Judas Iscariot," *ABD* 3:1092.

³⁴ 2 Macc 5:15; 10:13, 22; 3 Macc 3:24.

about what Judas “became.” As Arie Zwiep observes, the use of *γίνομαι* is quite appropriate with *προδότης*, since one “no one is born a traitor, one becomes one by definition.”³⁵ Judging from the Judas-tradition common to the Synoptics, Luke’s audience is probably already familiar with what Judas did. Luke takes the next step and provides an unambiguous classification of Judas’ character.

Luke 22:1–6

Luke 22:16 provides the audience with the only clues in the Gospel of Luke regarding Judas’ motivation: (1) “Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot” (22:3); (2) after Judas approached the chief priests with the offer to betray Jesus, they “agreed to give him money” (22:5). Regarding the first of these, some interpreters assert that Luke softens his portrayal of Judas by depicting him as under the control of Satan.³⁶ One must ask, however, whether Luke’s audience would have regarded this association with Satan as exonerating Judas. In the episode of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, for example, Peter indicts the couple with the question, “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?” (Acts 5:3). He further implies their personal accountability by saying, “How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart?” (Acts 5:4). Ananias and Sapphira, of course, are struck dead by God for their transgression. In light of this story, it would appear that Luke would expect his

³⁵ Arie W. Zwiep, *Judas and the Choice of Matthias: A Study on Context and Concern of Acts 1:15–26* (ed. Jörg Frey; WUNT 2. Reihe 187; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 139.

³⁶ William Klassen, *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 116–28; Kim Paffenroth, *Judas: Images of the Lost Disciple* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 19–21.

audience to assume that Judas is responsible for his actions.³⁷ Other New Testament writers also share Luke's view that the influence of Satan does not exonerate the sinner. On the contrary, noting satanic influence emphasizes the diabolical nature of the behavior in view. Mark 8:33 says, "He rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.' " In the Gospel of John, there is a heavy emphasis on the influence of Satan on Judas (John 6:70–71; 13:2, 27), but Jesus still speaks of the magnitude of Judas' guilt (John 19:11).

These perspectives are consistent with Jewish texts that acknowledge Satanic influence without excusing human sin. In 1 Chronicles 21, "Satan . . . incited David to count the people of Israel" (21:1), but "God was displeased with this thing, and he struck Israel" (21:7). In the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the mind that lends itself toward evil can be "overmastered by Beliar" (*T. Ash.* 1:8), but the good man is guided by an angel of peace rather than Beliar (*T. Ben.* 6:1). According to a Talmudic tradition, all sin is ultimately inspired by an evil spirit: "Resh Lakish said, 'A person does not commit a transgression unless a spirit of folly enters him' " (*b. Sotah* 3a). Rather than excusing Judas, the assertion in Luke 22:3 that Satan entered Judas indicates the high degree of evil in which Judas is now involved and reminds

³⁷ Klauck, "Judas der 'Verräter'?", *ANRW* 26.1:726.

the audience that behind the events at the human level lies a cosmic clash between good and evil.³⁸

Luke 22:2–4 implies an evil alliance involving Satan, Judas, and the chief priests who are “looking for a way to put Jesus to death.”³⁹ Luke uses spatial movement—“he went away” (22:4)—to reinforce the image of Judas’ joining this coalition of the enemies of Jesus.⁴⁰ The statement, “They were greatly pleased and agreed to give him money” (22:5), is an especially strong signal that Judas shares the mindset of these opponents rather than of a disciple, since Luke frequently uses the disposition of possessions as an indication of whether one is moving toward or away from the kingdom of God.⁴¹ When Jesus called Peter, James, and John, “they left everything and followed him” (5:11). Levi does likewise (5:28). Jesus’ message urges his disciples to sell their possessions in order to give to the poor (12:33), and he warns that one cannot serve both God and wealth (12:15; 16:13). His strong demand that discipleship requires giving up possessions (14:33) saddens a rich ruler

³⁸ Bertil Gärtner, *Iscaiot* (ed. John Reumann; trans. Victor I. Gruhn; FBBS 29; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 22–23; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (SP 3; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 335.

³⁹ Conzelmann’s contention that between Luke 4:13 and 22:3 the author envisions a period “free from the activity of Satan” (*The Theology of St. Luke* [trans. Geoffrey Buswell; New York: Harper & Row, 1960], 170) undervalues the indirect manifestations of satanic influence in the narrative. See further, William David Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 249–50; Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke’s Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 43–60.

⁴⁰ Schuyler Brown, *Apostasy and Perseverance in the Theology of Luke* (AnBib 36; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 82.

⁴¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* (SBLDS 39; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977), 127–71.

who approaches Jesus (18:22–23). In contrast, Zaccheus' willingness to part with his possessions puts him within the realm of salvation (19:9). The chief priests and Pharisees, however, are characterized as those who love money (16:14) and who in their hypocrisy "devour widows' houses" (20:47). Judas' receiving money from the chief priests depicts him as sharing their mentality in contrast to that of true disciples of Jesus. This characterization is affirmed by Luke 22:6, which describes Judas as a vigilant conspirator with the chief priests who began to constantly seek an opportunity to betray Jesus.

Luke 22:21–23

Judas' privileged status as one who is present during Jesus' exclusive instruction of the Twelve and as one who sits at the table with Jesus' inner circle is starkly contrasted in Luke 22:21–23 with his role as betrayer. Having just shared with the Twelve the loaf and the cup as emblems of his own body and blood, Jesus announces:

"But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!" Then they began to ask one another, which one of them it could be who would do this. (Luke 22:21–23)

With this announcement "murderous intent is now revealed to be present along with the closest companionship with Jesus."⁴² We noted above in our discussion of Luke 6:16 the instructions of the ancient rhetorician Theon explaining that vividness can

⁴² Christopher Francis Evans, *Saint Luke* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 794.

be produced by showing the incongruity between a person's position and some crime committed.⁴³ The details of the table setting, stressed by the dramatic assertion that the betrayer is "with me" and "his hand is on the table" quite vividly juxtaposes Judas' infidelity with his intimate association with Jesus at the institution of the sacred meal. The rhetorical result is a highly compelling invective against Judas, especially for those initiated into the meaning of the supper.⁴⁴

In v. 22 Jesus acknowledges that his betrayal and suffering are necessary in the divine plan, but he insists, nonetheless, that Judas remains culpable:⁴⁵ "For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!" The declaration of woe indicates the pitiable fate in store for Judas. We note that the interjection *οὐαί* is not a curse, per se, but rather a cry of grief due to a keen awareness of the fate that will befall Judas.⁴⁶ Jesus' declaration concerning Judas foretells a pitiable future, similar to that lamented elsewhere in Luke concerning the rich (6:24–26), the unrepentant (10:13), and the hypocritical (11:42–44, 46–47, 52). In these cases, the "woe" that is dreaded is the suffering that will

⁴³ Theon, 109; Kennedy, 45.

⁴⁴ Many commentators perceive that the scene is intended to encourage introspection on the part of the audience, warning them that failure as a disciple could happen even to one who shares the table: Ernst, *Lukas*, 590–91; Culpepper, *NIB* 9:423; Claire Clivaz, "Douze noms pour une main: nouveaux regards sur Judas à partir de Lc 22.21–2," *NTS* 48 (2002): 417; Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 210.

⁴⁵ Stein, *Luke*, 546–47; John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53* (WBC 35C; Dallas: Word, 1993), 1060.

⁴⁶ For example, in Luke 21:23 Jesus issues a woe statement in view of the suffering coming on pregnant women and nursing mothers in Jerusalem. See N. Hillyer, "Woe," *NIDNTT* 3:1051–54; C. Spicq, "μακάριος, οὐαί," *TLNT* 2:432–44.

occur under the vengeance of God.⁴⁷ Jesus' statement implies that a similarly terrible fate is in store for Judas.

Luke 22:47–48

The final glimpse of Judas in the Gospel of Luke (22:47–48) presents to the mind's eye a scene in which spatial relations clearly depict Judas as one of the Twelve who has defected and joined the enemies of Jesus:

While he [Jesus] was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?" (Luke 22:47–48)

Jesus stands with the Eleven as Judas arrives at the head of the company sent by the chief priests to arrest Jesus. The main conflict at the human level in Luke is represented in these two groups. The apostasy and treachery of Judas are on display as he arrives with these enemies. Judas next offers Jesus a kiss, normally a sign of love and respect, but here the ultimate act of duplicity.⁴⁸ Jesus' question to Judas (not found in Mark's account) brings Judas' treachery into sharp focus. The image of the unabashed Judas approaching Jesus to kiss him, then being exposed by the reproachful question from Jesus, elicits profound animosity toward Judas from the authorial audience.⁴⁹ As John Nolland observes, "The image of betrayal that it

⁴⁷ Hans Klein, *Das Lukasevangelium* (KEK 1, pt. 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 668.

⁴⁸ Joseph Fitzmyer, *Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV* (AB 28A; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 1449.

⁴⁹ Ernst, *Lukas*, 608–9.

creates stands as one of the most powerful to have ever gripped the human imagination.”⁵⁰

To summarize the characterization of Judas in the Gospel of Luke, he is a duplicitous apostle who turns traitor, an archetypal villain worthy of the animosity of both God and mortals in the values of the Greco-Roman world. At the human level of events, his disloyalty results in his aiding the chief priests and Pharisees in exchange for money. He uses his position as one of the Twelve to facilitate their arresting Jesus in private, thus avoiding the interference of the crowds with whom Jesus is so popular. In the cosmic clash between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God, he sides with Satan and against the Son of God. As a result, Judas also shares with the enemies of Jesus the grim future implied in Jesus’ pronouncements of woe regarding both the Jewish leaders and Judas. The account of Judas’ death in Acts 1 alludes to all of these character traits of Judas, though reframing them in relation to the plot of Acts.

The Plot of Acts: The Reign of Jesus and the Expansion of his Kingdom

Acts 1–7⁵¹ focuses on the inaugural stages of the disciples’ mission in Jerusalem. A final period of instruction by Jesus (1:1–8) establishes that the Holy Spirit will empower the disciples to be witnesses for Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea,

⁵⁰ Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1088.

⁵¹ Section divisions for Acts largely follow those of Parsons, *Acts*.

Samaria, and “to the ends of the earth” (1:8).⁵² After the full number of the Twelve is restored (1:12–26), the Spirit is poured out, and the mission begins in earnest (2:1–4). At the heart of the apostolic message is the assertion that “God has made [Jesus] both Lord and Messiah” (2:36). The initial proclamation is a great success, with three thousand being baptized, and a great spirit of generosity and joy prevailing (2:41–47).

Beginning in Acts 3, however, Christian proclamation regularly results in opposition and persecution. Chapters 4 and 5 recount the arrest of disciples by the chief priests (4:1–3; 5:17–18), who are depicted as enemies of God (5:29, 39). At the same time, there are internal threats. In 4:32–5:11 the sharing of goods within the community of believers presents an opportunity for Satan. He enters the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira, prompting them to lie about their generosity. In turn, they are struck dead by God for “lying to the Holy Spirit” (5:3) and “to God” (5:4). In chs. 6–7 external hostilities escalate to the point of martyrdom, and before his death Stephen characterizes his persecutors as those who “are forever opposing the Holy Spirit” and who killed God’s Righteous One (7:51–52). Despite the persecution that the disciples suffer, every obstacle is overcome through divine aid, which includes

⁵² Since the book of Acts ends with Paul in Rome, the phrase “the ends of the earth” is sometimes equated with Rome: Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of The Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 143–44, esp. n. 9; Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (eds. Eldon Jay Epp and Christopher R. Mathews; trans. James Limburg, et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 7. We take the phrase to indicate global expanse, in which Rome is a significant waypoint: Dupont, *Salvation*, 18–19; Gerhard A. Krodel, *Acts* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1986), 60–61; Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEK 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 116; Pervo, *Acts*, 44.

boldness being given through the Spirit (4:31), an angel releasing disciples from prison (5:19), and the growth of the mission in spite of persecution (8:4).

In Acts 8–12 the mission crosses several social boundaries with the conversions of Samaritans (8:9–25), an Ethiopian (8:26–40), and a Roman centurion (10:1–48). The victory of the new era of Christ’s reign over Satan’s allies is demonstrated in the humbling of the magician Simon (8:9–11, 18–24),⁵³ the conversion of the fierce persecutor Saul (9:1–31), disciples again being released from prison by an angel (12:6–19), and the death of Herod as divine punishment (12:20–23).

In Acts 13–19 Paul is the principal protagonist. His travels around the Mediterranean provide the structure and movement of the narrative, and the continuous reporting of Paul’s itinerary leaves the audience with the impression that the mission to bear witness to Jesus “to the ends of the earth” (1:8) is being fulfilled with unflagging progress. Opponents overcome include the magician Elymas (13:4–12), unbelieving Jews (13:13–52; 14:1–7, 19; 17:5, 13; 18:5–6, 12–17; 19:8–9), Gentile religion (14:8–18; 16:11–40; 17:16–34; 19:23–41), and Jewish Christians who insist that Gentiles must observe the Law of Moses (15:1–29). The disciples are repeatedly vindicated, and the triumph of the kingdom of Jesus over the kingdom of Satan is captured in the ironic words of the hostile Jews in Thessalonica, who accuse the

⁵³ Susan R. Garrett demonstrates that the conflicts in Acts with magicians such as Simon are another manifestation of the triumph of the reign of Jesus over the kingdom of Satan: Garrett, *Demise*; Garrett, “Exodus.”

disciples of “turning the world upside down . . . saying that there is another king named Jesus” (17:6–7).⁵⁴

In Acts 20–28, Paul’s journey to Jerusalem, his arrest there, and the voyage to Rome are the principal events. His trials before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa (chs. 24–26) become opportunities to continue the mission, as does his appeal to Caesar. The shipwreck during his voyage to Rome provides further opportunities for Luke to illustrate the inversion of authority that elevates the disciples of Jesus above their opponents (ch. 27).⁵⁵ Finally arriving at Rome, Paul engages in the mission of preaching the kingdom of God as fulfilled in Jesus (28:23). Once again meeting opposition among unbelieving Jews, Paul turns to the Gentiles (28:24–28). The resistance of the unbelievers does not deter the mission, and the conclusion of the book of Acts points toward the continued progress of the kingdom, asserting that Paul “lived there two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (28:30–31).⁵⁶

⁵⁴ The accusation that Christians are destroying the established order is a common charge from Jews in Acts (6:11, 13–24; 21:21, 28). See further Jerome H. Neyrey, “The Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts: “They Turn the World Upside Down”,” in *Social World of Luke-Acts* (ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 271–304.

⁵⁵ Michael D. Thomas, “The World Turned Upside-down: Carnavalesque and Satiric Elements in Acts,” *PRSt* 31 (2004): 462–63.

⁵⁶ A compelling case can be made that these final words point to the “unhindered” advance of the gospel as one of the major themes in Acts: Frank Stagg, *The Book of Acts: The Early Struggle for an Unhindered Gospel* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955), 12–17, 106–109, 120, 123; Frank Stagg, “The Unhindered Gospel,” *RevExp* 71 (1974). Also, Parsons, *Acts*, 367.

The book of Acts, then, is the triumphant sequel to Luke in which Jesus' disciples overcome numerous opponents and obstacles in their mission of carrying the message of the kingdom of God from Jerusalem into the Gentile world. Jesus is reigning on high (Acts 2:32–36; 3:13), and from this exalted position he empowers his disciples through the Holy Spirit to continue his mission of overthrowing the strongholds of Satan (esp. Acts 10:38; 26:18) and proclaiming the good news of Jesus' reign. The disciples steadily advance the message of the kingdom from Jerusalem to Rome, with thousands of both Jews and Gentiles submitting to the name of Jesus. The conclusion of the book optimistically envisions a continuation of this pattern. Within this plot, Judas' defection is an early problem to be addressed, and Judas himself becomes a defeated enemy.

The Death of Judas in Acts 1:18–20

The account of the death of Judas in Acts 1:18–20 is embedded within the story of the selection of Matthias as Judas' replacement (1:12–26). Before looking specifically at the verses that discuss the death of Judas, we will consider the indications of Judas' character in the larger pericope. Then, focusing on 1:18–20, we will proceed to discern the attributes of Judas that would have been apparent to Luke's audience in the elements of death-accounts that commonly reveal character traits in the ancient Mediterranean milieu: (1) evidence of the qualities of the mind, (2) descriptions of the body, (3) external circumstances connecting the details of the death with the larger narrative, (4) echoes of other well-known deaths, and (5)

indications that the manner of death constitutes a fitting punishment (*lex talionis*) for some crime committed by the deceased.

Judas in Acts 1:12–26

Luke's account of the demise of Judas and the selection of Matthias is placed between the promise of the Spirit and the fulfillment of that promise, indicating that Judas' defection from the circle of the Twelve is "a problem of first magnitude" that needs to be resolved before the commencement of the new phase of the apostolic mission.⁵⁷ Having exactly twelve Apostles is essential to the Lukan view that the birth of the Christian community is the inauguration of the restoration of Israel.⁵⁸ Thus, the details of Judas' death and the divine election of Matthias are not tangential to the plot, but integral to the restoration already initiated by the appearance of the resurrected Jesus, the promise of the Spirit, the Ascension of Jesus, and the reassurance of his return. The account of the replacement of Judas adds to

⁵⁷ Johnson, *Literary Function*, 174–75. The promised gift of the Spirit, the commencement of the mission, and the imminent expectation of the parousia are cited by some commentators as matters that make replacing Judas quite urgent. See, for example, Adolf von Schlatter, *Die Apostelgeschichte: ausgelegt für Bibelleser* (Erläuterungen zum Neuen Testament 4; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1962), 14; Zwiep, *Judas*, 173.

⁵⁸ Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1972; repr. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 75–112; Gerhard Lohfink, *Die Sammlung Israels: eine Untersuchung zur lukanischen Ekklesiologie* (SANT 39; Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1975), 71–72; Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 75–82; Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 123–30; Craig A. Evans, "The Twelve Thrones of Israel: Scripture and Politics in Luke 22:24–30," in *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts* (eds. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 154–70; David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 123–26; Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 18–22.

this auspicious beginning through the details of the defeat of an enemy and divinely guided preservation of the new community.

There is some debate about the proper boundaries of the Judas-Matthias section in Acts 1. NA²⁷ divides the chapter at the beginning of Peter's speech so that 1:15–26 are regarded as a unit. UBS⁴ takes the disciples' return to Jerusalem in v. 12 as the major break, and labels 1:12–16 as "The Choice of Judas' Successor." Admittedly, vv. 12–14 are transitional, providing a conclusion to the Ascension scene and setting the stage for Peter's speech. The naming of the Eleven Apostles in v. 13, however, introduces the problem of the absence of Judas. At the close of the section this problem is resolved by Matthias' being "added to the eleven apostles" (1:26). Since the primary focus of the section is introduced by the list of the Eleven in v. 13, we follow the text division in UBS⁴ and treat Acts 1:12–26 as a unit.

The formal structure of Acts 1:12–26 consists of three parts: a description of the state of the disciples (1:12–14); a speech by Peter (1:15–22); and the election of Matthias (1:23–26). Thematically, the section addresses two threatening questions that arise due to Judas' departure: (1) How may the Christian community defend its integrity, given that one of Jesus' Twelve Apostles betrayed him? (2) How may a properly credentialed, divinely authorized replacement for Judas be selected so that the number of Apostles is restored to twelve? Peter's speech is comprised of two

halves (1:16–20a, 20b–22) that correspond to these questions.⁵⁹ The two subsections are distinguished from one another both by content and by verbal markers.

The verb *ἐδεῖ* (literally, “it was necessary”) introduces the first movement of Peter’s speech in v. 16. The imperfect tense is appropriate since this section recalls the past events of Judas’ defection (1:16–17) and death (1:18–19). The details of Judas’ death result in his property being unoccupied and shunned (esp. 1:19). Therefore, Peter is able to cite Ps 69:25—“Let his homestead become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it” (Ps 69:25)—to show that Judas’ death was foreordained (1:20a). The citation in v. 20a thus completes the unit of thought begun in v. 16.⁶⁰ In further support of this analysis the logic of Peter’s speech requires that the desolate homestead (*ἐπαυλις*) be a reference to Judas’ property, not his office; otherwise, the scripture cited in v. 20a contradicts Peter’s further directions (20b–22) for replacing Judas.⁶¹

The present tense of *δεῖ* (literally, “it is necessary”) in v. 21 is in contrast to the imperfect form in v. 16. Rather than looking backward at events that fulfilled scripture, it looks forward to action that will fulfill scripture.⁶² The citation of Ps 109:8 in Acts 1:20b—“Let another take his position of overseer”—provides the

⁵⁹ Robert W. Wall, *NIB* 10:48–51.

⁶⁰ Jacques Dupont, “La destinée de Judas prophétisée par David (Actes 1,16–20),” *CBQ* 23 (1961): 46–50; L. Desautels, “La mort de Judas (Mt 27,3–10; Ac 1,15–26),” *ScEs* 38 (1986): 234; Parsons, *Acts*, 32.

⁶¹ Haenchen, *Acts*, 161; Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 126.

⁶² Dupont, “La destinée,” 41–51.

biblical authority for Peter's proposal to choose a replacement for Judas (1:21). Thus the two scriptures cited in Acts 1:20 are the central hinge in Peter's speech. Recognizing this center, as well as the two issues addressed by Peter and the narrative frame of the speech, we find Acts 1:12–26 to exhibit a chiastic flow of thought:

- 1:12 Narrative transition
- 1:13 Names of the Eleven
- 1:14 The community prays
- 1:15 Peter stands up (*ἀνίστημι*) to speak to the 120
- 1:16–19 Judas' disqualification and death (18–19)
 - 1:20a Scripture foretelling Judas' death
 - 1:20b Scripture authorizing Judas' replacement
- 1:21–22 Qualifications for Judas' replacement
- 1:23 The 120 "cause to stand" (*ἵστημι*) Joseph and Matthias
- 1:24–25 The community prays
- 1:26 Matthias added to the Eleven
- [2:1 Narrative transition]

For our purposes, this structure suggests three elements from the context of the Judas-Matthias pericope that, in addition to the details of Judas' death (esp. 1:18–19), have strong potential for contributing to the characterization of Judas: (1) the contrast between Judas and Peter; (2) the contrast between Judas and the qualifications emphasized in the selection of his replacement; (3) the character traits implied through the scriptures cited in v. 20. After a brief analysis of these three contextual elements, we will proceed with our study of the details of Judas' death.

We begin by observing that Judas and Peter were the two disciples about whom Jesus made personal prophecies at the Last Supper. There he announced that the betrayer at the table with him would come to a sorrowful end (Luke 22:21–22),

and foreseeing Peter's denials, Jesus admonished him, "once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31-34). The predictions of unfaithfulness by both disciples are explicitly shown as fulfilled with Luke's narration of the disloyal actions of both Judas (Luke 22:47-48) and Peter (Luke 22:54-62). Parsons notes the "situational irony" that results in Acts 1:15-22 from having "the one who denied Jesus retelling the story of the one who had betrayed him."⁶³ The current passage, however, does not simply recall the similarities of their past infidelities, but brings the story forward to focus on the aftermath and outcomes for each disciple. By having Peter's first act of leadership in Acts also be the place where the fate of Judas is reported, Luke simultaneously narrates the fulfillment of the second half of each pronouncement about these two disciples: Judas suffers woe; Peter strengthens his fellow disciples. An ancient auditor who perceived the implicit comparison between these two figures would find poetic significance in the contrast between Peter's standing up in the midst of the community of disciples as a leader and Judas' having fallen headlong in the field purchased with ill-gotten gain. Both of these disciples were previously mentioned as being targeted by Satan (Luke 22:3, 31), so that their personal stories become microcosms of the battle between Christ and Satan. After temporarily succumbing to Satan, Peter "turned back" (Luke 22:32) and was restored to his place among the believers. Judas, however, "turned aside to go to his own place" (Acts 1:25) and met a terrible fate. Peter has a role among the Twelve and in

⁶³ Parsons, *Acts*, 31.

the spread of the kingdom in Acts. Judas has abandoned his office and meets a horrible end. The comparison of Peter and Judas illustrates for Luke's audience the victory over the kingdom of Satan that is assured to those who remain faithful (or return) to the community of believers, and it also ominously shows the destruction of those who abandon Christ for Satan.

Regarding our second point derived from the chiastic structure of Acts 1:12–26, the groundwork for the contrast between Judas' characteristics and the qualifications of an apostle is laid by the constant allusions to Judas' status as one of the Twelve in the Gospel of Luke and the clear reversal of that status in Acts 1. Whereas Luke 6:13–16 listed Judas among the Twelve, in Acts 1:13 Judas is omitted and only eleven are named. A similar negation of earlier status is also apparent in Acts 1:17: Luke 22:3 described Judas as “being of the number of the Twelve (ὄντα ἐκ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ τῶν δώδεκα),”⁶⁴ in Acts 1:17 a pluperfect periphrastic construction, “he had been numbered among us (κατηριθμημένος ἦν ἐν ἡμῖν),” speaks of that status as a previous state of affairs that no longer stands.⁶⁵ Wordplay within Acts 1 continues to press the issue of Judas' loss of apostolic status. In Acts 1:17 the audience is reminded that Judas “was allotted his share (κληρὸν) in this ministry” (1:17), but in v. 26 “they cast lots (κλήρους)” between the two nominated to take Judas' place, and “the lot (κλήρον)

⁶⁴ Author's translation. By contrast, the parallels in Mark 14:10 and Matt 26:14 simply refer to Judas as “one of the twelve (εἷς τῶν δώδεκα).” See further Jervell, *Luke*, 84.

⁶⁵ Author's translation. Martin M. Culy and Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2003), 16.

fell on Matthias.”⁶⁶ Similarly, the new apostle is chosen “to take the place (τόπον) in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place (τόπον)” (1:25).⁶⁷ In addition, this final phrase describing Judas as going “to his own place (τὸν τόπον τὸν ἴδιον)” is particularly ominous. It has been variously interpreted as referring to his going away (ἀπελθὼν) to the chief priests in Luke 22:3,⁶⁸ to his departing to the property described in Acts 1:18–19,⁶⁹ or as a euphemism for Judas’ going to hell.⁷⁰ Given Luke’s habit of using spatial relations to reflect spiritual status, any of these interpretations would reinforce the theme of Judas’ apostasy and indicate his perdition.⁷¹ If the Gospel of Luke emphasizes that one of the Twelve became a traitor, the book of Acts insists that the traitor is no longer part of the community, much less one of the Twelve.

⁶⁶ Parsons, *Acts*, 34.

⁶⁷ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles* (ANTC; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2003), 70; Parsons, *Acts*, 34.

⁶⁸ Brown, *Apostasy*, 84.

⁶⁹ Hans-Josef Klauck, *Judas: ein Jünger des Herrn* (Freiburg: Herder, 1987), 109. Cf. Johnson, *Acts*, 37, 40, who takes “place” here to be another instance of Luke’s metaphorical use of possessions.

⁷⁰ Haenchen, *Acts*, 162; Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte / Teil I, Einleitung, Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1–8,40* (HTKNT 5; Freiburg: Herder, 1980), 220; Gottfried Schille, *Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas* (THKNT 5; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1983), 85–86; Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 128. In Jewish and early Christian idiom the righteous and the unrighteous go to their respective “places” in the afterlife. The phrase “one’s own place” is neutral; whether paradise or torment is intended depends on clues from the context. Cf. Ign. *Magn.* 5.1; 1 *Clem.* 5:4; Pol. *Phil.* 9:2; *Midr. Ps.* 31.6; *Midr. Eccl.* 7.4; *b. Hag.* 15a. See further ancient parallels in Gaventa, *Acts*, 70; Zwiep, *Judas*, 167.

⁷¹ Brown, *Apostasy*, 82–84; Gaventa, *Acts*, 70.

A more subtle critique of Judas in relation to the other Apostles is suggested by the statement in Acts 1:16 that Judas “became a guide (τοῦ γενομένου ὁδηγοῦ) for those who arrested Jesus.” This description is similar in construction to the introduction of Judas in Luke as one “who became a traitor (ἐγένετο προδότης)” (Luke 6:16). It also recalls the final appearance of Judas in the Gospel as he leads the mob that comes to arrest Jesus (Luke 22:47–48). Being a traitor and being a guide to the enemy are actions frequently paired together in the ancient world, since by virtue of their insider-knowledge, traitors are able to aid the enemy in circumventing defenses or coming upon unprepared troops (e.g., Jdt 10:12–13; 1 Macc 4:2; 2 Macc 5:15; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.305). Judas used his knowledge of Jesus’ personal habits (Jesus customarily resorted to the Mount of Olives, according to Luke 22:39) to lead the enemy to a place where they could seize Jesus out of view of his admiring crowds (Luke 22:2–6). Judas’ abuse of his personal knowledge of Jesus stands in poignant contrast to Peter’s insistence that Judas’ replacement must also have personal knowledge of Jesus, having been present when Jesus “went in and out” among the disciples (Acts 1:21–22). By becoming a guide to the enemy rather than a witness to unbelievers Judas has utterly inverted the proper use of apostolic knowledge.

We now turn our attention to the citations from Psalms in Acts 1:20 (Ps 69:25; 109:8). Psalm 69 begins by describing a person who has suffered God’s

discipline (Ps 69:5–7, 26) but has endured that affliction righteously.⁷² His enemies, however, have capitalized on his humbled state by falsely accusing, insulting, and abusing him (Ps 69:4, 9–12, 19–21). The psalm pleads for divine wrath to be poured out on these oppressors so that their tents are left desolate and they are removed from the roll of the living as well as of the righteous (Ps 69:24–28). Luke amends Ps 69:25 (Ps 68:26 LXX) to apply it to a single oppressor and cites it as fulfilled in Judas’ death: “Let his homestead become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it” (Acts 1:20a). Psalm 69:25 is fulfilled because Judas, the owner of the “homestead” now known as the “Field of Blood,” has died and, due to its frightening reputation, the property has continued be shunned after Judas’ death. Since Judas’ death fulfills Ps 69:25, Judas shares the fate of those who oppress and make false accusations against a righteous person who is suffering under divinely ordained affliction.⁷³

The second citation in Acts 1:20 (Ps 109:8 [Ps 108:8 LXX])—“Let another take his position as overseer”—provides the basis for Peter’s assertion that it is necessary (δεῖ, Acts 1:21) for Judas to be replaced. The evildoer envisioned in Ps 109 is similar to that of Ps 69. False accusations (Ps 109:2–6, 26) and curses (Ps 109:7–19, 28) have been heaped upon a righteous sufferer (Ps 109:4–5, 22–25), who in turn petitions the Lord to vindicate him by repaying his enemies with their own curses (Ps 109:20, 27–31). The particular curse of being replaced in office is applied to

⁷² Psalm 69 was frequently associated with the passion of Jesus in early Christian tradition: Matt 27:34, 48; Mark 15:23, 36; Luke 23:36; John 15:25, 19:29; Rom. 15:3.

⁷³ Gärtner, *Iscairiot*, 37–38.

Judas, so that he is again categorized with those who abuse and make false accusations against a righteous person.⁷⁴

Such a characterization of Judas accords with Luke's presentation of Jesus as a righteous sufferer. A major element of Luke's apologetic concerns is to show that the one whom the Jewish leaders rejected is God's "Righteous One" (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14; cf. 3:13; 13:28). Rather than being evidence against Jesus' messiahship, his death and suffering are presented in Acts as following a divinely ordained plan (Acts 2:23; 4:28) and fulfilling Scripture (Acts 2:25–36; 3:18; 4:10–11, 25–27; 8:32–35; 13:27–37; 17:2–3; cf. Luke 24:44–47). Like the victims in Ps 69 and 109, Jesus suffers in accord with the divine will even though he is righteous. Like the antagonists of these psalms, Judas is one who shares in the violence and false accusations against a righteous person and is repaid by divine justice.

The Mind of Judas

In the foregoing discussion of Judas in the larger context of Acts 1:12–26, we have already surfaced some attributes of the mind of Judas, such as his willingness to use his apostolic status for personal ends and his cruelty in aiding those who falsely accused and abused Jesus. In the description of Judas' death in Acts 1:18–19, however, one attribute of the mind of Judas is featured most prominently: his greed. The avarice of Judas comes to the fore in the statement, "Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness" (Acts 1:18). We noted a hint of greed in

⁷⁴ Gärtner, *Iscaiot*, 37–38.

Luke 22:5 with the report that Judas received money for agreeing to hand over Jesus. The phrase “the reward of his wickedness (μισθοῦ τῆς ἀδικίας)” now identifies the love of money as a major motivation for Judas.⁷⁵ Given the abundant teaching in Luke and Acts about the dangers of greed and the proper use of wealth, Judas' handing over Jesus in exchange for money depicts him as one who failed to be formed as a disciple in spite of repeated warnings to the effect that, “You cannot serve God and wealth” (Luke 16:13).⁷⁶

Furthermore, Judas' acquiring a field with this money appears particularly reprehensible in comparison to the overall generosity of other disciples who liquidate their assets in order to share with those in need (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–37; cf. 3:6).⁷⁷ Judas, who “acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness,” contrasts sharply with Barnabas, who “sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet” (Acts 4:37). Whereas Acts 1:12–26 is primarily concerned with Judas' defection from his duty as an apostle, the additional allusion to his greed highlights his failure as a disciple as well.

⁷⁵ Whether one interprets ἀδικίας as a simply an attributive genitive—“use of the genitive to express an adjectival idea,” Max Wilcox, “The Judas Tradition in Acts 1.15–26,” *NTS* 19 (1973): 441— or as genitive of means/production—Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 125, n. 143; Johnson, *Acts*, 36)—the character implications are still that Judas obtained money by committing unrighteousness.

⁷⁶ Brown, *Apostasy*, 85–86; Johnson, *Literary Function*, 180–83; Klauck, *Judas: ein Jünger*, 108–9. The proper use of material wealth is a constant theme in both Luke and Acts: Luke 6:20–21, 24–25, 30–35; 9:25; 12:15–21, 33; 14:12–14; 16:13, 19–31; 18:18–25; 20:47; 21:1–4; Acts 2:44–45; 3:6; 4:32–37; 5:1–11; 8:18–24; 11:27–30; 20:33–35; 24:17.

⁷⁷ Johnson, *Literary Function*, 180; Wall, *NIB* 49; Parsons, *Acts*, 33.

The Body of Judas

The most vivid element of Luke's account of Judas' death is the description of the state of his body in death: "and falling headlong (πρηνής γερόμενος), 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" (Acts 1:18b–19). The account combines three elements: (1) a fall to a prostrate position; (2) violent trauma to the body, including the bursting of his abdomen and the outpouring of Judas' entrails; and (3) the resultant reputation of the location as the "Field of Blood." (The third of these elements will be discussed more fully below under "External Circumstances," but we mention it here in order to show the full array of elements in the description and also because the name of the field explicitly adds the splattering of blood to the image of Judas' bodily injuries.)

We demonstrated in Chapter 2 that death-accounts of impious persons frequently include shocking images of carnage, such that "a gruesome death is one of the signature elements of divine retribution."⁷⁸ It is clear that Judas' death fits this category. In addition to this general conclusion that Judas' dies an ugly death with the earmarks of divine retribution, the details provided suggest more precisely the nature of his crime.

⁷⁸ O. Wesley Allen, Jr., *The Death of Herod: The Narrative and Theological Function of Retribution in Luke-Acts* (ed. E. Elizabeth Johnson; SBLDS 158; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 123. See further, W. Nestle, "Legenden vom Tod der Gottesverächter," *ARG* 33 (1936): 246–69; P. W. van der Horst, "Hellenistic Parallels to the Acts of the Apostles," *ZNW* 74 (1983): 24.

The first element in the description of Judas' body is the statement that he became *πρηγής*. The translation of the term *πρηγής* in Acts 1:18 has been a matter of debate (as indicated by the footnote in the NRSV that offers "swelling up" as an alternate translation). This uncertainty results primarily from the variations in the traditions of Judas' death rather than lack of evidence for the proper translation of *πρηγής*. The Old Latin text of Acts 1:18 cited by Augustine says, "he [Judas] bound himself around the neck and, having fallen on his face (*deiectus in faciem*), burst asunder in the midst" (*Fel.* 1.4).⁷⁹ While Augustine's text conflates the account of Judas' death in Matthew with the account in Acts, the rendering of *πρηγής* given here is consistent with modern lexicography.⁸⁰ The Vulgate, however, omits any mention of Judas' falling, saying simply that he hanged himself and burst in the middle: "*et suspensus crepuit medius*" (1:18).⁸¹ The Armenian and Old Gregorian versions of this passage say, "being swollen up he burst asunder," but the Greek behind these two versions is intractable at this point.⁸² The account of Judas' death in the fragments of Papias shares a tradition with these two versions, stating that Judas

⁷⁹ English translation from Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (Fourth Revised Edition)* (2d ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2002), 247.

⁸⁰ LSJ, 1459; BDAG, 863.

⁸¹ All quotations from the Vulgate are from Bonifatius Fischer and Robert Weber, *Biblia sacra: iuxta Vulgatam versionem* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994).

⁸² English translation from Metzger, *Textual*, 247. For additional accounts of the death of Judas from the period after Papias see Roman Halas, "Judas Iscariot—A Scriptural and Theological Study of His Person, His Deeds and His Eternal Lot" (S.T.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1946), 160–64.

“became . . . bloated (πρησθείς) in the flesh.”⁸³ Although Papias does not purport to be presenting the wording of Acts 1:18, the similarity in spelling between πρηγής and πρησθείς fueled speculation in the early twentieth century that πρηγής might have been a misreading of πρησθείς,⁸⁴ or that the two words shared a previously unrecognized root such that πρηγής should be translated “swollen.”⁸⁵ These conjectural proposals, however, are not persuasive in view of the lack of variants among the Greek mss of Acts 1:18 and the clear meaning of the Greek term πρηγής in numerous texts. Homer describes Adrastus’ fall from his chariot as “headlong (πρηγής) in the dust upon his face (ἐπὶ στόμα)” (*Il.* 6.43). Similarly, the opposite of πρηγής is illustrated in *Il.* 11.179: “many fell from their chariots upon their faces or upon their backs (πολλοὶ δὲ πρηγεῖς τε καὶ ὕπτιοι ἔκπεσον ἵππων).” In the margin of Codex Vaticanus at Wisdom 4:19, which says, “he will dash them speechless to the ground (πρηγεῖς),” a corrector has added the explanatory note ἐπὶ πρόσωπον.⁸⁶ The lexicon of Hesychius Alexandrinus (5th–6th cent. A.D.) defines the term as ἐπὶ

⁸³ *The Apostolic Fathers* (trans. Bart D. Ehrman; 2 vols.; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 2:104–107.

⁸⁴ F. H. Chase, “Note on ΠΡΗΝΗΣ ΓΕΝΟΜΕΝΟΣ in Acts 1:18,” *JTS* 13 (1912): 278–85, 415.

⁸⁵ J. Rendel Harris, “Did Judas Really Commit Suicide?,” *AJT* 4 (1900): 490–513; E. Nestle, “The Fate of the Traitor,” *ExpTim* 23 (1912): 331–32; Otto Bauernfeind, *Kommentar und Studien zur Apostelgeschichte* (WUNT 22; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1980), 28.

⁸⁶ Kirsopp Lake, “The Death of Judas,” in *The Beginnings of Christianity* (eds. F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake; London: Macmillan and Co., 1933), 5:27; Henry Barclay Swete, *The Old Testament in Greek: According to the Septuagint* (3 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1894), 3:610.

πρόσωπον πεπτωκώς.⁸⁷ The thirteenth-century lexicon often attributed to Zonaras likewise equates *πρηγής* with having fallen forward on one's face.⁸⁸ Therefore, our conclusion must agree with that of Kirsopp Lake, who rejoins, "There is too much extant Greek literature for us lightly to accept a new meaning of a well-known word merely because Papias, Matthew, and Luke differ in their tradition as to the death of Judas."⁸⁹

Luke says, then, that Judas "fell headlong," or literally, "became prostrate." Given Luke's symbolic use of spatial relations, the authorial audience would have heard this description as significant for Judas' characterization. The Gospel of Luke frequently illustrates the themes of divine exaltation and humiliation (Luke 14:11; 18:14) through the metaphors of rising and falling. Mary described God's mighty acts of salvation in such terms: "He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly" (Luke 1:51–52). The prophet Simeon said, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel"

⁸⁷ Hesychius, et al., *Hesychii Alexandrini lexicon Volumen III, P - Sigma* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 161. Cited 25 November 2009. Online: <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/fhu/Doc?id=10154812&ppg=195>.

⁸⁸ Joannes Zonaras, Johann August Heinrich Tittman, *Lexicon: Ex tribus codicibus manuscriptis nunc primum* (3 vols.; Leipzig: S. Siegf. Lebr. Crusii, 1808), 2:1572. Cited 21 June 2010. Online <http://books.google.com/books?id=190NAAAAYAAJ&lpq=PT352&ots=6r1K10lrca&dq=zonaras%20lexicon&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=true>.

⁸⁹ Kirsopp Lake, "The Death of Judas," in *The Beginnings of Christianity* (eds. F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake; London: Macmillan and Co., 1933), 5:29. So also C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; ICC 34; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 1:98. For a similar conclusion regarding Wisd 4:19, see C. Larcher, *Le livre de la Sagesse, ou, La Sagesse de Salomon* (3 vols.; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1983–1985), 2:348.

(Luke 2:34). The disciples' success in exorcising demons prompts Jesus to say, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning" (Luke 10:18). In Acts the high/low metaphors are also abundant, beginning with the ascension of Jesus, which signals his divine exaltation,⁹⁰ and the complementary description of his putting all his enemies under his feet (Acts 2:34–35; cf. Luke 20:41–44). Frequently a humble state is signified by a person's falling to the ground, as in the case of Saul (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14), Cornelius (Acts 10:25), and the Philippian jailer. On the other hand, Ananias (Acts 5:5), Sapphira (Acts 5:10), and Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:23) are struck down for attempting to exalt themselves. Judas, who becomes *πρηνής* in a violent manner, is in the latter category. The recounting of the fall of this villain so soon in the narrative after the ascension of Jesus sets up a stark contrast between him and Jesus. As Richard I. Pervo observes, "Jesus rose while Judas fell flat on his face."⁹¹

Numerous commentators have noted that the relatively rare term *πρηνείς* along with other conceptual parallels found in Acts 1:18–20 occur in Wisd 4:19.⁹² This passage addresses the problem of the wicked observing the premature death of the righteous and using their untimely demise as a basis for deriding them:

⁹⁰ Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte (Apg 1–12)* (EKKNT 5; Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1986), 72–76; Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 121; Parsons, *Acts*, 27–28; Pervo, *Acts*, 45–46.

⁹¹ Pervo, *Acts*, 50.

⁹² Lake, "Death," 29–30; Gärtner, *Iscaiot*, 37–38; Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 88; Klauck, *Judas: ein Jünger*, 104; Klassen, *Judas: Betrayal*, 169; Zwiep, *Judas*, 72; Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 15; Pervo, *Acts*, 104.

The unrighteous will see, and will have contempt for them [the righteous],
but the Lord will laugh them to scorn.
After this they will become dishonored corpses,
and an outrage among the dead forever;
because he will dash (ῥήξει) them speechless to the ground (πρηνεῖς),
and shake them from the foundations;
they will be left utterly dry and barren,
and they will suffer anguish,
and the memory of them will perish. (Wisd 4:18–19)

The punishment set for these who have mocked the righteous is that God will mock them by violently striking them down and leaving their corpses in a shameful state. The verb ῥήξει (from ῥήγνυμι) is defined as “to cause to come apart or be in pieces by means of internal or external force, tear in pieces, break, burst”⁹³ or “break asunder, rend, shatter.”⁹⁴ Cognate forms of ῥήγνυμι are used in the Synoptics in Jesus’ statements about new wine bursting old wineskins (Mark 2:22; Matt 9:17; Luke 5:37). The connotations of tearing or bursting conveyed by ῥήξει, along with these villains being dashed to the ground (πρηνεῖς), suggest a final state of the corpse readily identified with the description of Judas in Acts 1:18. In addition, Wisd 4:8–19 shares with Pss 69 and 109 the theme of the persecution of the righteous by the wicked.⁹⁵ Perceiving linguistic echoes of Wisd 4:8–19 in the death of Judas in Acts 1

⁹³ BDAG, 904.

⁹⁴ LSJ, 1568.

⁹⁵ Gärtner, *Iscaiot*, 37–38; Klauck, “Judas der ‘Verräter’?,” *ANRW* 26.1:731–32.

would further confirm his characterization as one who suffered violent, divine retribution for scorning the righteous.⁹⁶

The second element of Luke's description of Judas' body gives vivid details of the result of Judas' fall: "he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out." Luke's language here is ekphrastic, intended to bring a visual image before the mind's eye.⁹⁷ Theon's advice to his students is helpful in understanding the rhetorical impact of such details:

The virtues of an ecphrasis are as follows: most of all, clarity and a vivid impression of all-but-seeing what is described; next, one should not recollect all useless details and should make the style reflect the subject, so that if what it describes is colorful, the word choice should be colorful, but if it is rough or frightening or something like that, features of the style should not strike a discordant note with the nature of the subject. (Theon 119.31–120.2; Kennedy, 47).

The frightening and grotesque details of the death of Judas do not "strike a discordant note," but rather harmonize with the other elements of invective against Judas in this passage. In the words of Robert L. Brawley, "The evisceration of Judas is a gruesome affair with strong visual and olfactory metaphors through which the figure sneaks repulsion into the construct of world represented by Judas—the image is loathsome; the mess stinks."⁹⁸ Their inclusion adds to the excoriation of his

⁹⁶ Hermann Levin Goldschmidt and Meinrad Limbeck, *Heilvoller Verrat?: Judas im Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1976), 67; Klauck, *Judas: ein Jünger*, 104; Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 15.

⁹⁷ Parsons, *Acts*, 33.

⁹⁸ Robert L. Brawley, *Text to Text Pours Forth Speech: Voices of Scripture in Luke-Acts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 66. Cited 28 May 2010. Online: <http://www.netlibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=11049>.

character. The ugly, horrifying image becomes permanently attached to the character of Judas.

One may ask, however, whether more specific character implications are entailed in disembowelment. Some interpreters suggest that such descriptions play on the dual meaning of *σπλάγχνα* as both “intestines” and “the seat of emotions.” In *Apoc. Pet.* 9:4 false witnesses in hell have fire put into their mouths and intestines. Richard Bauckham comments that, in addition to the obvious connection between lying and the torture of the mouth, apparently the intestines are tortured “presumably . . . because the deceit comes from within the liar.”⁹⁹ The Venerable Bede (d. 735) employs allegory and suggests that the effusion of Judas bowels is appropriate since these “had conceived the evil scheme of treachery.”¹⁰⁰ In a similar move, Robert Hall suggests that the reference to Judas' bowels may be intended to contrast with the good (compassionate) bowels mentioned in Luke 10:33; 15:20, so that Judas is “a tragic symbol of religious disaffection whose self-absorption wins out over mercy.”¹⁰¹ These interpretations, however, lack support from other ancient death accounts, which generally regard injuries to the bowels as among the most horrifying of wounds and mention them in order to indicate extreme violence, rather than misplaced affection.

⁹⁹ Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (NovTSup 93; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 217.

¹⁰⁰ The Venerable Saint Bede and Lawrence T. Martin, *The Venerable Bede Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Cistercian Studies Series 117; Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1989), 18.

¹⁰¹ Wall, *NIB* 10:50.

Evisceration stands as one of Homer's most horrifying descriptions of wounds and gore in the *Iliad*.¹⁰² In the context of combat, such grim depictions serve to heighten the audience's appreciation for the horrors faced on the battlefield.¹⁰³ Away from the battlefield, however, the emotions aroused by such a shocking image may be directed toward other rhetorical purposes. For example, the death of Amasa in 2 Sam 20:8–13 includes the detail that Amasa's "entrails poured out on the ground" (2 Sam 20:10), but this text is concerned primarily with the characterizations of Joab and David rather than Amasa. He had been a commander for the usurper Absalom in his war against David, but after the defeat of Absalom, David offered Amasa the command of his army in order to promote reconciliation. David's long-time commander Joab, however, objects to this course of action. Meeting Amasa away from Jerusalem, Joab draws Amasa near on the pretense of giving him a kiss. Joab suddenly strikes Amasa with his sword, eviscerating him and leaving him to wallow in his own blood. When passers-by begin to stare at Amasa, his body is thrown into the field and covered up. The elements of a treacherous kiss, spilled bowels, and a body dying in a field are tantalizing parallels to the story of Judas.¹⁰⁴ In the account of Amasa's death, however, these details say more about the character of the survivor Joab than about the deceased Amasa. In 1 Kgs 5:5–6 the dying David

¹⁰² For example, *Il.* 4.522–55; 13.506–8; 14.514–19; 17.311–15; 20.416–18; 21.180–82.

¹⁰³ Jasper Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 90–92, 103; Christine F. Salazar, *The Treatment of War Wounds in Graeco-Roman Antiquity* (ed. John Scarborough; Boston: Brill, 2000), 126.

¹⁰⁴ Cited as precedent for Acts 1:18 in Haenchen, *Acts*, 160; Johnson, *Acts*, 36.

instructs Solomon to punish Joab for the blood of both Abner and Amasa, “who murdered, retaliating in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war.” The account of Amasa’s death functions as an apology vindicating David and indicting Joab for undue violence against Amasa.¹⁰⁵ The death of Amasa does not suggest particular character traits relevant to the case of Judas.¹⁰⁶ It does, however, attest the emotional value attached to such ekphrastic details and illustrates how they function to intensify a rhetorical trajectory already established by the larger narrative.

In the Jewish literature of the early Christian period, there are two notable cases of villains whose bowels come out as punishment for their sins. In 2 Chron 21:12–15, 18–19, the evil King Jehoram is informed that he will suffer from a disease that will make his bowels come out “day after day.”¹⁰⁷ His crimes are (1) the propagation of idolatry in Judah comparable to what Ahab had done in Israel and (2) the slaughter of his own brothers, “members of your father’s house, who were better than yourself” (2 Chron 21:13; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 9.99–100). Over the course of two years of illness, “his bowels came out because of the disease, and he died in great agony” (2 Chron 21:19). Josephus also describes Jehoram’s fate, stating, “he perished miserably, looking on while his entrails fell out” (*Ant.* 9.99–104). The intensity of Jehoram’s suffering is stressed through the description of his bowels

¹⁰⁵ P. Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 432.

¹⁰⁶ So also Zwiep, *Judas*, 69–70.

¹⁰⁷ Cited as precedent for Acts 1:18 in Lawrence Briskin, “Tanakh Sources of Judas Iscariot,” *JBQ* 32 (2004): 194.

outside his body. These details, in turn, reflect the severity of his offenses. The implication is that the crimes of promulgating idolatry and doing violence to righteous persons are particularly abominable to God, and that because of these Jehoram suffered an especially grisly death.

In a similar case, Josephus describes the “miserable end” of the Roman governor Catullus who suffered an incurable disease that caused his bowels to fall out (*J.W.* 7.451–453). Catullus had contrived false accusations as a means of justifying the slaughter of Jews, and Josephus regards the manner of his death as conspicuous evidence of divine requital: “His malady ever growing rapidly worse, his bowels ulcerated and fell out; and so he died, affording a demonstration no less striking than any, how God in his providence inflicts punishment on the wicked” (*J.W.* 7.453). His violent persecution of the innocent is repaid by a most frightening death, vividly depicted through the grotesque description of his bowels protruding.

Jehoram and Catullus are both guilty of treacherous violence against innocent countrymen and they are repaid in similar fashion, with a painful disease that causes their bowels to come out. Like these two, Judas transgressed a filial relationship and conspired to commit violence against an innocent Israelite. What Judas suffers does not align perfectly with the deaths of these two villains, since Jehoram and Catullus suffer a prolonged disease, whereas Judas bursts suddenly as the result of a violent fall. Nevertheless, Luke’s audience would have been familiar with one’s bowels coming out as a particularly horrifying death and a sign of divine retribution for especially impious crimes, such as Judas’ betrayal of the righteous man Jesus.

Taken altogether, Luke's description of Judas' body is highly condemning. Judas' fall and prostration convey the humiliation and defeat of Judas as an enemy of Jesus. The gruesome trauma to the body and the scattering of his bowels and blood indicate violent retribution and divine justice. The parallel descriptions in Wisd 4:18–19 and the death accounts of Jehoram and Catullus corroborate the evidence from Ps 69 and 109 that Judas is characterized as one who scorns the righteous and commits violence against them.

External Circumstance and Divine Justice: Location, Location, Location

After describing the physical trauma that caused Judas' death, Luke adds that the story of Judas' fall "became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood" (Acts 1:19). This explanation provides the necessary background for Peter's assertion that the Scripture has been fulfilled that says, "Let his homestead become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it" (Acts 1:20a; cf. Ps 69:25). Judas' property is desolate because he, the owner, has died and because the local story of the "Field of Blood" wards off other occupants. Such a death is viewed as a curse, and the site of the death is to be avoided. The revulsion induced in the audience by the details of Judas' death in v. 18 is mirrored by the response of the citizens in Jerusalem in v. 19. The explanation of these circumstances further reinforces the characterization of Judas as a repulsive villain.

In addition, the earlier indicators that Judas died under divine wrath are further confirmed by the relationship between his crime and the location of his death. As we observed in Chapter Two, *lex talionis* is often fulfilled in the death of an unsavory character by some connection between the place of death and a crime committed. We recall, for example, that Herodotus found it significant that the Persian viceroy was crucified at the place where Xerxes had bridged the Hellespont (Herodotus, *Hist.* 9.120–21). According to Livy, a negligent watchman who allowed the Gauls to scale the escarpment of the Roman Capitol was punished by being “flung from the rock with the approval of all” (5.37.10). Diodorus Siculus finds it especially poignant when temple-robbers die inside a shrine where they were hiding, commenting that by “divine Providence they met with the punishment temple-robbers deserve” (*Library of History* 16.58.5–6). Procopius observes that the location of the death of the Roman deserter Ulifus indicates that he “obviously suffered retribution from Heaven in being destroyed at the very place where he himself had murdered Cyprian” (*History of the Wars* 8.33.12).

In Jewish literature as well the connection between crime and the location of the criminal’s death is frequently an attribute of divinely ordained retribution. Elijah pronounced judgment on Ahab after the murder of Naboth, saying, “Thus says the LORD: In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, dogs will also lick up your blood” (1 Kgs 21:19; cf. 22:38). Due to Ahab’s repentance (1 Kgs 21:27–29), the fulfillment of this threat is deferred to his son Joram, but Joram’s death emphatically stresses the retributive principle with a three-fold reference to his

body's being disposed of on the "plot of ground" that had belonged to Naboth (2 Kgs 9:25–26). The location of the death of Andronicus, a deputy of Antiochus IV, also symbolizes the fulfillment of talion. Andronicus was guilty of murdering the former high priest Onias, whom he had lured out of sanctuary by false pledges of loyalty. The public outcry was such that even Antiochus was moved to action. Stripping Andronicus of his purple robe, Antiochus "led him around the whole city to that very place where he had committed the outrage against Onias, and there he dispatched the bloodthirsty fellow. The Lord thus repaid him with the punishment he deserved" (2 Macc 4:38).

This pattern is evident again in the deaths of the high priest Menelaus and his brother Lysimachus, both of whom conspired to endear themselves to the Seleucid rulers by plundering the gold of the Temple and committing other forms of sacrilege. In the case of Lysimachus, the populace revolted against him and 2 Macc 4:42 reports with tacit irony that "the temple robber himself [Lysimachus] was killed close by the treasury." The location of the death of Menelaus is tied to his sacrilegious conduct as high priest. By order of Antiochus, Menelaus was pushed into a high tower full of ashes, where it was the practice to

. . . push to destruction anyone guilty of sacrilege or notorious for other crimes. By such a fate it came about that Menelaus the lawbreaker died, without even burial in the earth. And this was eminently just; because he had committed many sins against the altar whose fire and ashes were holy, he met his death in ashes. (2 Macc 13:4–8)

These cases exhibit flexibility in perceiving the justice of the location of the villain's death, including: dying at or near the scene of the crime, dying on property

that was obtained through the crime being punished, or even dying in a place that has features reminiscent of the crime. Familiar with such precedents, it is to be expected that the Lukan audience would, as a matter of literary habit, perceive divine justice in Judas' death occurring on the field purchased "with the reward of his wickedness" (Acts 1:18). Furthermore, Peter's explanation that these circumstances fulfill scripture explicitly affirms that Judas' death is a matter of divine action. The external circumstances of his death, therefore, further confirm his characterization as a traitor who was motivated by greed and who died under God's judgment.

Death according to Precedent

In Chapter Two we discerned that ancient audiences perceived character in a death-account by comparing it to other deaths and asking what kind of person would die in such a manner. The answer to this question is not "limited to one philological connection,"¹⁰⁸ nor is it necessary that such precedents correspond in every detail. As elements of the literary repertoire of the authorial audience, death-accounts that simply share major points of similarity with the death of Judas would shape the auditor's perception of Judas' characterization in Acts 1. Three precedents in particular in the Jewish literature of the period offer a combination of a violent

¹⁰⁸ Allen, *Death*, 21. An example of an unhelpful parallel to the death of Judas in Acts is the rabbinic story of a man whose bowels come out after he falls from a roof (*b. Hul.* 56b–57a) which is frequently alluded to in the literature on Acts 1:18 but holds no implications of character for the case of Judas. See Haenchen, *Acts*, 160; Johnson, *Acts*, 36; Ben Witherington, III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 121. Note the objection of Schille to Haenchen's assumption (apparently based on *b. Hul.* 56b) that Judas fell from a roof: Schille, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 83.

fall, an ignoble final state of the corpse, and similar crimes to those committed by Judas.

Of the death accounts noted in this section, the death of the evil queen Jezebel in 2 Kgs 9 contains a high degree of similarity to Luke's account of Judas' death. In her story, Jehu is anointed as king by a young prophet and commissioned to "strike down" Jezebel and the remainder of Ahab's house as vengeance for their slaughter of the prophets (2 Kgs 9:7) and for the murder of Naboth (2 Kgs 9:25–26). When Jehu arrives at Jezreel, Jezebel is looking down out of a window. Jehu asks, "Who is on the Lord's side?" He then orders the eunuchs attending her to throw her down. "So they threw her down; some of her blood spattered on the wall and on the horses, which trampled on her" (2 Kgs 9:32–33). Jehu enters the house to eat and drink, then sends servants out to bury Jezebel, but "they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands" (2 Kgs 9:35). Jehu concludes that the prophecy has been fulfilled that said she would be eaten by dogs and "be like dung on the field" (2 Kgs 9:36–37). Not only do Jezebel and Judas both die from a fall, but in both cases the fall is of sufficient force that there is a violent rupturing of the body. In addition, the descriptions of Judas' discharged bowels and Jezebel's being scattered "like dung" suggest similar connotations of filth that contaminates the ground on which they die.

The parallels extend beyond the physical descriptions to include other circumstances as well. In both cases the death-account occurs in a larger context in which a person who has abused a position of power is being removed from that

position and another appointed in his or her place. Jehu's anointing as the new king and his entering into Jezebel's house signifies his supplanting of her in her office.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Judas' death in Acts 1 is embedded in the account of his being replaced by Matthias. Furthermore, both Jezebel and Judas are guilty of conspiring in the murder of innocent persons and prophets. When Ahab was unable to obtain what he wanted from Naboth, Jezebel took the lead in orchestrating the death of the innocent man. Similarly, when the chief priests and scribes are at an impasse in their plot against Jesus, Judas steps forward to help them resolve the difficulty. Jezebel kills the prophets of the Lord. Judas contributes to the murder of Jesus, who is also regarded as a prophet (Luke 4:24; 13:33–34; 24:19; Acts 3:22–23; 7:52). Finally, we have noted the significance of the location of Judas' death; likewise, the place of the death of Jezebel is also significant. Naboth was a Jezreelite (1 Kgs 21:1, 4, 6, 7, etc.), and the vineyard Jezebel contrived to steal was in Jezreel (1 Kgs 21:1). Fittingly, Elijah prophesied that Jezebel would die within the bounds of Jezreel (1 Kgs 21:23; 2 Kgs 9:10), and so she did (2 Kgs 9:36–37).

Ahab and Jezebel are paradigms of evil in the Jewish Scriptures, and an ancient auditor would hear the similarities between the death of Judas and the death of Jezebel as an extreme condemnation of Judas. The allusions to Judas' love of money and his callousness in betraying Jesus are seen as classic manifestations of evil when seen in comparison to Jezebel's greed and cruelty. In view of her death-

¹⁰⁹ Francisco O. Garcia-Treto, "The Fall of the House: A Carnavalesque Reading of 2 Kings 9 and 10," *JSOT* 46 (1990): 48, 56–57.

account, the violent end of Judas appears even more clearly as an instance of divine requital for the persecution of God's Righteous One.

The description of the demise of the king of Bablyon in the taunt in Isa 14:4–20 describes a terrible fall and a desecrated corpse. In Isa 14 the king is charged with claiming for himself divine status (Isa 14:12–14) and oppressing others “with unceasing blows” (Isa 14:4–5). Through divine reversal, however, he is “laid low,” “cut down,” and “fallen from heaven” like a star (Isa 14:8, 12). His final state is frightening and repulsive, being cast out as unburied carrion (Isa 14:19) and trampled underfoot (Isa 14:19), with maggots for a bed and worms for a covering (Isa 14:11). The motifs of a violent fall and a dishonored corpse not only repay him for violence against the innocent, but are also due punishment for his “high” arrogance. Similarly, we have observed that in Luke and Acts falling is often associated with being humbled. Further, we noted in Pss 69, 109, and Wisd 4:18–19 that the persecution of the righteous was coupled with arrogance toward them.¹¹⁰ The taunt in Isa 14:4–20 suggests that the higher the arrogance and the more cruel the persecution it engenders, the more violent the fall and the greater the dishonor to the corpse. Heard in light of Isa 14, Judas' falling explosively on his face suggests repayment for arrogant violence against an innocent person.

¹¹⁰ The fate of the oppressors of the righteous in Wisd 4:18–19 appears to echo this taunt. See Larcher, *Le livre*, 346.

The physical description of the death of Antiochus IV in 2 Macc 9 shares with Acts 1:18–20 the details of a brutal fall and a repulsive state of the bowels.¹¹¹

Antiochus is racing toward Jerusalem in his chariot with the intent of killing all of the inhabitants when “the all-seeing Lord, the God of Israel, struck him with an incurable and invisible blow” causing severe pain in his bowels (2 Macc 9:5). This punishment is recognized as due justice, since “he had tortured the bowels of others with many and strange inflictions” (2 Macc 9:6). The arrogance and anger of Antiochus only increase, however, and he urges his driver to go faster. This results in further injury: “And so it came about that he fell out of his chariot as it was rushing along, and the fall was so hard as to torture every limb of his body” (2 Macc 9:7). This fall is interpreted as requital for his extreme pride:

Thus he who only a little while before had thought in his superhuman arrogance that he could command the waves of the sea, and had imagined that he could weigh the high mountains in a balance, was brought down to earth and carried in a litter, making the power of God manifest to all. (2 Macc 9:8)

Subsequently his body swarms with worms, his stench becomes so repulsive that his attendants cannot perform their duties, and he dies in great pain.

This account differs in details from that of Judas in that Judas appears to have died suddenly, but Antiochus suffers prolonged agony. Also, Judas’ bowels gush out, but Antiochus is afflicted with internal pain in his bowels. Nevertheless, an auditor whose repertoire of death-accounts included the death of Antiochus as

¹¹¹ An alternate account of his death is given in 1 Macc 6:5–16 in which the king becomes fatally ill from disappointment after hearing that his forces had been routed in Judah.

recounted in 2 Macc 9:4–12 would perceive in Act 1:18–20 a violent fall similar in magnitude to that experienced by Antiochus. The vivid description of the repulsive state of his bowels shares the frightening and revolting elements present in the description of Judas' bowels. The result is that Judas dies a death similar to the infamous, arrogant, impious persecutor of the Jews, Antiochus IV.

The cases cited above—Jezebel, the king of Babylon, and Antiochus IV—suggest a pattern in which those guilty of arrogant impiety, abuse of power, and extreme violence against the righteous incur the severe punishments of a violent fall, horrifying trauma to the body, and a dishonored corpse. Their fall indicates their loss of a high position and their humiliation. The severity of their wounds repays their violence toward the innocent. The enduring disgrace of their final, repulsive state corresponds to the infamy attached to their names after they are gone. While there is variation in detail, Luke casts Judas in this mold when he says, “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” (Acts 1:18b–19).

The Function of the Figure Judas in Acts

A complex narrative like Acts allows many theological concerns to be addressed, so it is simplistic to attempt to deduce a single purpose for the book. A strong scholarly consensus agrees, however, that one of the primary purposes of Acts is to serve as a “legitimizing narrative” showing that the community of disciples

composed of both Jewish and Gentile Christians is in continuity with the salvation history of the Jewish Scriptures and constitutes the restored Israel.¹¹² In particular, the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish religious leaders appears to have provided a basis for objections from the opponents. In response to this problem, the plot of Acts defends the identity of the new people of God through the disciples' testifying about the resurrection of Jesus, giving evidence from the Jewish Scriptures, demonstrating the power of the Holy Spirit through miracles, and showing their divinely enabled defeat of the enemies of the Christian community. The account of Judas' death and his characterization in Acts 1:12–26 serves several functions in this program of legitimation.

First, Luke's death-account of Judas addresses a potential apologetic problem for the Christian community. Detractors will ask how Jesus could be the Messiah and Son of God if one of his apostles rejected and betrayed him. Luke reverses the implications of this event by showing it to be a necessary fulfillment of Scripture (Acts 1:16–20a; Ps 69:25). Luke also builds legitimacy for the new community by using the circumstances as an occasion to show that the disciples receive divine guidance through the Jewish Scriptures (Acts 1:20b–21; Ps 109:8), as well as prayer and providence (Acts 1:23–25). In addition, the identity of the church as the restored Israel is supported in this episode through the restoration of the circle of apostles to the full tally of twelve (Acts 1:26), and continuity with the ministry of

¹¹² Haenchen, *Acts*, 100–3; Johnson, *Acts*, 7–9; Jervell, *Theology*, 1–4; Witherington, *Acts*, 72–74; Parsons, *Acts*, 15; Pervo, *Acts*, 21–22.

Jesus is emphasized through the qualifications required in the selection of Matthias (Acts 1:21–22).

A second way in which Judas' death contributes to the defense of the identity of the new community as the people of God is through the clear earmarks that he dies a punitive death as a persecutor of the righteous. This characterization is reinforced in numerous ways in Acts 1:18–20. His dying on a field purchased with the betrayal price is a signal of retribution for wages obtained through wicked means. The citations from Pss 69 and 109 imply that he suffers the consequences of those who scorn the righteous and commit violence against them.¹¹³ The literary and thematic parallels with Wisd 4:18–19 again place him in this category. Finally, his violent fall and horrifying physical injuries echo stories of other enemies of the righteous who have been similarly punished by God.

Judas is further identified as a defeated enemy of God by observing that the death of Judas is part of a series of punitive events in Acts indicative of divine wrath. Most notable among these accounts are the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11), the death of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:20–23), the blinding of Elymas (Acts 13:7–11), and the attack on the seven sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13–16).¹¹⁴ Less violent examples of divine defeat of enemies also include the temporary blinding of Saul

¹¹³ Timothy Berkley notes that even without the detailed description of Judas' death in Acts 1:18–19, the psalms quoted in Acts 1:20 recall the convention of violent vengeance on the opponents of God: Timothy W. Berkley, "O.T. Exegesis and the Death of Judas," *Proceedings, Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies* 14 (1994): 32.

¹¹⁴ Allen, *Death*, 120–30; Paffenroth, *Judas*, 22.

(Acts 9:8; 22:11), miraculous rescues from prison (Acts 5:17–21; 12:6–11; 16:25–27), thwarted plots (Acts 9:23–25; 20:3; 25:1–5; 27:42–43; cf. 21:27–32), vindication before Gentile officials (Acts 16:35–39; 18:12–17; 19:37–41; 25:31–32), and numerous healings and exorcisms. Luke in his literary art does not simply mention these victories of the disciples over their enemies, he records details that allow the audience to experience the thrill of justice being carried out or take delight in the parodying of the opponents.¹¹⁵ The more detailed and fitting the punishment of a villain, the more satisfaction the ancient audience derives from hearing that justice is served. The divine reversals repaid to Judas are numerous, and the description of his death, brutally vivid. He stood to inherit a throne (Luke 22:30), but due to his apostasy he is cast down miserably. He purchases a field, but he does not inhabit it. He had a place among the Twelve in the restoration of Israel, but “he departed to go to his own place” (Acts 1:20b, 25–26). He handed Jesus over to violent men for a fee, and in requital he suffered a violent fall that burst his body and scattered his bowels and blood on the property he purchased with the betrayal price. Judas thus vividly introduces a series of enemies and obstacles that meet the vengeance of divine justice and are decisively overthrown in the new era of the reign of Christ.

We also recall that in Luke’s Gospel the predictions of salvation in Jesus are accompanied by promises of divine retribution.¹¹⁶ The details of Judas’ death in Acts

¹¹⁵ Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 49. See also Thomas, “World,” 456–58.

¹¹⁶ Allen, *Death*, 116–30.

1:18–20 fulfill prophecies made in Luke’s Gospel in such a way as to show him falling under that retribution. Luke 1:51–53 describes God’s salvation as demonstrated through his scattering the proud, dethroning the powerful, and sending the rich away empty. Judas has fulfilled all three: his entrails are scattered on the field, he has lost his opportunity to sit on one of the twelve thrones (Luke 22:30), and the property obtained with “the reward of his wickedness” is left desolate. Simeon prophesied that Christ would cause “the falling and the rising of many in Israel” (Luke 2:34), and Acts 1 sets up a sharp contrast between Jesus’ own rising and Judas’ falling. The fate of Judas also fulfills the grim expectations set by Jesus’ foresight at the Last Supper: “The Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!” (Luke 22:22).

The cumulative effect of the Scriptures fulfilled in Judas’ death, the violent nature of his fall, the focus in Acts on punitive events, and the correspondence between the demise of Judas and the prophecies of vengeance in the Gospel of Luke overwhelmingly indicate that Judas dies as an enemy of the righteous who merits divine requital. Thus, Judas’ death is a constituent element in Luke’s narrative argument that the defeat of enemies of the Christian movement is evidence of the enthronement of Jesus on high and of the identity of Jesus’ disciples as the reconstituted people of God.

While prosecuting his defense of the identity of the new people of God, Luke also shows concern for the moral formation of his audience.¹¹⁷ In addition to contributing to Luke's legitimating purpose, Judas' death-account has potential to serve as a cautionary moral tale in at least two ways. First, we have noted above Judas' failure to live up to Jesus' abundant teaching on the dangers of money. Additionally, we have observed the sharp contrast between Judas and the spirit of generosity that characterized the early church (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–37). Judas' moral failure in this regard had frightful results, and Luke's audience receives a renewed warning against the love of money through being reminded of its effect on Judas. Second, Luke's concern about betrayal by close friends is evident in Luke 21:16, where Jesus warns, "You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death." The vivid description of the divine retribution suffered by Judas for his betrayal of a righteous man through abuse of his insider-knowledge stands as a warning to others who might be tempted to commit similar treachery.

Conclusions

Using conventions common to death-accounts in the Mediterranean milieu, Luke not only presents an ignoble death for Judas, but draws a portrait of a punitive death of a treacherous villain. By recalling that Judas became a guide to the enemies of Jesus in exchange for money, Luke indicates that the mind of Judas is

¹¹⁷ Parsons, *Acts*, 20–21.

characterized by greed. The citations of Pss 69 and 109, as well as the echoes of Wisd 4:18–19, classify Judas among the persecutors of the righteous. The details of his violent fall and the revolting final state of his body resonate with other well-known deaths of the enemies of the righteous, further affirming that Judas is punished for persecuting God’s Righteous One. The vividness with which his physical trauma is recounted underscores this ignoble characterization. The poetic justice entailed in his dying on the property purchased with the “reward of his wickedness” indicates that the divine hand is involved in his punishment.

Thus, the death of Judas in Acts 1:18–20 portrays him as one who suffers divine vengeance for having persecuted God’s Righteous One, Jesus (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14). Previously, in the Gospel of Luke, Judas was depicted as an apostle who turned traitor, and in so doing joined forces with the allies of Satan in a cosmic battle for kingship over the world. In Acts, however, the defeat of all enemies of the Son of God is underway as a consequence of Jesus’ ascension and enthronement. The correspondence between Judas’ death and other punitive events in Acts affirms that Judas is now reckoned among those enemies who are being overthrown. The animosity engendered toward Judas through his odious depiction in the Gospel finds satisfaction in the gruesome details of his death, and Luke’s ominous final comment that Judas “turned aside to go to his own place” implies eternal condemnation similar to that envisioned by the woe pronounced on Judas in Luke 22:22. As Luke’s first example of a persecutor of the righteous and enemy of God who is violently

overthrown in Acts, the death of Judas in Acts 1:18–20 communicates the plot of *Acts in nuce*.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Death of Judas according to Papias

But Judas went about in this world as a great model of impiety. He became so bloated (πρησθείς) 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 (αἰδοῖον) 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 uninhabited because of the stench. Indeed, even to this day no one can pass by that place without holding his nose. This was how great an outpouring he made from his flesh on the ground. (Papias, frag. 4:2–3)¹

Papias, bishop of Hierapolis during the days of Polycarp and Ignatius, wrote five volumes comprising a single work entitled “Interpretation of the Oracles of the Lord (Λογίων κυριακῶν ἐξηγήσεως),”² perhaps as early as A.D. 110.³ The work as a

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the English translation, Greek text, and numbering system for the fragments of Papias are those found in *The Apostolic Fathers* (trans. Bart D. Ehrman; 2 vols.; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

² Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.33.4 (*ANF* 1:563); Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.36.1–2; 3.39.1.

³ Ulrich H. J. Körtner, *Papias von Hierapolis: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des frühen Christentums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1983), 88–94, 225–26; Robert W. Yarbrough, “The Date of Papias: A Reassessment,” *JETS* 26 (1983): 181–91; William R. Schoedel, “Papias,” *ANRW* 27.1:236–37; Ulrich H. J. Körtner and Martin Leutzsch, *Papiasfragmente; Hirt des Hermas* (Schriften des Urchristentums 3; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998), 30–31. If the allusion in frag. 12 to the reign of Hadrian (A.D. 117–138) is given more weight than Eusebius’ placement of Papias during the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98–117), then a date ca. A.D. 125 is more tenable for Papias: thus Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature* (trans. Matthew J. O’Connell; 2 vols.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2005), 1:158. Körtner and Leutzsch, suggest that frag. 12 may have attributed to Papias a statement from Quadratus,

whole appears to have survived as late as the ninth century,⁴ but at present it is only known in fragmentary form through quotations and allusions that have been preserved in a variety of ancient sources. The number of fragments assembled in modern critical collections varies, depending on editorial judgments regarding disputed texts,⁵ as well as whether one chooses to include, along with the fragments that quote or paraphrase his writings, texts that preserve information about Papias himself.⁶ Bart Ehrman's collection (LCL), which includes only fragments that quote from Papias or otherwise indicate something of the content of his books, is typical at sixteen fragments. The largest collections, such as those by Josef Kürzinger (25

thereby creating the misleading impression that Papias wrote during Hadrian's era; see Körtner and Leutzsch, *Papiasfragmente*, 31.

⁴ E. J. Goodspeed and Robert M. Grant, *A History of Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 91–92; David G. Deeks, "Papias Revisited," *ExpTim* 88 (1977): 324.

⁵ See William R. Schoedel, "Papias," *ANRW* 27.1:244–45 for discussion of some proposed texts that are still being debated. Also, Charles E. Hill has recently argued that anonymous tradition about the Fourth Gospel that Eusebius preserves in *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.5–13 is, in fact, from Papias. Hill's argument, based on perceived parallels with other material that is explicitly attributed to Papias, is tenuous and does not appear to have won much support thus far. See Charles E. Hill, "What Papias Said about John (and Luke): A 'New' Papian Fragment," *NTS* NS 49 (1998): 582–629; Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 386–96.

⁶ Recent critical collections may be found in *The Apostolic Fathers* (trans. Ehrman, LCL); Körtner, *Papias*; Josef Kürzinger, *Papias von Hierapolis und die Evangelien des Neuen Testaments: gesammelte Aufsätze, Neuauflage, und Übersetzung der Fragmente, kommentierte Bibliographie* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1983); Andreas Lindemann and Henning Paulsen, *Die apostolischen Väter: griechisch-deutsche Parallelausgabe auf der Grundlage der Ausgaben von Franz Xaver Funk/Karl Bihlmeyer und Molly Whittaker* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992); Enrico Norelli, *Papia di Hierapolis: Esposizione degli oracoli del Signore. I frammenti. Introduzione, testo, traduzione e note* (Lecture cristiane del primo millennio 36; Milan: Paoline, 2005); Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (3d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007). For tables that provide cross-referencing of the numbers assigned to each fragment in some of the various collections see Körtner, *Papias*, 48–49; Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 730; Norelli, *Papia*, 502–3.

frags.), Enrico Norelli (26 frags.), and Michael W. Holmes (28 frags. in his 3d ed.), include not only Latin and Greek sources, but also a few Arabic and Armenian texts.

Papias' account of the death of Judas is one of the longer and more widely preserved fragments. It has survived in catenae and commentaries in three forms. First, the version cited above appears in catenae on Acts,⁷ as well as a commentary on Acts by Theophylact (bishop of Achrida in Bulgaria, eleventh-twelfth century)⁸ and an anecdote in codex Paris. 1630.⁹ The second form contains a doublet so that two versions of the death of Judas are combined: the version found in our first category, and an alternate version that states that the swollen Judas was crushed by a wagon, causing his bowels to spill out. This longer form is found in catenae on Matthew¹⁰ and comments on Acts 1:16–20 by Oecumenius (bishop of Trikka in Thessaly, late tenth century).¹¹ Third, summary statements that echo the Papias-tradition in their brief descriptions of Judas' swelling and bursting may be found in

⁷ J. A. Cramer, *Catenae in Acta SS. Apostolorum e cod. nov. coll.* (vol. 3 of *Catenae graecorum patrum in Novum Testamentum*; ed. J. A. Cramer; Oxford, 1838; repr., Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), 12–13; Joseph Reuss, *Matthäus-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche* (TU 61; Berlin: Akademie, 1957), 47–48, right col.

⁸ Theophylact, *Expositio in Acta Apostolorum*, at Acts 1:19 (PG 125:521c–524a).

⁹ Jean François Boissonade, ed., *Anecdota: Anecdota graeca e codicibus regiis* (5 vols.; Paris: Regio Typogr., 1829–1833), 2:464–65. Cited 2 August 2010. Online: <http://books.google.com/books?id=CxUOAAAAYAAJ&pg=PP5#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

¹⁰ J. A. Cramer, *Catenae in Evangelia S. Matthaei et S. Marci ad fidem codd. mss.* (vol. 1 of *Catenae graecorum patrum in Novum Testamentum*; ed. J. A. Cramer; Oxford, 1840; repr., Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), 231; Reuss, *Matthäus-Kommentare*, 47–48, left col.

¹¹ Oecumenius, *Commentaria in Acta Apostolorum*, at Acts 1:16–20 (PG 118:57d–60b).

commentaries on Matthew by Theophylact¹² and Euthymius Zigabeno (Byzantine theologian, twelfth century),¹³ and in a scholium on Acts 1:18 attributed to Eusebius.¹⁴ The latter instance also describes Judas' swelling in terms of his not being able to pass where a wagon could easily pass, but like those sources in our first category, it does not mention his being crushed by a wagon. An additional element that appears in all three forms of the tradition—specifically in the catenae on Matthew, the catenae on Acts, codex Paris. 1630, and the scholia attributed to Eusebius—is the citation of a certain Apollinaris as the source through whom Papias' account has been preserved. He is widely regarded to be the fourth-century exegete of Laodicea.¹⁵

The establishment of a critical text for Papias' account of the death of Judas was undertaken by Theodor Zahn,¹⁶ and his work was further redacted by Franz Overbeck, Adolf Hilgenfeld, and Erwin Preuschen,¹⁷ each building on the work of his

¹² Theophylact, *Enarratio in Evangelium Matthaei*, at Matt 27:3–5 (PG 123:460b–c).

¹³ Euthymius Zigabeno, *Expositio in Matthaeum*, at Matt 27:5 (PG 129:705c–706a).

¹⁴ Christian Friedrich von Matthäi, et al., *S. Lucae Actus apostolorum Graece et Latine* (Rigae: Sumtibus Ioann. Frider. Hartknochii., 1782). Cited 2 August 2010. Online: <http://books.google.com/books?id=c1gUAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA304#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

¹⁵ Kirsopp Lake, "The Death of Judas," in *The Beginnings of Christianity* (eds. F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake; London: Macmillan and Co., 1933), 5:23, n. 1; William R. Schoedel, *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias* (Camden, N.J.: Nelson, 1967), 111; Kürzinger, *Papias*, 104, n. 1. Theodor Zahn held the person in question to be the apologist Claudius Apollinaris of Hierapolis (late second century): Theodor Zahn, "Papias von Hierapolis, seine geschichtliche Stellung, sein Werk und sein Zeugnis über die Evangelien," *TSK* 39 (1866): 682–83.

¹⁶ Zahn, "Papias," 680–87.

¹⁷ Franz Overbeck, "Über zwei neue Ansichten von Zeugnissen des Papias," *ZWT* 10 (1867): 39–42; Adolf Hilgenfeld, "Papias von Hierapolis," *ZWT* 18 (1875): 262–64; Erwin Preuschen,

predecessors. Preuschen only slightly revised Hilgenfeld's work, most notably making the critical apparatus more succinct. Hilgenfeld's text was taken up by Franz Xaver von Funk in his critical collection and has gained wide acceptance as the authoritative reconstruction.¹⁸ The principal text-critical issue is whether the original account stated that Judas burst by being crushed by a wagon, or simply compared Judas' size to that of a wagon. When the two versions are placed side by side, it becomes apparent for several reasons that the description of an accident involving a wagon is a gloss that has been inserted into the original account.¹⁹ Most noticeably, in those accounts that include the additional statement that Judas was crushed by a wagon, tension is created with the remainder of the account that proceeds to describe his swelling so large that he could not fit where a wagon might pass and then dying on his own property. It is unlikely that such contradictory

Antilegomena: die Reste der ausserkanonischen Evangelien und urchristlichen Überlieferungen (2d ed.; Gieszen, Germany: Alfred Töpelmann, 1905), 61–62.

¹⁸ F. X. von Funk, *Patres apostolici* (2 vols.; 2d ed.; Tübingen: H. Laupp, 1901), 1:360–63. In Funk's 1901 edition he credits Hilgenfeld as the source of his Greek text, and notes one emendation, a correction of Hilgenfeld's misprint of εἶχον (not found in any mss) in v. 2 to εἶχεν. Notably, numerous subsequent publications have reprinted the text found in this edition of Funk citing Preuschen rather than Hilgenfeld: Karl Bihlmeyer, *Die apostolischen Väter: Neubearbeitung der Funkschen Ausgabe* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1924), 136–37; Karl Bihlmeyer and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *Die apostolischen Väter: Neubearbeitung der Funkschen Ausgabe von Karl Bihlmeyer* (3d ed.; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1970), 136–37; Lindemann and Paulsen, *Die apostolischen Väter*, 294–97. Hilgenfeld's text as corrected by Funk is also the critical text used in Ehrman (LCL, 2003) and (with two minor spelling changes) in Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*. Körtner, *Papias*, cites Preuschen as the source of his critical text, but in actuality his text is closer to that of Hilgenfeld as corrected by Funk.

¹⁹ The two accounts may be compared in parallel columns in several sources: Lake, "Death," 23–24; Reuss, *Matthäus-Kommentare*, 47–48; Körtner, *Papias*, 28–29; Arie W. Zwiep, *Judas and the Choice of Matthias: A Study on Context and Concern of Acts 1:15–26* (ed. Jörg Frey; WUNT 2. Reihe 187; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 112–15.

elements were both part of Papias' original version.²⁰ Second, the exact repetition in wording that exists in the longer version strongly suggests that a doublet has been created. Third, the account of Judas' being crushed by a wagon is easily explained as the result of a copyist's desire to render Papias' exaggerated statement (that Judas "could not pass through a place that was easily wide enough for a wagon") into a more plausible version.²¹ Finally, the texts that do not mention the accident with a wagon read much more smoothly than those that contain this additional wording. Thus, beginning with Zahn, the critical editions have uniformly regarded the account of an accident involving a wagon as a gloss. Our analysis of Papias' account of the death of Judas will be based on the critically established text in which the circumstances of his death include enormous swelling, pus, worms, and a foul stench, but not his being crushed by a wagon.

Trajectories in the Fragments of Papias

Due to the fragmentary state of Papias' work it is not possible to trace a narrative flow as we did in our chapters on the death of Judas in Matthew and Acts. We will attempt to establish some context for Papias' account of the death of Judas by reviewing the principal literary and theological features of the surviving fragments. One remains cautious, however, noting that many of the quotations and allusions that have survived were likely cited due to their uniqueness. It seems

²⁰ Zahn, "Papias," 686.

²¹ Kürzinger, *Papias*, 105.

almost certain that his five volumes contained much that was common to the mainstream tradition, for which there would have been little need to cite Papias.

We may begin with the title by which Eusebius refers to Papias' work: *Λογίων κυριακῶν ἐξηγήσεως* (frag. 3).²² The term *κυριακός* is commonly used in early Christian literature for things especially pertaining to the Lord (Jesus), such as *κυριακὸν δεῖπνον* (1 Cor 11:20) or *κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ* (Rev 1:10).²³ The range of meanings attached to *λόγιον* in early Christian usage includes divine sayings, scriptures, and accounts of divine action.²⁴ The question arises, therefore, whether Papias' title suggests a focus on utterances of Jesus, scriptures (gleaned from the Jewish Bible) related to Jesus, or anecdotes (*chreia*) about Jesus. Notably, Papias refers to Mark's work as both a record "of the Lords' words and deeds" and also a work dealing with *τῶν κυριακῶν . . . λογίων* (frag. 3), suggesting that Papias considered this expression to be an appropriate description for a work that includes stories about Jesus as well as sayings from Jesus.²⁵ Additionally, the term *ἐξηγήσις* is commonly used to refer to a narrative as well as to interpretation.²⁶ Papias' title, then, does not suggest a narrow type of content.

²² Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.1; cf. τῆς ἐξηγήσεως τῶν κυριακῶν λόγων (frag. 4); τῶν κυριακῶν ἐξηγήσεων (frags. 5, 6).

²³ BDAG, 576; LSJ, 1013.

²⁴ G. Kittel, "λόγιον," *TDNT* 4:137–41.

²⁵ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.15; cf. G. Kittel, "λόγιον," *TDNT* 4:141.

²⁶ BDAG, 349; LSJ, 593.

A survey of the contents of Papias' work further confirms that he took a broad view of what qualified as *Λογίων κυριακῶν ἐξηγήσεως*. Eusebius states that Papias "recounts certain miracles and other matters" such as a person being raised from the dead in Papias' time and Justus Barsabbas drinking poison without harm (frag. 3; cf. frag. 12).²⁷ Eusebius proceeds in summary fashion to say that Papias' books include several non-canonical utterances of Jesus, such as

. . . other matters that came to him from the unwritten tradition, including some bizarre parables of the Savior, his teachings, and several other more legendary accounts. Among these things he says that after the resurrection of the dead there will be a thousand-year period, during which the Kingdom of Christ will exist tangibly, here on this very earth. (frag. 3)²⁸

A lengthy fragment reported by Irenaeus (see below) credits Jesus with teaching that the earth would become extremely fertile during the time of the (millennial) kingdom (frag. 1).²⁹ Eusebius also says that Papias relayed a story about a woman "falsely accused of many sins before the Lord" (frag. 3).³⁰ Others report that Papias recounted the death of the brothers James and John at the hands of Jews (frag. 12;³¹ frag. 13³²), and that Papias claims near the end of his writings to have served as

²⁷ Eusebius, *Eccl. hist.* 3.39.8–9; Philip of Side, *Ecclesiastical History*.

²⁸ Eusebius, *Eccl. hist.* 3.39.7–12.

²⁹ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.33.3–4.

³⁰ Eusebius, *Eccl. hist.* 3.39.17; cf. John 7:53–8:11.

³¹ Philip of Side, *Ecclesiastical History*.

³² George the Sinner, *Chronicle*.

John's amanuensis in the writing of the Gospel (frag. 16).³³ Perhaps the most well-known tradition attributed to Papias relays comments on the origin of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew (frags. 2, 3; see below).³⁴ Of course, we have his version of the death of Judas as well (frag. 4). To judge from these vignettes, Papias' work was a potpourri of early Christian traditions.

Among the longer fragments of Papias we have a quotation from his preface preserved by Eusebius. It indicates that one purpose of Papias' writing is to preserve reliable oral traditions that he received from those who heard the apostles themselves. Papias also expresses concern that many Christians are being drawn away by stories that he regards as inauthentic. In this brief extract from his introduction Papias contrasts "those who had a lot to say" with "those who taught the truth," and "those who recalled commandments from strangers" with "those who recalled the commandments which have been given faithfully by the Lord and which proceed from the truth itself":³⁵

[2] But Papias himself, in the preface of his work, makes it clear that he himself neither heard nor saw in person any of the holy apostles. Instead, he declares that he received the matters of faith from those known to them. As he says:

[3] "I also will not hesitate to draw up for you, along with these expositions, an orderly account of all the things I carefully learned and have carefully recalled from the elders; for I have certified their truth. For unlike most people, I took no pleasure in hearing those who had a lot to say, but only those who taught the truth, and not those who recalled commandments

³³ Codex Vaticanus Alexandrinus 14.

³⁴ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.15; 3.39.14–16.

³⁵ Moreschini and Norelli, *Early*, 1:159.

from strangers, but only those who recalled the commandments which have been given faithfully by the Lord and which proceed from the truth itself. [4] But whenever someone arrived who had been a companion of one of the elders, I would carefully inquire after their words, what Andrew or Peter had said, or what Philip or what Thomas had said, or James or John or Matthew or any of the other disciples of the Lord, and what things Aristion and the elder John,³⁶ disciples of the Lord, were saying. For I did not suppose that what came out of books would benefit me as much as that which came from a living and abiding voice.” (frag. 3;³⁷ cf. frag. 5³⁸).

We should note that Papias’ preference for oral sources over “what came out of books” is not a denunciation of all written sources.³⁹ After all, he himself writes five books, and he speaks approvingly of the writings of Mark and Matthew:⁴⁰

[14] These are his [Papias’] words:

[15] “And this is what the elder⁴¹ used to say, ‘When Mark was the interpreter [*Or: translator*] of Peter, he wrote down accurately everything that he recalled of the Lord’s words and deeds—but not in order. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied him; but later, as I indicated, he accompanied Peter, who used to adapt his teachings for the needs at hand, not arranging, as it were, an orderly composition of the Lord’s sayings. And so Mark did nothing wrong by writing some of the matters as he remembered them. For he was intent on just one purpose: to leave out nothing that he heard or to include any falsehood among them.’ ”

This then is what Papias says about Mark. [16] And this is what he says about Matthew:

³⁶ Irenaeus and Eusebius disagree over the identity of the “John” whom Papias claims to have known. Irenaeus identifies him as a “disciple of the Lord” and one who heard the Lord teach (*Haer.* 5.33.3), apparently intending to indicate John the apostle. Eusebius argues that Papias made a distinction between the disciple John and the presbyter John, and that Papias himself admits that he did not hear the disciples of the Lord directly (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.1–7).

³⁷ Eusebius, *Eccl. hist.* 3.39.2–4.

³⁸ Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 18.

³⁹ A. F. Walls, “Papias and Oral Tradition,” *VC* 21 (1967): 137–40.

⁴⁰ Charles E. Hill, “Papias of Hierapolis,” *ExpTim* 117 (2006): 312.

⁴¹ Eusebius identifies this “elder” as the presbyter John. To be clear, then, Eusebius quotes Papias, who is quoting this presbyter from the generation who knew the apostles.

“And so Matthew composed the sayings in the Hebrew tongue, and each one interpreted [*Or: translated*] them to the best of his ability.” (frag. 3)⁴²

Living a generation removed from the apostles, Papias is aware of a variety of traditions about Jesus, both oral and written, some of which he deems reliable, and others that he rejects.

The identity of a particular party against which Papias' polemical comments are directed, or whether such may even be discerned, has been the subject of a good deal of scholarly debate. F. C. Baur observed that Paul is omitted in Papias' list of reliable apostolic sources, and, therefore, Baur proposed that Papias had Paul in mind when he contrasted the commandments of strangers with the commandments taught by those who knew the Lord.⁴³ Baur's thesis has the principal difficulty of being an argument from silence.⁴⁴ More compelling, but still tentative, is the proposal of J. B. Lightfoot that Papias was writing in response to early Gnosticism.⁴⁵ Lightfoot leans heavily on Irenaeus, observing that in the preface to his *Against Heresies* (known by Irenaeus and Eusebius as *A Refutation and Subversion of Knowledge Falsely So Called*) Irenaeus is concerned about those who misuse “the

⁴² Eusebius, *Eccl. hist.* 3.39.14–16.

⁴³ Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi: Sein Leben und Wirken, seine Briefe und seine Lehre: Ein Beitrag zu einer kritischen Geschichte des Urchristenthums* (Stuttgart: Becher & Müller, 1845), 220–21. Cited 13 August 2010. Online: <http://books.google.com/books?id=YiAEAAAAQAAJ&oe=UTF-8>.

⁴⁴ J. B. Lightfoot, *Essays on the Work Entitled Supernatural Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1889), 151–52. Cited 12 August 2010. Online: <http://books.google.com/books?id=mXNAAAAIAAJ&oe=UTF-8>. Also, Körtner, *Papias*, 167–68. Baur's position is echoed by Charles M. Nielsen, “Papias: Polemicist Against Whom?,” *TS* 35 (1974): 529–35.

⁴⁵ Lightfoot, *Essays*, 160–61.

oracles of the Lord” and promote improper interpretation of them. Lightfoot reasons that the parallel language between Irenaeus’ preface and that of Papias implies that Papias was confronting similar opponents.⁴⁶ Following this line of argument, Lightfoot concludes that Papias offers a work that affirms the original context and interpretation of the sayings handed down from the Lord and the Apostles, in contrast to the gnostics who, Irenaeus charges, distort these traditions by inserting them into a context of their own creation.⁴⁷ Lightfoot notes that a prolific gnostic author such as Basilides, whose work dates from the time of Hadrian and who composed “twenty-four volumes on the Gospel” (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.7.7; cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 4.12), would fit quite well within Papias’ description of “those who had a lot to say” and “recalled commandments from strangers.”⁴⁸ Eduard Schwartz agrees largely with Lightfoot’s case, adding that Papias’ millenarianism and miracle-stories would have challenged Gnostic anti-materialism.⁴⁹ As tantalizing as these correspondences may be, the case remains circumstantial. Irenaeus is quite clear about the identity of his opponents, whereas Papias’ comments are general in nature and might apply to many different factions

⁴⁶ Lightfoot, *Essays*, 160.

⁴⁷ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.3.6; 1.8.1 (*ANF* 1:320, 326).

⁴⁸ Lightfoot, *Essays*, 161.

⁴⁹ Eduard Schwartz, "Über den Tod der Söhne Zebedaei: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Johannesevangeliums," in *Zum Neuen Testament und zum frühen Christentum* (Gesammelte Schriften 5; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963), 60–63, 74–78, 109.

in early Christianity.⁵⁰ In addition, our primary sources for Gnostic beliefs are detached from Papias in time and place.⁵¹ The case formulated by Lightfoot, therefore, is plausible but not conclusive. It continues to be held tentatively by some scholars.⁵²

The fragments and summaries of Papias' writings suggest that his interests were eclectic, including along with sayings attributed to Jesus many other kinds of information as well. Even if one concludes that Papias was principally concerned with the sayings of Jesus, he must still acknowledge that the final product is infused with a variety of other kinds of material.⁵³ As Kürzinger observes, Papias' work must have resembled the canonical Gospels in form.⁵⁴ Also like the canonical Gospels, it seems inevitable that Papias' five-volume work would serve many purposes, rather than address only one polemical issue. To judge from his preface, his principal

⁵⁰ Johannes Munck, "Presbyters and Disciples of the Lord in Papias," *HTR* 52 (1959): 230; Schoedel, *Polycarp*, 101.

⁵¹ J. V. Bartlet, "Papias' 'Exposition': It's Date and Contents," in *Amicitiae Corolla: A Volume of Essays Presented to James Rendel Harris* (ed. H. G. Wood; London, 1933), 21, 33; Schoedel, *Polycarp*, 91.

⁵² Hill, "Papias," 312–13 is a recent advocate of Lightfoot's proposal. Walter Bauer concluded that Papias' silence regarding Luke and Paul was due to the use being made of these books by Marcion, and that his neglect of the Gospel of John is due to its popularity with Montanists and Valentinians; Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (eds. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard A. Krodel; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 184–89; 204–5. Körtner is sympathetic to the Gnostic theory, but suggests that since Papias was in Asia Minor and apparently familiar with the book of Revelation, one need look no further for the opponents than such groups as the Nicolaitans and others identified in Rev 2:2, 6, 14–15, 20–24, which may have held a form of Gnosticism; see Körtner, *Papias*, 168–72; Körtner and Leutzsch, *Papiasfragmente*, 41–42.

⁵³ Armin Daniel Baum, "Papias als Kommentator evangelischer Aussprüche Jesu: Erwägungen zur Art seines Werkes," *NovT* 38 (1996): 257–76.

⁵⁴ Kürzinger, *Papias*, 82–83. So also Körtner and Leutzsch, *Papiasfragmente*, 32–33.

concern is to defend what he perceives to be reliable tradition. The fragments indicate, however, that this purpose sprawls to include not only sayings of Jesus, but also accounts of the origin of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew (and perhaps John), miracles and martyrdoms in the apostolic and post-apostolic era, and millenarianism.

Papias' millenarian views are prominent in the fragments (frags. 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14) and lead to his one other mention of Judas, thus they call for special comment in our present project. Eusebius, who strongly disagrees with millenarian views, devalues Papias' work as a whole, partially because of the chiliastic element:

Among them [Papias' books] he says that there will be a millennium after the resurrection of the dead, when the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this earth. I suppose that he got these notions by a perverse reading of the apostolic accounts, not realizing that they had spoken mystically and symbolically. For he was a man of very little intelligence, as is clear from his books. But he is responsible for the fact that so many Christian writers after him held the same opinion, relying on his antiquity, for instance Irenaeus and whoever else appears to have held the same views. (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.12–13 [Lake, LCL])

Irenaeus was sympathetic to Papias' views, and apparently he quotes from Papias' fourth book concerning the manifestation of a physical paradise on earth:

Thus the elders who saw John, the disciple of the Lord, remembered hearing how the Lord used to teach about those times, saying:

“The days are coming when vines will come forth, each with ten thousand boughs; and on a single bough will be ten thousand branches. And indeed, on a single branch will be ten thousand shoots and on every shoot ten thousand clusters; and in every cluster will be ten thousand grapes, and every grape, when pressed, will yield twenty-five measures of wine. And when any of the saints grabs hold of a cluster, another will cry out, ‘I am better, take me; bless the Lord through me.’ So too a grain of wheat will produce ten thousand heads and every head will have ten thousand grains and every grain will yield ten pounds of pure, exceptionally fine flour. So too the remaining

fruits and seeds and vegetation will produce in similar proportions. And all the animals who eat this food drawn from the earth will come to be at peace and harmony with one another, yielding in complete submission to humans.”

Papias as well, an ancient man—the one who heard John and was a companion of Polycarp—gives a written account of these things in the fourth of his books. For he wrote five books. And in addition he says: “These things can be believed by those who believe. And the betrayer Judas,” he said, “did not believe, but asked, ‘How then can the Lord bring forth such produce?’ The Lord then replied, ‘Those who come into those times will see.’” (frag. 1)⁵⁵

His description of the abundance of the earth during the millennium has very close parallels in *1 En.* 10:18–19 and *2 Bar.* 29:5, indicating that Papias was familiar with Jewish apocalyptic literature.⁵⁶ More importantly for our investigation of Papias’ characterization of Judas, the brief exchange between Judas and Jesus projects a strongly pejorative image of this disciple. Judas is depicted as a skeptic, and Jesus’ response implies that Judas will not be among those who see the millennial kingdom. In fact, Papias appears to be leveraging the derogatory traditions about Judas in order to represent those who do not agree with his millenarian ideas as being in the same category as Judas.

This review of trajectories in Papias implies that his audience was familiar with early Christian oral traditions, including those embodied in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. His writing had polemical purposes, such as defending what he viewed as authentic tradition, promoting millenarianism, and possibly challenging gnostic interpretation of the traditions. For our examination of Papias’ characteriza-

⁵⁵ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.33.3.

⁵⁶ See further Robert M. Grant, “A Note on Papias,” *ATHR* 29 (1947): 171–72; Körtner, *Papias*, 97–104; Schoedel, “Papias,” *ANRW* 27.1:248.

tion of Judas, we conclude that the story of Judas' betrayal of Jesus for a price would be a part of the repertoire of Christian traditions known to Papias' audience due to their familiarity with Matthew and Mark. Further, if Papias' account of Judas' death is consistent with his other glimpse of Judas, this disciple will be portrayed as an unbeliever who will not be fit to enter the millennial kingdom.

The Death of Judas in the fragments of Papias

Among the elements of our five-fold rubric for discerning characterization in death-accounts—mind, body, external circumstances, echoes of well-known deaths, and evidence of divine punishment—descriptions of Judas' body dominate Papias' account. His vivid description of Judas' symptoms is the primary vehicle by which he conveys implications about the mind of Judas, the kind of person whose death he echoes, and the fulfillment of talion in his case. Therefore, although all five of our elements are present to some degree, the bulk of our analysis of this death-account will be devoted to the description of Judas' body.

The Mind of Judas

The only comment in our fragment that directly addresses the quality of Judas' mind is the statement that he “went about in this world as a great model (ὁπὸδειγμα) of impiety (ἀσεβείας).” A rule of thumb in the Hellenistic world is that piety is that which pleases the gods, and impiety is that which displeases them (Plato, *Euthyphr.* 7a). Due to this generalized conception, the term ἀσέβεια denoted both anti-religious and anti-social conduct throughout the ancient Mediterranean

culture. Impiety was a capital offense in Athens, and Socrates and other philosophers were executed upon conviction of it.⁵⁷ In the LXX ἀσέβεια and its cognates are used frequently to translate a variety of terms for sinful behaviors, including actions directed towards both God and humans.⁵⁸ Thus, the term ἀσέβεια would universally indicate bad character, while not specifying the precise nature of Judas' crime.

Notably, by speaking of Judas as μέγα . . . ἀσεβείας ὑπόδειγμα, Papias uses language similar to 2 Pet 2:5–6, which recalls the vengeance of God on “a world of the ungodly (ἀσεβῶν)” in the days of Noah, as well as the violent destruction that made Sodom and Gomorrah “an example (ὑπόδειγμα) of what is coming to the ungodly (ἀσεβέ[σ]ιν).” Perhaps influenced by this language, Papias refers to Judas as one who “went about in this world as a great model (ὑπόδειγμα) of impiety (ἀσεβείας),” then proceeds to describe Judas' torments as an example of the fate of the impious. Thus, the introductory sentence of our fragment both indicts Judas with a universally recognized vice, and also frames the description that follows as due punishment for his crime. Klassen suggests that Judas' suffering as “a model of great ungodliness” is told in order to “terrorize the reader and to prevent others from taking the path of betrayal.”⁵⁹ While we agree that Judas' frightening symptoms are told as a cautionary tale, we also find evidence that the ancient auditor would have

⁵⁷ See further Gerhard Thür, “Asebeia,” *DNP* 2:77.

⁵⁸ W. Foerster, “ἀσεβέω,” *TDNT* 7:185–87; W. Günther, “σέβομαι,” *NIDNTT* 2:93.

⁵⁹ William Klassen, “Judas Iscariot,” *ABD* 3:1095.

perceived in the afflictions of Judas indications of particular vices for which he was being punished.

The Body of Judas

Christopher B. Zeichmann has noted that Papias' ekphrastic description of Judas' body is organized according to the guidelines given in the progymnasmata attributed to Aphthonius the Sophist:⁶⁰ "In making an ecphrasis of persons one should go from first things to last, that is from head to feet" (*Preliminary Exercises* 37R).⁶¹ Accordingly, the sequence of the depiction of Judas' body proceeds thus: (1) his body as a whole, (2) his head, (3) his eyes, (4) his privates, (5) his bodily emissions. The image is unified by the fantastic swelling that affects each body part, while the comments on particular organs contribute additional invective to the literary portrait. We will follow the outline suggested by Papias' organization of the elements.

The symptoms of enormous swelling and a fluid-filled body correspond to ancient accounts of ὕδρωψ, or dropsy (edema), a widely known disease in which the retention of fluid in the body produces exceptional swelling, pain, and diarrhea.⁶² The Hippocratic Corpus mentions it frequently, describing it as an illness in which

⁶⁰ Christopher B. Zeichmann, "Papias as Rhetorician: Ekphrasis in the Bishop's Account of Judas' Death," *NTS* 46 (2010): 428–29.

⁶¹ George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (SBLWAW 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 117.

⁶² Jörg Kurz, "Wassersucht," in *Antike Medizin: ein Lexicon* (ed. Karl-Heinz Leven; Munich: C. H. Beck, 2005), 914–15.

the flesh dissolves into liquid (*Breaths* 12), the body fills with fluid (*Affections* 22), and in extreme cases the face and privates become enlarged as well (*Affections* 61; *Diseases* 2.61; *Epidemics* 7.20).⁶³ Among the medical writings attributed to Galen (2nd cent. A.D.), a particular type of dropsy identified as ἀνὰ σάρκα includes the swelling of the entire body due to fluid and distortion of the αἰδοῖα, the very term Papias uses to refer to Judas' private parts (*Galenī definitiones medicae* 279).⁶⁴ Aretaeus of Cappadocia, a contemporary of Galen, describes various forms of dropsy, one of which affects the lower abdomen, so that "the scrotum and prepuce swell, and the whole member becomes crooked, from the inequality of the swelling."⁶⁵ Of another type, he states that "the whole body is filled, and the face is swollen, and also the neck and arms."⁶⁶ He adds that a mixture of the various types is a much more serious case.⁶⁷ Of the three types of dropsy described by Soranus of Ephesus, a physician who practiced in Rome during the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian and whose work survives in Latin translations by Caelius Aurelianus (5th cent. A.D.), his description of the type known as leucophlegmatia sounds most similar to the symptoms that Papias attributes to Judas:

⁶³ For an analytical overview see Alain Touwaide and Natale Gaspare De Santo, "Edema in the Corpus Hippocraticum," *American Journal of Nephrology* 19 (1999): 155–58.

⁶⁴ Galen, *Galenī opera omnia* (ed. Karl Gottlieb Kühn; 20 vols.; Leipzig: Car. Cnoblochii, 1821–1833), 19:424. Cited 27 September 2010. Online: [http://www.bium.univ-paris5.fr/histmed/medica/cote ?45674x19](http://www.bium.univ-paris5.fr/histmed/medica/cote%2045674x19).

⁶⁵ Aretaeus, *On the Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases* 2.1; for Greek text see Karl Hude, *Aretaeus* (Corpus Medicorum Graecorum 2; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958), 4.1.5.

⁶⁶ Aretaeus, *On the Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases* 2.1; Hude, *Aretaeus* 4.1.7.

⁶⁷ Aretaeus, *On the Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases* 2.1; Hude, *Aretaeus* 4.1.4–5.

Thus leucophlegmatia or *interus* is marked by a soft, moist swelling of the abdomen, face, legs, scrotum, and foreskin, the fluid appearing whitish through the skin. There is also an offensive smell from the mouth, i.e., bad breath, a feeling of heaviness throughout the body, and a swelling that gives way before the pressure of the fingers so that the parts remain somewhat depressed. In some cases thick white fluids are vomited or else discharged by the bowels; and it is from this circumstance that the disease seems to have derived its Greek name, for *leucon* is the Greek for ‘white’ and *phlegma* for “thick fluid.”⁶⁸

Papias’ description of Judas’ body corresponds in numerous details to the symptoms of dropsy cataloged by these ancient medical authors: fluid throughout the body, swelling that extends from the head through the privates, the emission of pus, and a foul smell. We are led to conclude that Papias’ second-century audience would have identified Judas’ symptoms as a case of dropsy of extreme proportions. In fact, the summary of Papias’ account found in the commentary of Theophylact on the Gospel of Matthew describes Judas as suffering from a dropsical (ὕδριξός) disease.⁶⁹ Having diagnosed the disease, we are now in a position to pursue the question of the implications of character that Papias’ audience might perceive through such an exaggerated description of dropsy.

In a variety of literary genres from the Greco-Roman milieu, dropsy is associated with an indulgent lifestyle. Celsus describes a case of dropsy in which the patient could not be cured because of his intemperate habits, and he adds that a slave is more easily cured than a free person due to the constraints required for treatment, such as abstinence from food and drink (*De medicina* 3.21.3). Lucian

⁶⁸ Soranus according to Caelius Aurelianus, *On Chronic Diseases* 3.8.104.

⁶⁹ Theophylact, *Enarratio in Evangelium Matthaei*, at Matt 27:3–5 (PG 123:460b–c).

comments, regarding the illnesses of the upper class, “Gout and consumption and pneumonia and dropsy are the consequences of those splendid dinners” (*Gall.* 23). Philostratus describes a young man with dropsy who fails to recover until Apollonius urges him to give up his luxurious lifestyle (*Vit. Apoll.* 1.9). These citations indicate that the ancient audience would be familiar with dropsy as a sign of extravagant self-indulgence.

Closely related to this connotation is the widespread analogy between dropsy and greed. Just as the dropsical patient only worsened his case by attempting to satisfy his thirst, so also the greedy only intensify their avarice by the increase of their holdings. In the *Gnomologium Vaticanum* 434 Plato is credited with a brief maxim likening the wealthy and the greedy to the person suffering from dropsy.⁷⁰ A more complete explanation of the analogy is provided in Stobaeus’ *Florilegium* (fifth-century A.D.), which credits Diogenes of Sinope, a Cynic philosopher in the fourth century B.C., with the analogy: “Diogenes compared money-lovers to dropsies: as dropsies, though filled with fluid crave drink, so money-lovers, though loaded with money, crave more of it, yet both to their demise. For, their desires increase the more they acquire the objects of their cravings” (*Flor.* 3.10.45).⁷¹ Teles,

⁷⁰ Although many of the sayings collected in this fourteenth-century manuscript are verified through other sources in their attribution to ancient authors, this maxim attributed to Plato has not been found elsewhere. See further Leo Sternbach, *Gnomologium Vaticanum e Codice Vaticano Graeco 743* (Texte und Kommentare 2; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1963), 162; Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman sourcebook* (Library of Early Christianity 4; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 19.

⁷¹ English translation from Willi Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14* (SNTSMS 85; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 34, to whom I am indebted for the discussion of

another Cynic teacher (third century B.C.), makes a similar analogy, citing Bion of Borysthenes (c. 335–c. 245 B.C.):

And if anyone wants either to have himself freed from want and scarcity or to free someone else, let him not seek money for him. For it is, says Bion, as if someone who wants to relieve the thirst of a man suffering from dropsy would not treat the dropsy but would supply him with springs and rivers. For the sufferer would sooner burst with drinking than be cured of thirst. And this man could never be satisfied, since he is insatiable, thirsting for fame and superstitious. (Teles, *A Comparison of Poverty and Wealth* 39H)⁷²

Describing the greed of a certain Scopas, Polybius comments,

He was unaware that as in the case of a dropsy the thirst of the sufferer never ceases and is never allayed by the administration of liquids from without, unless we cure the morbid condition of the body itself, so it is impossible to satiate the greed for gain, unless we correct by reasoning in the vice inherent in the soul. (*The Histories* 13.2.2)

In an ode devoted to the dangers of hoarding wealth, Horace writes, “By indulgence the dreadful dropsy grows apace, nor can the sufferer banish thirst, unless the cause of the malady has first departed from the veins and the watery languor from the pale body” (*Carm.* 2.2). Ovid complains of the importance attributed to money in his society: “They strive to gain that they may waste, and then to repair their wasted fortunes, and thus they feed their vices by ringing the changes on them. So he whose belly swells with dropsy, the more he drinks, the thirstier he grows.

dropsy as an ancient metaphor for greed. For Greek text see Stobaeus, et al., *Anthologium* (5 vols.; Berlin: Apud Weidmannos, 1884–1923), 3.10.45. Cited 25 August 2010. Online: <http://www.archive.org/details/joannisstobaeian03stovuoft>.

⁷² English translation from Edward N. O’Neil, *Teles (The Cynic Teacher)* (Graeco-Roman Religion Series 3; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977), 41. This citation from Bion is also found in Stobaeus, et al., *Anthologium*, 4.33.31. See further Jan Fredrik Kindstrand, *Bion of Borysthenes: A Collection of Fragments with Introduction and Commentary* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1976), F34.

Nowadays nothing but money counts” (*Fast.* 1.213–218). The frequency with which the analogy between the love of money and dropsy occurs, as well as the comments above that suggest that dropsy is caused by a luxurious lifestyle, lead us to conclude that Papias’ audience would have readily recognized a connection between Judas’ illness and the role that money played in the various accounts of his betrayal of Jesus (Matt 26:15; Mark 14:11; Luke 22:5; John 12:4–6; Acts 1:18).⁷³

Dropsy is also associated with perjury and infidelity in the ancient Mediterranean milieu. If the analogy with greed reflects the bloating that occurs from overabundant intake of food and drink, perhaps the analogy with these other vices derives from the notion of attempting to conceal within oneself that which the divine would expose. Pseudo-Aristotle reports,

It is said about Tyana that there is some water sacred to Zeus, God of oaths (they call it Asbamaeum) from which a very cold stream arises and bubbles as cauldrons do. To men who keep their oaths this water is sweet and kindly, but to perjurers judgement is close at their heels. For the water leaps at their eyes, their hands and their feet, and they are seized with dropsy and consumption; and it is impossible for them to get away before it happens, but they are rooted to the spot lamenting by the water, and confessing their perjuries. (*De Mir. Ausc.* 152)

The effects attributed to the pool at Tyana bear strong resemblance to the Jewish ordeal of the suspected adulteress (*Sotah*) described in Num 5:11–31. In that ritual, the accused is placed under oath regarding her innocence, and the words of a priestly curse are washed into a cup of water, which the woman is forced to drink. If

⁷³ The comparison of greed to one who eats and drinks without satisfaction occurs in several other sources that do not specifically name dropsy as the disease under consideration: Plutarch, *Mor.* 524B–D; Porphyry, *To Marc.* 27.435–38; Seneca, *Helv.* 10.11.3; Xenophon, *Symp.* 4.37.

the wife is guilty of infidelity, then “the water that brings the curse shall enter into her and cause bitter pain, and her womb shall discharge, her uterus drop, and the woman shall become an execration among her people” (Num 5:27). Josephus interprets the consequences as an attack of dropsy in requital for adultery as well as perjury: “If she has proved false to her husband in wedlock and to God by her oaths, she comes to an ignominious end, her leg falling away and dropsy (ὕδερου) attacking her belly” (*Ant.* 3.273). In rabbinic literature, the tradition is preserved that dropsy is “a sign of sin” (*b. Sabb.* 33a; *Lev. Rab.* 15:2). It is especially associated with sexual sin (*b. Sabb.* 33a; *b. Yebam.* 60b), but also with secret sin that takes place in the heart (*b. Yoma* 66b). The unifying logic seems to be that divine justice uses the swelling associated with dropsy to reveal sin hidden behind a pretense of innocence. This line of reasoning is similar to that employed in the climax of *Bel and the Dragon* as Daniel feeds special cakes to a dragon that is being worshipped, causing the dragon to burst and reveal that it is not truly a god (*Bel* 14:27). Reading Papias’ account of Judas in the light of these comparative materials leads again to a derogatory characterization. Given the traditions of Judas’ pretense at the Last Supper (“Is it I?”) as well as his treacherous kiss, his swelling so large “that he could not pass through a place that was easily wide enough for a wagon” would suggest a particular egregious case of infidelity.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Regarding the Cloaca Maxima constructed by Tarquinius Priscus, Pliny comments, “Tarquin is said to have made the tunnels large enough to allow the passage of a waggon fully loaded with hay” (*Nat.* 36.24.108). This statement is an exaggeration also, suggesting that in antiquity hyperbolic comparisons to the size of a wagon may have been commonplace.

While Papias' composite portrait indicates that Judas suffered from dropsy, the detailed descriptions of various parts of Judas body provide further invective against Judas when heard against the background of Greco-Roman physiognomy. Physiognomy—the assessment of character through the examination of the features of the body—was a common practice in antiquity.⁷⁵ The fundamental principle of physiognomic theory is briefly stated in our oldest extant handbook on the subject, a work falsely attributed to Aristotle:⁷⁶ “It seems to me that soul and body react on each other; when the character of the soul changes, it changes also the form of the body, and conversely, when the form of the body changes, it changes the character of the soul” (Ps.-Aristotle, *Physiogn.* 808b.12–15). Notably, the author of the second major physiognomic handbook to survive from antiquity was a contemporary of Papias from a nearby city, Polemon of Laodicea (c. A.D. 88–c. A.D. 145).⁷⁷ It is likely, therefore, that Papias' audience would have heard character implications in each feature noted in the description of the misshapen Judas.

⁷⁵ Two excellent surveys of the primary literature of physiognomy may be found in: Mikeal C. Parsons, *Body and Character in Luke and Acts: The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 17–65; Chad Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts: The Use of Physical Features in Characterization* (Biblical Interpretation Series 94; Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 7–51.

⁷⁶ Hartsock, *Sight*, 13.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 15–16.

According to Polemon, “A very large head indicates lack of knowledge and understanding, and indifference” (B30, Hoyland).⁷⁸ Papias’ brief comment that “not even his swollen head could fit” where a wagon might easily pass communicates more than simply an exaggeration of Judas’ physical condition. It also derides his mental abilities. The implications of this comment are supported by the description of the swelling around Judas’ eyes. The physiognomists put special emphasis on the value of the eyes in revealing character:⁷⁹ “In all selection of signs some give a much clearer demonstration of the subject than others. Clearest of all are those that appear in the most favourable position. The most favourable part for examination is the region round the eyes, forehead, head and face” (Ps.-Aristotle, *Physiogn.* 814b). Polemon’s first chapter, about one-third of his work, is devoted to the significance of the eyes.⁸⁰ When Papias provides a more detailed description of Judas’ eyes than any other part of his body, the character implications are strong: “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” (frag. 4.2). Papias’ audience was familiar with the symbolic value of becoming blind. Chad Hartsock has surveyed the role of blindness in Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian literature, with an eye toward physiognomy, and he

⁷⁸ Robert Hoyland, “A New Edition and Translation of the Leiden Polemon,” in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam* (ed. Simon Swain; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 421.

⁷⁹ Hartsock, *Sight*, 53.

⁸⁰ Hoyland, “New,” 341–83.

finds that physical blindness is consistently associated with spiritual blindness, divine punishment, and helplessness.⁸¹ In ekphrastic detail Papias describes Judas' loss of sight due to the swelling of the flesh that shuts out the light so that even with the aid of a physician's speculum the light cannot penetrate and Judas "could not see the light at all." Judas is portrayed as one totally confounded in spiritual blindness. Further, the unusual case of losing his sight due to swelling may have conveyed a moral lesson to the ancient auditor familiar with the character implications of both dropsy and blindness: greed and indulgence lead to spiritual darkness. This implication is consistent with the comment in *T. Jud.* 18:2, 6 that the love of money is a sign that is especially dangerous to a person because it blinds his soul, "and he goes about in the day as though it were night."⁸²

The description of Judas' enlarged private parts and emissions of pus do not appear to suggest particular moral faults (e.g., sexual sin), but do have the rhetorical effect of adding to the horror and shame of his detestable state, as emphasized by Papias: "And his genitals (*αἰδοῖον*) 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" (frag. 4.3; emphasis added). The inclusion of these details is consistent with the instruction of Theon (observed earlier in our study of Acts 1:18-20) to the effect that ekphrastic elements that are "rough or frightening . . .

⁸¹ Hartsock, *Sight*, 81, 124, 165, 207.

⁸² Cf., "You say, 'I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.' You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked" (Rev 3:17).

should not strike a discordant note with the nature of the subject” (Theon 120.1–2; Kennedy, 47). Since Papias is holding up Judas as an example of the fate of an impious person, these revolting and horrifying details are appropriate. The *Testament of Job* says that the plague inflicted on Job included a discharge of moisture, worms, and a foul stench (*T. Job* 20:7–9; 34:4; 35:2). These details underscore the extreme misery Job suffered, an element also being emphasized in Papias’ account of Judas. While Job is an exception as a righteous figure, further evidence below will demonstrate that such grotesque details are frequently included in the death-accounts of detestable figures.

External Circumstances

The external circumstances accompanying Judas’ death-account in Papias are focused on the place of his death and the subsequent condition of that property:

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 uninhabited because of the stench. Indeed, even to this day no one can pass by that place without holding his nose. This was how great an outpouring he made from his flesh on the ground. (frag. 4.3)

This portion of Papias’ account has several affinities with the Lukan version of the death of Judas (Acts 1:18–20). For example, in both accounts Judas dies on his own property, and in the aftermath others avoid the property because of his dying there. The aversion the local populace feels toward the place of Judas’ death due to the foul stench mirrors the repulsion that the audience feels toward Judas himself. In addition, Papias seems to imply a violent death, such as either bursting from extreme

swelling or as the result of a fall as reported in Acts 1, when he adds that the bloated Judas made a profuse outpouring on the ground. The emphasis in Papias is on the enormity of the foulness that remains as a reminder of Judas. The external circumstances in Papias' account of Judas' death lead the audience toward an enduring abhorrence of Judas, with a hint of divine justice if one assumes that the audience would think of the property on which Judas dies as having been purchased with the betrayal price.

Death according to Precedent and Evidence of Divine Judgment

If an auditor in the ancient Mediterranean milieu asked what kind of person dies the kind of death Papias ascribes to Judas, the combination of dropsy, worms, diseased privates, and a foul stench would call to mind precedents among the death-accounts of notorious villains who are regarded as suffering divine vengeance for particularly abominable cases of violence against the innocent. Herodotus reports that Pheretime was excessive in her vengeful bloodshed against her enemies (after forming a treaty based on deceptive conditions). Her fate was that "her living body festered and bred worms" because the gods disapproved of "over-violent human vengeance" (Herodotus, *Hist.* 4.205). After Cassander vented his animosity toward Alexander by violently destroying his entire family, "He himself was not to come to a good end. He was filled with dropsy, and from the dropsy came worms while he was yet alive" (Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 9.7.2–3). After a career involving an exorbitant amount of bloodshed against his own countrymen, as well as a profligate

lifestyle, Sulla is reported to have died from a disease of the bowels in which his body is consumed by worms. Plutarch says,

This disease corrupted his whole flesh also, and converted it into worms, so that although many were employed day and night in removing them, what they took away was as nothing compared with the increase upon him, but all his clothing, baths, hand-basins, and food, were infected with that flux of corruption, so violent was its discharge. Therefore he immersed himself many times a-day in water to cleanse and scour his person. But it was of no use; for the change gained upon him rapidly, and the swarm of vermin defied all purification. (*Sulla* 36.2–3)⁸³

In Jewish circles, the elements of worms, anguish, and a foul stench would certainly call to mind the death of the arch-persecutor Antiochus IV:

And so the ungodly man's body swarmed with worms, and while he was still living in anguish and pain, his flesh rotted away, and because of the stench the whole army felt revulsion at his decay. Because of his intolerable stench no one was able to carry the man who a little while before had thought that he could touch the stars of heaven. Then it was that, broken in spirit, he began to lose much of his arrogance and to come to his senses under the scourge of God, for he was tortured with pain every moment. And when he could not endure his own stench, he uttered these words, "It is right to be subject to God; mortals should not think that they are equal to God." (2 Macc 9:9–12)⁸⁴

The symptoms of dropsy, diseased private parts, worms, and foul stench are also found in Josephus' dual accounts of the death of the tyrant Herod the Great:

But Herod's illness became more and more acute, for God was inflicting just punishment upon him for his lawless deeds. The fever that he had was a light one and did not so much indicate symptoms of inflammation to the touch as it produced internal damage. He also had a terrible desire to scratch himself because of this, for it was impossible not to seek relief. There was also an ulceration of the bowels and intestinal pains that were particularly terrible, and a moist, transparent suppuration of the feet. And he suffered

⁸³ Cf. Pliny, *Nat.* 7.43.137–38; 9.38.114; 26.86.138

⁸⁴ Cf. the simpler accounts in 1 Macc 6:1–16 and Josephus, *Ant.* 12.357–60.

similarly from an abdominal ailment, as well as from a gangrene of his privy parts that produced worms. His breathing was marked by extreme tension, and it was very unpleasant because of the disagreeable exhalation of his breath and his constant gasping. He also had convulsions in every limb that took an unendurable severity. Accordingly it was said by the men of God and by those whose special wisdom led them to proclaim their opinions on such matters that all this was the penalty that God was exacting of the king for his great impiety. (*Ant.* 17.168–171)

He had fever, though not a raging fever, an intolerable itching of the whole skin, continuous pains in the intestines, tumours in the feet as in dropsy, inflammation of the abdomen and gangrene of the privy parts, engendering worms, in addition to asthma, with great difficulty in breathing, and convulsions in all his limbs. His condition led diviners to pronounce his maladies a judgement on him for his treatment of the professors. (*J.W.* 1.656)

In Christian literature, the deaths of persecutors of the church are recounted in similar terms. After executing the apostle James and allowing himself to be honored as if he were divine, Herod Agrippa 1 suffers severe abdominal pain and dies from a worm-disease, according to Acts 12:23.⁸⁵ Eusebius repeats the accounts of the deaths of Herod the Great (*Hist. eccl.* 1.8.6–9) and Herod Agrippa I (*Hist. eccl.* 2.10.1–9) and continues the tradition of recounting in detail the ugly, shameful deaths of persecutors by giving an account of the demise of the persecutor Galerius:

A divinely-sent punishment, I say, executed vengeance upon him, beginning at his very flesh and proceeding to the soul. For all at once an abscess appeared in the midst of his privy parts, then a deeply-seated fistular ulcer; which could not be cured and ate their way into the very midst of his entrails. Hence there sprang an innumerable multitude of worms, and a deadly stench was given off, since the entire bulk of his members had, through gluttony, even before his disease, been changed into an excessive quantity of fat, which then became putrid and presented an intolerable and most fearful sight to those that came near it. As for the physicians, some of them were wholly

⁸⁵ Josephus does not mention worms but reports that, after claiming divine honors, Herod Agrippa I was suddenly struck by severe abdominal pain and died five days later (Josephus, *Ant.* 19.344–60)

unable to endure the exceeding and unearthly stench, and were butchered; others, who could not be of any assistance since the whole mass had swollen and reached a point where there was no hope of recovery, were put to death without mercy. (Eusebius, *Eccl. hist.* 8.16.3–5).

Lactantius' account of the death of Galerius is similarly vivid, grotesque, and shameful:

It was in during the eighteenth year of his reign that God struck Maximian [Galerius] with an incurable malady. A malign ulcer appeared on the lower part of his genitals and spread more widely. . . . His entrails putrefied from the outside, and his whole seat dissolved in decay. . . . As the marrow was assailed, the infection was forced inwards and got a hold on his internal organs; worms were born inside him. The smell pervaded not just the palace but the whole city; and this was not surprising, since the channels for his urine and his excrement were now confused with each other. He was consumed by worms, and his body dissolved and rotted amid insupportable pain. (*Mort.* 33.1–8)

It is apparent that in Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian literature, death-accounts that describe the putrefaction of living flesh, worms, foul stench, and (in some cases) dropsy are typically associated with impious persons who commit acts of excessive violence against their defeated enemies, their own countrymen, the innocent, or the people of God. Authors seem to relish the ekphrastic presentation of the most lurid details in these cases, including the description of affected genitals and bodily excretions. A sympathetic reader would find these shocking images as morbidly satisfying demonstrations of divine justice,⁸⁶ an implication frequently made explicit in these accounts. Heard in relation to these types of deaths, Papias' account of the death of Judas would characterize Judas as one who commits gross

⁸⁶ Kim Paffenroth, *Judas: Images of the Lost Disciple* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 23. Cf. Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 49.

violence against innocent persons, lives a dissolute life, and who, as a result, suffers a hideously shameful death under divine judgment.

Other than an occasional mention of dropsy, the precedents above do not provide much comparative material for the enormous swelling that Judas undergoes. The legend of Ahikar,⁸⁷ however, "one of the best-known and most widely disseminated tales in the ancient Mediterranean world,"⁸⁸ contains a death-account with several similarities to the Judas tradition, including extreme swelling. The story of Ahikar is set in the court of the neo-Assyrian empire and was composed in Aramaic at least as early as the fifth century B.C.⁸⁹ Its familiarity in Jewish circles is attested by the appearance of the figure Ahikar in the book of Tobit and the presence of the text among the Elephantine papyri.⁹⁰

Ahikar, a wise and beloved advisor to the king, has no son to train as his successor. He adopts his nephew Nadan and schools him in wisdom. When Nadan is of age, Ahikar presents him to the king in his own stead. After taking his place in the king's court, Nadan betrays Ahikar and convinces the king that Ahikar is involved in a plot against the throne. The king orders Ahikar's execution. The

⁸⁷ A translation of the Aramaic text is found in *OTP* 2. Translations of the Syriac, Arabic, and Armenian versions are available in *APOT* 2.

⁸⁸ J. M. Lindenberger, "Ahiqar (Seventh to Sixth Century B.C.): A New Translation and Introduction," *OTP* 2:479.

⁸⁹ J. A. Lund, "Ahiqar," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (eds. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 18.

⁹⁰ Lindenberger, "Ahiqar," *OTP* 2:479–80.

executioner, however, is Ahikar's friend and agrees to spare his life and keep him in hiding. In the course of events a situation arises in which the king longs for Ahikar's counsel, and the king is overjoyed when it is finally revealed that Ahikar still lives. We observe that the story contains a number of general parallels with early Christian traditions regarding Judas: the betrayal of a teacher by his pupil, false accusations leading to a death sentence for the innocent teacher, and the reappearance of the one supposed to be dead. In the death-account of Ahikar's nephew Nadan, however, we find particular details that are similar to the death of Judas in Papias. When Nadan's treachery is exposed, he is given into Ahikar's power to do with as he wills. After Ahikar rebukes Nadan with wise sayings relevant to his crimes, Nadan swells to enormous proportions, bursts, and dies. The Arabic version is quite ekphrastic:

And when Nadan heard that speech from his uncle Haiqâr, he swelled up immediately and became like a blown-out bladder. And his limbs swelled and his legs and his feet and his side, and he was torn and his belly burst asunder and his entrails were scattered, and he perished, and died. And his latter end was destruction, and he went to hell. For he who digs a pit for his brother shall fall into it; and he who sets up traps shall be caught in them. (*Ahikar* 8:38)⁹¹

It is apparent that Nadan's fate is evidence of divine judgment, and this interpretation is made explicit in various versions of the story: "God is he that hath kept me alive, and He will judge between us" (8:40, Syriac);⁹² "The Lord knoweth what is hidden, and is acquainted with the mysteries and the secrets. And he will requite thee and will judge betwixt me and thee, and will recompense thee according to thy

⁹¹ Transl. A. S. Lewis, *APOT* 2:776.

⁹² Transl. J. R. Harris, *APOT* 2:776.

desert" (8:37, Arabic).⁹³ With the death of Nadan as precedent, Judas' death in Papias is portrayed as divine punishment appropriate for one who secretly plots to commit violence against a righteous benefactor.

Conclusions

Line upon line of Papias' account of Judas' death excoriates Judas' character. The scene is dominated by evidence that Judas suffers divine retribution. Papias suggests this feature by introducing his description of Judas' increasing torments with the statement that Judas "went about in this world as a great model of impiety." The symptoms of incredible swelling, loss of sight, terrible suffering, and worm-disease are familiar in the ancient Mediterranean milieu as indicators of divine punishment. Dropsy is indicative of greed, infidelity, and pretense, all of which are attributes of Judas present in the Judas traditions of Mark and Matthew that were known to Papias' audience. The description of his swollen head and his loss of eyesight due to inflammation around his eyes suggest that he was a stupid person whose spiritual perception dimmed to the point of spiritual blindness due to his greed and indulgence. Papias' comments about Judas' deformed privates and the foul stench that tainted the place of his death add to the shameful and repugnant image. In sum, this account of Judas' death characterizes him as a profligate buffoon who plots against the innocent and is repaid by God with horrific torments resulting in an ignoble death. This portrait of Judas is consistent with the one other mention

⁹³ Transl. A. S. Lewis, *APOT* 2:776.

of Judas in the fragments of Papias in which Judas doubts the abundant fruitfulness of the millennium and is rebuffed by Jesus with the statement, “Those who come into those times will see” (frag. 1.5). In both of these fragments the implication is that Judas is condemned.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Summary

In the ancient Mediterranean milieu, both author and audience perceived a death-account as a prime opportunity for a colorful final stroke in the literary portrait of a figure. The character-shaping value of the details of a person's death were widely recognized in the ancient world, from the rudimentary exercises of the *Progymnasmata*, to the more advanced instruction by rhetorical theorists such as Cicero and Quintilian, and across a wide range of literature—Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Christian, including epic, history, biography, philosophy, and scripture. By identifying the explicit *loci a persona* listed by the rhetoricians, and proceeding to trace the characterizing elements that regularly appear in death-accounts, we were able to discern a five-fold rubric to assist the modern reader in experiencing the elements of characterization which a member of the authorial audience would likely have perceived. These elements are (1) evidence of the qualities of the mind, (2) details of what happens to the body, (3) additional circumstances that speak to character traits, (4) echoes of other death-accounts, and (5) indications that the death satisfies divine justice. With this heuristic device in hand, we proceeded to analyze three early accounts of the death of Judas in an attempt to answer with the authorial audience the question, “What kind of person would have died this way?”

In the Gospel of Matthew our analysis of the plot recognized the development of two groups in relation to Jesus: his disciples and his enemies. Jesus' interaction with the disciples follows a pattern of teaching, misunderstanding, correction, and growth. With the Pharisees, Jesus' interactions steadily result in increased animosity. As the conflict between Jesus and his opponents reaches its climax, Judas is shown to defect from the circle of the Twelve and aid the opponents of Jesus in exchange for money. These events portray Judas as one who has left the path of a disciple and joined their enemies. Jesus' statement at the Last Supper, that it would have been better for Judas never to have been born, further solidifies the characterization of Judas as an apostate. The scene of Judas' death in Matt 27:3–5 is consistent with this portrayal. Although he recognizes Jesus as an innocent man and regrets his role in the plot against him, his failure to return to discipleship is attested in at least two ways. First, he demonstrates his religious affiliation with the enemies of Jesus by going to the priests to make confession. Second, when he is rebuffed and hangs himself in grief, he further attests that as a pupil of Jesus he failed to perceive the lesson of mercy that Jesus demonstrated repeatedly toward his disciples' mistakes. The implicit contrast with Peter reinforces this point. In addition, we found that suicide by hanging was an unclean, ignoble death in the ancient Mediterranean milieu, one often associated with guilt and despair, not redemption. Such a death is consistent with Jesus' earlier lament that it would have been better for Judas never to have been born (Matt 26:24). By this death, Matthew illustrates to his audience the dangers of apostasy from Jesus and the religious bankruptcy of

those who depend on the unbelieving Jewish leaders. In addition, the large number of parallels between the demise of Judas and the story of Ahithophel would likely lead Matthew's audience to perceive Ahithophel as precedent for the death of Judas. Thus, Matthew's account of the death of Judas would be perceived by an ancient auditor as that of a failed disciple who dies a shameful death appropriate for one who defects to the enemies of God's chosen king.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus' conflict with his enemies is depicted as a manifestation of his overthrow of Satan, and his interaction with the Twelve emphasizes both their formation as disciples and their preparation to carry on his mission. In Acts, Jesus has now triumphed decisively over his enemies, and from his throne on high he empowers his disciples to overcome obstacles and enemies as they advance his kingdom. By the end of Luke's Gospel, Judas is vividly shown to be a traitor from within Jesus' closest circle who joins forces with Satan and the human enemies of Jesus in exchange for money. Acts 1 emphatically shows that Judas is no longer one of the Twelve, and contrasts his character with that of other Apostles and Peter in particular. The Scriptures cited by Peter in Acts 1:20, as well as the literary parallel with Wisd 4:18–19, further identify Judas as a persecutor of God's Righteous One. His violent fall to his death in Acts 1:18–20 on land he purchased with the betrayal price especially emphasizes greed as one of his attributes, providing a sharp contrast to the generosity of the Christian community. The ekphrastic description of the bursting of his bowels echoes other deaths of infamous villains who are struck down by a divine blow as punishment for their arrogance and violence against the

righteous. The combination of these elements presents Judas as an enemy of Jesus who is violently defeated, making him the first in a series of punitive divine actions in the book of Acts. Consistent with the cry of woe uttered by Jesus in Luke 22:22 when he envisioned Judas' fate, Acts 1:18–20 presents Judas as an apostate whose greed led him to side with Satan and resulted in his suffering a punitive death under divine justice.

In Papias' account, Judas suffers horribly while living, then dies an ugly death in consequence of his impious behavior. He is tormented by the symptoms of an extreme case of dropsy, a disease associated with the vices of self-indulgence, greed, perjury, and other forms of infidelity. The more lurid of Judas' maladies convey shame, and from a physiognomic standpoint, he is depicted as stupid and lacking in spiritual insight. Ancient death-accounts that report similar symptoms are typically those of excessively violent persecutors of the righteous. The death of Nadan in the well-known story of Ahikar is similar in the detail of enormous swelling, and in relation to this case Judas would be viewed as dying an appropriate death for one who plots treachery against a righteous master. Papias' exaggerated account characterizes Judas as a vice-filled, treacherous figure who suffers a punitive death of the most horrifying sort.

Continuity and Variegation

Although these three early accounts of the death of Judas vary in details, they share a high degree of similarity in their connotations of character traits. First, in all

three of these accounts Judas dies an ugly, ignoble death that provides a final stroke that is consistent with the villainous portrait of Judas earlier in each work. In Matthew and the writings of Luke, Judas is consistently presented as a betrayer in the course of the gospel story, and he meets his fate as a traitor and defector from the community of Jesus. Even Matthew's description of a remorseful Judas leads only to a desperate death, not an overturning of his earlier characterization. In Papias, the Judas who doubts the bounty of the millennial kingdom dies in such a manner as to indicate that he will not share in that kingdom. Death by hanging, suffering a violent fall, or swelling grotesquely then bursting are all shameful modes of death in antiquity and qualify as invective against Judas. In Matthew and Luke, Jesus earlier statements of woe concerning Judas (Matt 26:24; Luke 22:22), with their implications of his condemnation, are consistent with the characterization of Judas in the subsequent death accounts.

Second, in all three accounts Judas is depicted as a traitor who assists the enemies of Jesus in perpetrating violence against him. Matthew and Luke emphasize repeatedly that Judas is an insider—one of the Twelve—who pretends to remain loyal to Jesus while looking for an opportunity to hand him over. In Matthew, Judas' suicide by hanging provides the capstone to this image, as it is a death common to those who have been found guilty of treason. The violent fall of Judas in Luke, as well as the citations from Psalms, augment Luke's earlier image of him as a traitor so that he dies the death of one who abuses a position of power and persecutes the righteous. Our fragment from Papias with its similarities to the legend of Ahikar

suggests that Judas, like Nadan, was a disciple who betrayed his master for personal elevation. In addition, the extremity of Judas' physical suffering in Papias' account echoes numerous deaths of violent persecutors of God's people. Thus, Luke and Papias especially share their emphasis on Judas as a perpetrator of violence against the righteous who, therefore, suffers an especially horrible fate.

Third, these three accounts agree in the implication that greed is a primary motive for Judas' crime. Matthew indicates that Judas took the initiative of asking for money for his role in the plot (Matt 26:15), and the thirty pieces of silver emerge as central in Judas' final words and actions. Luke's direct statement that Judas "acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness" keeps the greed of Judas in view as his death is reported. Along with that of Ananias and Sapphira, Judas stands in stark contrast to the generosity of the fledgling Christian community in Acts 1–5, sustaining Luke's emphasis on the use of wealth as a measure of spiritual health. Papias' description of Judas' dropsy, which in turn leads to his loss of sight, likewise suggests a warning that greed leads to spiritual darkness.

While all three of our accounts attribute to Judas a sinful character, a shameful death, the fate of a treacherous villain, and the motive of greed, each account also adds nuances of its own.¹ Matthew's interest in discipleship resonates with his emphasis on the despair of Judas as he fails to perceive the availability of

¹ Since ancient times, the diversity among these accounts has not lacked for theories of harmonization. For reviews of these early efforts, see J. Rendel Harris, "Did Judas Really Commit Suicide?," *AJT* 4 (1900): 490–513; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988–1997), 3:565, n. 31.

grace so often extended in Matthew to the faltering disciples and such as Peter found after his denial. In addition, his interest in showing Jesus to be the Son of David is supported by Judas' dying in a similar manner to Ahithophel. Luke's account of Judas' death also shows his concern for discipleship, particularly in relation to the proper use of money, but his account heavily emphasizes Judas' failure as an apostle. In contrast to the eleven (especially Peter) Judas is depicted as the anti-apostle who abused his knowledge of Jesus to aid the enemies of the righteous. Rather than share a throne in the new kingdom, he is hurled down in defeat with the opponents of Jesus. Additionally, Papias indulges in a morbid lampoon of Judas as a fat-headed, disgusting ignoramus who persists in his profligate habits no matter how self-destructive.

Finally, in all three accounts Judas dies the death of one divinely accursed. For Matthew's predominantly Jewish audience, this is derived from the Scripture that says that a hanged body is under God's curse (Deut 21:23). For Luke and Papias, a similar connotation of divine disfavor is communicated by the indications that Judas' death is a punitive one brought about through providence, as indicated by comments on the location of his death, the fulfillment of Scripture, the horrific state of the body, and the sudden violence of Judas' death in both of these accounts.

Avenues for Further Research

Our study of methods of characterization in death-accounts in the ancient Mediterranean milieu offers a contribution to the emerging fields of rhetorical

analysis and the study of characterization as a subcategory of narrative criticism. If we have succeeded, then the rubric we have applied to Judas could perhaps be enhanced and applied fruitfully to death-accounts of other figures. One recent study of the death of Jesus has surfaced new evidence of parody in this frequently tilled soil.² The application of our categories of character-shaping elements in death-accounts to the passion narratives might also bring to light forgotten nuances of characterization that were evident to ancient audiences, perhaps even employed for the purpose of overturning the stigma of crucifixion. Of course, the early Christian reading of any death-account in biblical literature could potentially be elucidated by the application of our rubric.

In Matthew and the Lukan corpus, the function of the figure Judas in the plotlines of each body of material indicates areas of research to be further explored in the theological tendencies of each author. Matthew's thematic interests have frequently been ascertained by reading with a view toward the apparent conflict between the Matthean community and the synagogue.³ In addition, scholarly interpretation of his portrait of the disciples is dominated by their repeated failings and the strong demands of discipleship.⁴ The death of Judas touches on both of

² Joel Marcus, "Crucifixion as Parodic Exaltation," *JBL* 125 (2006): 73–87.

³ A survey of the principal studies in Matthew makes this trend evident. See Donald Senior, *What Are They Saying about Matthew?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983). Also, Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:692–738.

⁴ See the history of research in Jeannine K. Brown, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective: The Portrayal and Function of the Matthean Disciples* (Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica 9; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002).

these areas of research. Another topic, however, emerges as a concern of Matthew through his depiction of Judas' as one who failed to perceive the grace repeatedly extended to the disciples by Jesus. In addition to the polemic and didactic interests so often observed in Matthew by the methods described above, the pastoral concern of Matthew speaks even through the death of Judas. His interest in the availability of forgiveness to weak and faulty disciples calls for more thorough exposition.

We have observed that even though the death of Judas has sometimes been viewed as an intrusion on the text in Acts 1, it is in actuality integrally connected to other themes in Acts, such as the defeat of enemies and the commencement of a global expanse of the kingdom of Jesus. From our study of these concepts we discerned that the motif of the reign of Jesus holds together several divergent elements in Acts. This result suggests that further investigation of the kingship of Jesus in Acts might prove insightful.

Finally, in relation to the study of Judas, it is hoped that by fixing more firmly the earliest characterization of Judas, our picture of the developments of the Judas-traditions as they relate to early Christian unity, diversity, and theological development would be sharpened. Comparison with the portraits of Judas in the Gospels of Mark and John, as well as with that of the newly discovered second-century gnostic *Gospel of Judas*, would be among the next steps in this pursuit. It is evident that diverse images of Judas were available in the early centuries of Christianity. The church chose some as canonical, while excluding others. A comparison of the various images of Judas in these early sources holds the promise

of further clarifying theological debates related to discipleship, apostasy, forgiveness, condemnation, and, no doubt, other topics for which this infamously enthralling figure provided a vivid and memorable rhetorical device.

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