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SURVIVING THE HANGING TO BE CLUBBED IN SERMONS: JUDAS ISCARIOT IN ONE STRAIN OF PATRISTIC RECEPTION[1]

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Introduction

The New Testament admonition to cautious stewardship of wealth was preached as consistently in the early church as it is today. Like all generations, early Christians dealt with the rich and the poor, opulence and thrift, and greed and charity. Their biblical exhortations ranged from the Old Testament law to the New Testament epistles against *avaritia*, the greed for material gain. Typical expositions from the patristic era include the Didache instruction against stinginess, Basil's sixth sermon urging benefactions, and Jerome's letter to Pammachius renouncing wealth. However, patristic homilies could employ no clearer illustration for cautionary wealth than Judas Iscariot. The disciple who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver and skimmed from the ministry accounts eventually hung himself, financing the armaments of ancient sermons and letters to target the destructive end that follows avarice.

Meanwhile, one narrow strain of the early church preserved a tradition of Judas surviving the hanging only to live a life of misery, gluttony, guilt, and even post-mortem torment. This interpretation in turn afforded early homilists and commentators the opportunity to embellish the consequences of his avarice as exhortations for their audiences. Susan Gubar describes Judas's symbol-

1. An earlier form of this article was delivered to the 2018 Historical Theology Colloquium of the *Center for Early Christian Studies and the Land Center for Cultural Engagement* at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX. All Scripture quotations taken from the NASB (New American Standard Bible).

ism as a "perpetually tortured bogeyman deployed to police the border of Christendom."[2] This strain of patristic thought is not widely recognized and includes figures like Papias, Apollinaris, Theophylact, and Origen, as well as some Apocryphal New Testament works. They collectively portray the surviving Judas with a sense of desperation, fueled by disappointment and disillusionment. For some church fathers, the use of Judas was unforgiving, as they embellished an *extended* miserable earthly life and posited woeful encounters *beyond* life into the afterlife.

For context, three parallel strains of patristic reception are discernable. First, patristic figures simply exposited the biblical text to profile Judas as the betrayer. For example, the Martyrdom of Polycarp compares Polycarp on trial to Jesus, with both being appointed to suffer, while Polycarp's betrayers "received the punishment of Judas himself."[3] The Acts of Thomas exhorts readers to abstain from theft and covetousness "which ensnared Judas Iscariot and caused him to hang himself."[4] This strain would become the mainstream of reception, best illustrated by John Chrysostom and Augustine below. A second strain of reception can be seen among Valentinian gnostics, as in the account of the Gospel of Judas. They embellished Judas to be a prototype of victory over the bondage of the material body, beginning with Jesus saying to him, "Step away from the others and I shall tell you the mysteries of the kingdom."[5] A distinguishing metaphysic marks this tradition, dualistically narrating a victor figure from heaven who liberates the true spiritual dimension of a person to overcome the imprisoning material dimension. A catholic Christianity battled fervently against this tradition, as when Irenaeus of Lyons confronted the gnostic reasoning that Judas could be an emblem of passion from the Pleroma. After all, he insisted, this system equally affirmed Christ's victorious passion, even as Judas was

2. Gubar, *Judas*, 106.
3. Mart. Pol. 6.2 (Holmes, 313).
4. Acts Thom. 84 (Elliott, 480).
5. Gos. Jud. 35 (Kasser et al., 23).

his betrayer, was expelled from the twelve, and was never restored to his position.[6]

A third and kind of mutant strain involved Judas's extended suffering. This article describes that variety in contrast to a second strain that ends with his hanging. Both warn against avarice using the example and metaphor of Judas Iscariot. It first revisits the biblical narratives of his betrayal and grief, particularly exploring Judas's motive in the Gospels as a baseline for patristic interpretation. Next, it profiles an enlargement of the patristic tradition that he survived the hanging, only to be clubbed in their sermons as a homiletical device to discourage avarice. Here, an ekphratic explanation of the biblical text graphically illustrates the mental and spiritual anguish of the betrayer due to his avarice. Finally, in contrast, it recognizes how a mainstream tradition was content with a model of suffering from avarice that ended in suicide. For both strains, Judas was simply the most popular illustration in the ubiquitous hortatory against avarice, a powerful sermon device among mainline church fathers. The marked difference in these two groups was a creative embellishment *from* the biblical text versus a fidelity *to* that text.

Biblical Account of Judas's Financial Greed

An examination of the biblical texts serves as a reminder and reexamination of the traditional story of Judas Iscariot available to the early church.

Gospel Accounts

The New Testament narrates Judas's betrayal of Jesus beginning with the foreshadowing of his behavior as treasurer. In three steps, Judas is presented as unethical, disloyal, and regretful. The steps center on financial transactions, combining for a path to personal destruction for the early Christians to illustrate how greed leads to shame.

First, John 12:6 cites that Iscariot feigned a response to the anointing of Jesus when he claimed the money could have been

6. Irenaeus, *Haer*. 2.20.2–5 (*ANF* 1:388–89).

spent on the poor, when really, he was a thief of the bag of ministry expenses. Here, he is unethical. Second, Judas offers to deliver Jesus to the Pharisees for thirty pieces of silver in Matthew (26:15), with Luke's Gospel simply offering a reference to money (22:5). He betrays Jesus with a kiss in the Garden of Gethsemane, likely holding the silver on his person (Matt 26:48–49; Mark 14:44–45; Luke 22:47–48). Here, he is disloyal. Third, he shows remorse when he returns the money to the Jewish leaders (Matt 27:3) and when he hangs himself (Matt 27:5). Peter's speech in Acts, which leads to the replacement of Matthias for Judas, reports that the betrayer "falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out" (Acts 1:18). Here, he is regretful. Noteworthy for the theme of money in the life of Judas Iscariot, the Pharisees could not deposit the return into the treasury because of its link to blood. They instead purchased a potter's field to bury strangers that gained the name "the Field of Blood" (Matt 27:6–8).

The Judas Motive

Readers of the New Testament cannot know exactly the compounded motives of Judas in his treachery against Jesus. Not surprisingly, multiple theories have been posited. Politics and revolutionary disappointment, identity and insecurity, satanic inspiration, and greed are suggested causes. For much of church history, the temptation of money receives ultimate attention in the motive of Judas. However, additional motives can still be recognized among scholars.

Politics. Bernard Ruffin is among those who suppose that revolutionary expectations were behind the betrayal. In this line of thinking, the surname Iscariot has been thought to derive from the Greek word *sicarios*, meaning "assassin" or "dagger," making Judas a zealot or of the sicarii, the class of assassins.[7] This in turn

7. The first-century Josephus describes these zealots: "These men agree in all other things with Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty; and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord . . . nor indeed do

leads to the theory that Judas was frustrated by the lack of revolutionary activity by Jesus. Here, the disciple hoped the betrayal would motivate his master to greater resistance that rose to a higher level of insurgency. With such thinking, William Barclay speculates, "It is likeliest of all that Judas never meant Jesus to die but betrayed him with the intention of forcing his hand."[8]

Studies in political zeal around Jesus' ministry usually center on Simon, son of Alphaeus: "Simultaneously, a zealot's religious devotion and hope for theocracy could have been compatible with Jesus' message, with some reevaluation if Jesus' message did not display patriotism in the form of revolution."[9] Perhaps this same incentive was behind Judas's actions. Perhaps Judas even supposed the money would be applied to fuel a rebellion, again warping a philosophy of patronage as seen in John 12:6. On the other hand, his association with revolution can be overestimated. James Brooks thinks that Iscariot simply means a man from Kerioth, a city in Judea near Hebron.[10] This etymology and personal provenance allow for a second theory of motive: insecurity.

Identity Insecurity. If Judas were from Kerioth, this would likely mean he is the only Judean among the twelve, although the provenance of Thomas, Jude, and Simon the Zealot are equally unknown. William Steuart McBirnie supposes that Judas experienced a sense of being left out:

> Judas alone among the disciples was of southern extraction; and the differences in temperament and social outlook, together with the pretty prejudices to which these generally give rise, may explain in part though they do not justify, his after treachery—the lack of inner sympathy which existed between Judas and the rest of the disciples.[11]

While this theory of identity insecurity may have marked Judas's inward thinking, it is a speculative theory built on an uncertain

they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man Lord" (*Ant*. 18.1.6).

8. Barclay, *Acts of the Apostles*, 18.
9. Shelton, *Quest for the Historical Apostles*, 224.
10. Brooks, *Mark*, 72.
11. McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 180.

historicity. Certainly, his name becomes foundational to his identity; Judas likely has a root meaning of "God be praised," yet the immensely popular name in first century Palestine[12] was shouldered by a Jew who dishonored the Messiah.

Satan. Meanwhile, one spiritual motive behind Judas's actions is the influence of the enemy of God, while money was merely the means for that influence. Luke's Gospel first attributes a Satanic motivation: "And Satan entered Judas, the one called Iscariot, who belonged to the number of the twelve" (Luke 22:3). John's Gospel follows suit.[13] In this line of interpretation among patristic writers, Judas becomes an actor in the theater of a greater conflict beyond himself, accompanied by his avarice and motivated by Satan. His role in betrayal from within the twelve functions in irony, an observation not missed by the critic Celsus. As Origen argues against his scorn, he affirms a Satanic inspiration when he hypothesizes that even if a disciple were "possessed by a worse spirit than Judas . . . what would this contribute to an accusation against Jesus or the Christian religion?" when Jesus gave himself freely.[14] Origen attributes a Satanic influence on Judas when he remarks, "For if any one gives place to the devil, Satan enters into him; thus did Judas give place, and thus did the devil put it in his heart to betray Jesus."[15]

In a letter to one fallen Theodore, Chrysostom employs Judas's greed as an example of how the agency of Satan will similarly prevent cleansing from sin:

> For this reason also the wicked one dragged Judas out of this world lest he should make a fair beginning, and so return by means of repentance to the point from which he fell. For although it may seem a strange thing to say, I will not admit even that sin to be too great for the succor which is brought to us from repentance. Wherefore I pray

12. Williams, "Palestinian Jewish Personal Names," 89.

13. John 13:2 reads, "And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, to betray him." John 13:27 states, "And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, 'That thou doest, do quickly.'"

14. Origen, *Cels*. 2.11 (*ANF* 4:435).

15. Origen, *Comm*. *Jo*. 10.30 (*ANF* 10:408).

> and beseech you to banish all this Satanic mode of thinking from your soul, and to return to this state of salvation.[16]

For Chrysostom, Judas did not find redemption from his Satanic association, and Theodore should avoid being like him. This Satanic influence theme cuts across strains of patristic reception. Here, the enemy of God cultivated Judas's fatal flaw of money, the fourth identifiable motive.

Greed. Avarice is the motive recognized most obviously by the Gospels, so that its connection to finance is our subject of focus for Judas. In the most telling of passages, John records how Judas objected to the anointing of Jesus with costly oil: "Now he said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he kept the money box, he used to steal from what was put into it" (12:6).

The attribution of money-thief finds weight for Maximus of Turin (ca. 380–423) who contrasts how the thief on the cross confessed Christ while Judas the disciple denied Jesus. Both were thieves, but the convicted one repented before Jesus while the trusted one betrayed Jesus face to face: "The thief confesses the one whom the disciple denied."[17] John Chrysostom (ca. 349– 407) describes the covetous effect of money on him:

> Hear, ye covetous, consider what befell him; how he at the same time lost the money, and committed the sin, and destroyed his own soul. Such is the tyranny of covetousness. He enjoyed not the money, neither the present life, nor that to come, but lost all at once, and having got a bad character even with those very men, so hanged himself.[18]

The story of Judas becomes a cautionary tale of how being entrusted as financial officer implies an ability to manage wealth, requiring careful stewardship against temptation. Apostle scholar McBirnie hypothesizes:

> He undoubtedly possessed a certain business ability and was therefore appointed keeper of the purse. But his heart could not have been clean,

16. John Chrysostom, *Theod. laps*. 1.9 (*NPNF*[1], 9:97).
17. Maximus of Turin, Sermon 74.2 (ACW, 182).
18. John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt*. 85.2 (*NPNF*[1], 10:508).

> even from the first, as he administered even his primary charge dishonestly. The cancer of this greed spread from the material to the spiritual.[19]

From the early church to the contemporary church, thinkers recognize that at least Judas's financial privilege led to a succumbing to temptation for gain, which in turn led to betrayal and attempted suicide. This lesson in the unethical, disloyal, and regretful would be embellished in a strain of patristic writers that protracted Judas's life to augment this lesson on financial temptation.

Patristic Accounts of Judas's Extended Suffering

While the biblical account that Judas took his own life is the commonly accepted narrative even among the ancients, some church fathers did not halt his suffering on a tree the night of his betrayal. Instead, they extended his life and gained a greater sermon illustration on the misery of avarice.

Papias and Apollinaris

Attribution comes to Papias (60–135) by Apollinaris, Bishop of Laodicea (ca. 310–390),[20] for the most graphic description of his survival:

> Judas was a terrible, walking example of ungodliness in this world, his flesh so bloated that he was not able to pass through a place where a wagon passes easily, not even his bloated head by itself. For his eyelids, they say, were so swollen that he could not see the light at all, and his eyes could not be seen, even by a doctor using an optical instrument, so far had they sunk below the outer surface. His genitals appeared more loathsome and larger than anyone else's, and when he relieved himself there passed through it pus and worms from every part of his body, much to his shame. After much agony and punishment, they say, he finally died in his own place, and because of the stench the area is deserted and uninhabitable even now; in fact, to this day one cannot

19. McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 180–81.

20. Theodore Zahn establishes how this is Apollinaris, the late second century bishop of Hierapolis (see Lake, "Death of Judas," 23n1).

> pass that place without holding one's nose, so great was the discharge from his body, and so far did it spread over the ground.[21]

Another account in an associated manuscript tradition complements this one:

> Judas walked about in this world as a weighty example of impiety. He was so inflamed in the flesh that he could not pass where a wagon could easily pass. When the wagon struck him, his bowels emptied out.[22]

The challenge of contradiction with the biblical account of his death by hanging and falling is explained by Apollinaris himself:

> Judas did not die by hanging but lived on, having been cut down before he choked to death. Indeed, the Acts of the Apostles makes this clear: "Falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and his intestines spilled out." Papias, the disciple of John, recounts this more clearly [in the account above].[23]

The seemingly contradictory verse in Acts 1:18, "Falling headlong, he burst open," is here marshaled not as contradictory but as evidence compatible with his survival of the hanging. For Apollinaris, the biblical description indicates a different death, with Judas proving a survivalist when he was cut down before dying. This extended-life account in turn provides a patristic basis for a more expansive use of Judas as an illustration of the corruption of money. He is a walking glutton, miserable and heavy and foul. Like Prov 23:21, "For the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe one with rags."

The claims to the extended life of Judas accompany a hortatory purpose to exacerbate the effects of financial gain illustrated by his experience. Geoffrey Smith describes how the depiction of Judas's death here "calls to mind similar depictions of the dying days of other notorious villains."[24] Gluttony, teeming bowels,

21. Fragments of Papias 18 (Holmes, 755–57); Smith, "Death of Judas," 313.

22. Smith, "Death of Judas," 313. For a summary of these two traditions, see Lake, "Death of Judas."

23. Fragments of Papias 18 (Holmes, 755).

24. Smith, "Death of Judas," 311.

putrefaction, and worm infestation are reported in combination by Josephus about King Herod, Eusebius about Emperor Galerius, and the Maccabean account of Antiochus's death.[25] Judas's death comes as judgment in ways similar to the most inimical of figures which represent hostility to the work of God. Christopher Zeichmann has highlighted how the passage "points in favor of a rhetorical backdrop," and without saying that it is intended to embellish the historical, he posits that its *ekphrasis* "supplements the visualization of the passage."[26]

Additional negative financial associations have been strained from these stories. For example, Susan Gubar suggests the characteristics given by Papias "forecast or reflect anti-Semitic features often ascribed to Jews,"[27] including moneylending. The pregnant money bag, the expulsion of the bowels, the foul smell, the "conceiving" of a plot, and the miscarriage of the plot "signify the sterile breeding of money"—financial planning that proved abortive.[28] The images provide foundational association with usury among Jews by their blood money and parasitism.[29] The patristic association between foul imagery and money would later see the Middle Ages augment the discharge and odor imagery by suggesting that Jewish men menstruated.[30] Yet, like many social scientists, her stress on these images tends to overemphasize what is at best an inference. Nonetheless, here among patristic writings, an extended life of suffering is the instructive, miserable consequence to financial greed.

Origen

In a sermon from Matthew's Gospel, the Bishop of Alexandria, Origen (184–253), claims briefly that Judas anticipated Jesus in Hades in the hope of efficacious repentance:

25. Josephus, *Ant*. 17.6.5; Eusebius, *Hist*. *eccl*. 8.16.3–5; 2 Macc 9:5–29. See also Smith, "Death of Judas," 311.
26. Zeichmann, "Papias as Rhetorician," 428.
27. Gubar, *Judas*, 116.
28. Gubar, *Judas*, 119.
29. Gubar, *Judas*, 117–25.
30. Gubar, *Judas*, 117.

> Perhaps, he desired to die before his Master on His way to death, and to meet Him with a disembodied spirit, that by confession and deprecation he might obtain mercy; and did not see that it is not fitting that a servant of God should dismiss himself from life, but should wait God's sentence.[31]

Such a claim for Judas is not repeated in Origen. Yet it reinforces his controversial view of the afterlife with a universal reconciliation of all beings. His theology in *Against Celsus* comes closest to this afterlife application for Judas:

> When He [Jesus] became a soul, without the covering of the body, He dwelt among those souls which were without bodily covering, converting such of them as were willing to Himself, or those whom He saw, for reasons known to Him alone, to be better adapted to such a course.[32]

For Origen, there is a defensive posture around Judas that warrants this opportunity. At the same time, he makes clear the sin of Judas as an illustration in deep error. Origen speaks to the failed financial stewardship when he describes Judas as "a very powerful deterrent to any one from being anxious to take from the account of the poor," and to anyone who feigns justice while taking from the poor, "Let there be assigned to him the portion along with Judas who did these things."[33] In an exhortation to give genuinely to the poor rather than in a hypocritical fashion, Origen employs Judas to warn against corruption from money.

> If, then, any one in our time who has the bag of the Church speaks likes Judas on behalf of the poor, but takes away what is put therein, let there be assigned to him the portion along with Judas who did these things; on account of which things eating like a gangrene into his soul, the devil cast it into his heart to betray the Savior.[34]

31. Origen, cited in Aquinas, *Catena Aurea*, 933. See also Laeuchli, "Origen's Interpretation," 258–59, where it is called Origen's "Homily on Matthew 117." Cane states that Sermon 117 exists only in a late Latin text (*Place of Judas Iscariot*, 131n12).
32. Origen, *Cels*. 2.43 (*ANF* 4:448).
33. Origen, *Comm*. *Matt*. 11.9 (*ANF* 10:438).
34. Origen, *Comm*. *Matt*. 11.9 (*ANF* 10:438).

He then suggests that Paul had Judas in mind when writing 1 Tim 6:10, "And perhaps, when the Apostle says, 'The love of money is a root of all evils,' he says it because of Judas' love of money, which was a root of all the evils that were committed against Jesus."[35] Origen's use of Judas only speculates on post-mortem repentance, evidenced by his earthly repentance, but this church father makes great strides to illustrate for the church a depraved heart, much like the list of fathers below. This notion of post-mortem repentance took hold in tradition, evidenced by another writer maintaining this pattern of Judas beyond the hanging.

Theophylact

In the Orthodox tradition beyond the patristic era, Theophylact of Ochrid (ca. 1050–1108)[36] posits that in deep repentance Judas hung himself in the hopes to implore Jesus in the afterlife. Yet his survival on earth was explicitly a divine act, perhaps to shame him and his thirty pieces of silver in a continued life of suffering:

> And this is why he hanged himself, in order that he might get to hades before Jesus, and there implore him and obtain salvation. You must know, however . . . the tree bent down and he continued to live, because it was God's will either to reserve him for repentance or for open disgrace and shame. For they say that he had the dropsy, so that he could hardly pass where a carriage could easily pass; and then he fell on his face and burst asunder, as Luke says in Acts.[37]

Like Apollinaris, Theophylact evidences an extension of Judas's life into further suffering, intended in the afterlife but resultant in a continued earthly life. Yet his evidence of the extending tree continues in other medieval stories around Judas. Kim Paffenroth profiles one medieval legend in which his failure to be

35. Origen, *Comm*. *Matt*. 11.9 (*ANF* 10:439).

36. William Klassen argues that this is seventh-century historian rather than the eleventh-century archbishop. Paffenroth, *Judas*, 172n54. While the dates for the later are given above, the identification is immaterial to the medieval reception of Judas.

37. Theophylact, *Comm*. *Matt*. 27, cited in Harris, "Did Judas Really Commit Suicide?" 495. Klassen offers another translation, while positing that Theophylact deemed Judas to be "Jesus' favored disciple" (*Judas*, 173).

hanged resulted in his missing of the harrowing of hell: "Judas, still bearing his purse, was the first to come to Hell after Christ's visit." She also describes how the tenth-century *Voyage of St. Brendan* relates that the saint discovered Judas on a rock in the sea, where he is allowed to sit on Sundays—a sabbath to his suffering of various physical torments every other day of the week.[38]

The trail from Papias through Apollinaris to Origen to Theophylact evidences the ancient attempt to show early Christians the logical consequence of financial temptation and sin. While these writers present the story as historical, this strain functions in literary *ekphrasis* to visually embellish the story of Judas's greed. The Christian who holds money is cautiously exhorted to beware its indulgence. Yet the embellishment of Judas as avaricious and financially corrupt becomes even richer in the apocryphal tradition.

Apocryphal New Testament

The apostolic acts of the second through fifth centuries provide journeys and encounters of the apostles as they take the gospel across the known world. They complement the orthodox strain of a remorsefully tormented Judas in the afterlife. Thematically noteworthy is that these works tend towards *encratism*, a movement formal and informal that censured practices of food, sex, and any material pleasure, well into a category of legalism.[39] One can imagine Peter converting the wives of Prefect Agrippa and the prefect's friend Albinus, and this form of the gospel includes abstaining from sexual relations with these husbands.[40] Predictably, these texts will imply the encratic consequence of indulged mammon for Judas.

The late fourth-century Acts of Andrew and Paul describes how some apostles journeyed to a city whose geography cannot be initially placed where they encounter Judas. In this city called Amente, Andrew encounters the betrayer who had formerly re-

38. Paffenroth, *Judas*, 123–25.

39. Shelton, *Quest for the Historical Apostles*, 48–49.

40. Acts Pet. 34 (Elliott, 423). For a summary of this example, see Shelton, *Quest for the Historical Apostles*, 83–84.

pented of his act of betrayal, returned to Jesus before his trial, and followed his command to go to the desert in repentance. There, Judas encountered Satan and worshipped him in fear. In regret, he hanged himself and resolved to meet Jesus in Amente, which now functions as an underworld of souls.[41] In an interpretative strain of 1 Pet 3:19, when Jesus had come to this Hades, he liberated all the souls except Judas. Yet, to demonstrate that "Satan's boast might be proved vain,"[42] Jesus ordered Michael the archangel to take Judas's soul away, to be sent back (somewhere) until the day of judgment.

The Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Disciple (or the Gospel of Bartholomew) relates a similar episode of Judas in Amente: "Then he [Jesus in Hades] turned to Judas Iscariot and uttered a long rebuke and described the sufferings which he must endure. Thirty names of sins are given, which are the snakes which were sent to devour him."[43] In this apocryphal New Testament book, Judas is censured in the afterlife of Hades, after the crucifixion and before the resurrection, as the betrayer confronts the betrayed. The rebuke of "thirty names of sins" are "snakes sent to devour" Judas, echoing the thirty pieces of silver foundational to the betrayal with an association with Satan. The gluttony of Judas finds judgment in the devouring snakes sent against him. This fifth-century work perpetuates negatively the effect of the money behind Judas's motivation virtually by name.

The patristic reception of Judas's suffering in the afterlife ends here; it would continue forward into popular thought. In Dante's (1265–1321) *Inferno*, Judas functions as a lesson concerning judgment in the lowest part of hell. He is tortured in its ice by Satan, who bites at his body and flays his hide with his claws. His legs jerk as he is tormented beside Brutus and Cassius, traitors to Julius Caesar.[44] Likewise, in Longfellow's (1807–1882) poem *The Divine Tragedy*, the poet assigns to Judas this monologue:

41. Acts Andr. Paul (James).
42. Acts Andr. Paul (James, 472).
43. Gos. Bart. (James, 183).
44. Dante, *Divine Comedy*, 381.

> Too late! Too late! I shall not see Him more among the living . . . But in the other world! I will be there before Him, and will wait until he comes, and fall down on my knees and kiss his feet, imploring pardon, pardon! I heard Him say: All sins shall be forgiven, except the sin against the Holy Ghost.[45]

In the Gospel of Judas, the dubious disciple finds a short-lived, positive, gnostic function as the favored recipient of the private instruction of Jesus. Judas becomes the prototype victor from the bondage of the material body.[46] Yet even here the afterlife holds suffering. After calling Judas "the thirteenth spirit" in the disciple's own vision and after laughing at him, Jesus declares, "You will become the thirteenth [referent ambiguous], and you will be cursed by the other generations—and you will come to rule over them. In the last days they will curse your ascent to the holy [generation]."[47] The end of this gnostic Gospel concludes on the finale of money: "Judas answered them [high priests] as they wished. And he received some money and handed him [Jesus] over to them."[48] While avarice is not denounced here and while Judas is simultaneously glorified, this gnostic work correlates Judas's inevitable sense of suffering to his financial transaction.

Echoes of the consequence for financial indulgence might be seen in other ways in these writings. Judas is defamed through additional ad hominem associations. For example, the Arabic Gospel of Infancy reports how Judas was demon-possessed as a child.[49] The Book of the Cock relates how a woman brought a dead rooster to the Last Supper, Matthias placed it on a dish on the table, Jesus resurrected it, empowered it with human speech, and instructed it to follow Judas as he exited the room. The plan to betray Jesus reverberates with the consequence of the thirty pieces of silver, lead-

45. Longfellow, "Divine Tragedy," 402–3. The chapter dedicated to Judas is the "Alcedama," named for the Potter's Field bought with the thirty pieces of silver.

46. Wright, *Judas*, 52.

47. Gos. Jud. 46–47 (Kasser et al., 32–33).

48. Gos. Jud. 58 (Kasser et al., 45).

49. (Arab.) Gos. Inf. 35 (James, 82). James provides this synopsis of this section: "Judas, a child possessed by the devil, smites Jesus, and the devil leaves him in the form of a dog" (82).

ing the rooster to report it to Jesus. The rooster wept. Jesus discharged the bird, empowered it to ascend the sky for a thousand years.[50] Perhaps the stint of heavenly life is awarded the faithful fowl in contrast to the suffering to be awarded unfaithful Judas. Whereas Judas suffers the result of his greed as a wicked servant, the rooster—perhaps the symbol of denial that finds repentance for another disciple, Peter—enjoys the result of a good and faithful servant.

In the most elaborative apocryphon embellishing the money around Judas's betrayal, a fifth-century Eastern text traces the origins of the coins in the Judas transaction. In the Legend of the Thirty Pieces of Silver, the coins were minted by Terah in Genesis, inherited by Abraham then Isaac, received by Solomon, captured by Nebuchadnezzar, passed on to the magi, lost in route to the manger but discovered by merchants, who in turn sell them to Agbar, King of Edessa. An ancient legend cited in Eusebius tells how the king was healed of disease by Christ,[51] and in this Legend, the king sent the coins as a gift. Jesus placed them in the temple treasury, which the religious leaders used to pay Judas.[52] The glorious chain of possession was broken with their abuse by Judas. Burke and Čéplö describe how the story provides "a providential transmission of sacred relics" for the medieval churches claiming to have a coin,[53] but a force of providence also surrounds Judas's inevitable use of the coins.[54]

All of these sources—both orthodox and gnostic—give attention the problem of Judas's avarice to illustrate the consequence of avarice, of financial self-indulgence. Their imagery and contrast represent the more severe method of exemplifying sin. Exegetically, this narrow tradition of extended suffering demonstrates a betrayal—an ironic term—of the New Testament text to promote a good intention: the use of the twelfth disciple and betrayer to illustrate the devastating effects that financial greed af-

50. Bk. Rooster (James, 150).
51. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.13.4.
52. *Leg. Sil.* 1–14 (see Burke and Čéplö, "Legend," 303–5).
53. Burke and Čéplö, "Legend," 300.
54. The Western text of the *Legend of the Thirty Pieces of Silver* calls the coins "predestined" (*Leg. Sil.* 11; Burke and Čéplö, "Legend," 308).

fords the disciple of Christ. However, the more mainstream method among the church fathers did not employ Judas with an extended life, but as a homiletical device showing the logical outcome of sinful avarice in this life. Theirs is a preaching in congruence with the biblical account of Judas dying on the tree.

Patristic Homilies on Judas and Avarice

Without promoting a fantastic narrative of Judas's extended life, later church fathers still explicated the spiritual condition and wealth motivation of the betrayal episode for disciples in their churches. The earlier strain with its motive for extending his life is forsaken for a strain of straightforward preaching against avarice.

John Chrysostom

The thirty pieces of silver does not elude Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople (ca. 349–407). When Jesus simply declared to his disciples how one would betray him, the homilist remarks:

> Yet He [Jesus] might have said [to Judas], "O thou unholy, thou all unholy one; accursed, and profane; so long a time in travail with mischief, who hast gone thy way, and made satanical compacts, and *has agreed to receive money*, and hast been convicted by me too, dost thou yet dare to ask [is it I]?"[55]

The financial element is central to the unholy qualities of Judas in his betrayal. Judas "distorted not his hands, but stretched them out for the *price* of his precious blood."[56] Quoted earlier, the bishop elucidated the futility of mammon as Judas "lost the money, and committed the sin, and destroyed his own soul."[57]

Chrysostom grieves the effects of avarice:

> O blindness! Whereunto hath it led him? Such is covetousness, it renders men fools and senseless, yea reckless, and dogs instead of men,

55. John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 81 (*NPNF*[1], 10:486) (emphasis mine).
56. John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 81 (*NPNF*[1], 10:488) (emphasis mine).
57. John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 85.2 (*NPNF*[1], 10:508).

> or rather even more fierce than dogs, and devils after being dogs . . . for such doth the insatiable desire of gain make men, out of their mind, frenzy-smitten, altogether given up to gain, as was the case even with Judas.[58]

Similarly, he declared, "Oh madness! How did the covetousness of Judas altogether blind him!"[59] For Chrysostom, the entrustment of money requires stewardship for the Christian, again with Judas as a foil:

> God chose Judas . . . yea he gave him somewhat beyond the others, the stewardship of the money. But what of that? When he afterwards abused both these trusts, betraying Him who he was commissioned to preach, and misapplying the money which he should have laid out well; did not escape punishment, and very reasonable too. For we must not use the high honors given to us by God so as to offend Him, but so as to please Him better.[60]

Finally, Chrysostom uses Judas to explicate how one can receive the highest honorable opportunities in discipleship, but only one failure can cause a downfall. Here, motive is attributed to Christ who hoped for Judas to overcome his greed through discipleship:

> He was entrusted with the money of the poor, so that his passion might be soothed thereby (for he was a thief) even then did not become any better . . . for since Christ knew that he was covetous, and destined to perish on account of his love of money he not only did not demand punishment of him for this at that time, but with a view to softening down his passion he was entrusted with the money of the poor, that having some means of appeasing his greed he might be saved from falling into that appalling gulf of sin, checking the greater evil beforehand by a lesser one.[61]

58. John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 81 (*NPNF*[1], 10:487).
59. John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 80 (*NPNF*[1], 10:482).
60. John Chrysostom, *Dros.* 4.1 (*NPNF* [1], 9:62).
61. John Chrysostom, *Laed.* 11 (*NPNF*[1], 9:279).

Cyril of Alexandria

Cyril of Alexandria (ca. 376–444) in North Africa also centers Judas's motive on finances, condemning the temptation for money as the worst of all temptations:

> Many and bitter passions wage war with the soul of man, and, attacking it with unendurable violence, humble it to unseemly deeds: but worse than all the rest is that root of all evil, the love of money, into whose inextricable nets that traitorous disciple so fell, that he even consented to become the minister of the devil's guile, and the instrument of the wicked chiefs of the synagogue of the Jews in their iniquity against Christ.[62]

For Cyril, life in Christ was traded for sin: "For the sake of worthless pence he [Judas] ceased to be with Christ, and lost his hope toward God, and the honor, and crowns, and life, and glory prepared for Christ's true followers, and the right of reigning with Him." Passionately, Cyril asked, "What lamentation can suffice for him?" as "that wretched being fell into such utter misery!"[63]

Augustine of Hippo

The North African bishop, Augustine of Hippo (354–430), offers a notable amount of attention to Judas as a homiletical device to show the logical outcome of sinful avarice in this life. In his tractates on John, he identifies his thievery:

> [Judas] who was a thief, yea—do not overlook it—not a thief of any ordinary type, but a thief and a sacrilegist: a robber of money bags, but of such as were the Lord's; of money bags, but of such as were sacred . . . Lay to heart our Lord's example while living with man upon earth.[64]

In the same tractates, he reflects:

> Why, then, do we wonder if Christ's bread was given to Judas, that thereby he should be made over to the devil . . . but [he] thought only of his money gain, and found the loss of his soul. He got the wages he

62. Cyril, *Comm. Luc.* 148 (Smith, 693).
63. Cyril, *Comm. Luc.* 148 (Smith, 694).
64. Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 50.10–11 (*NPNF*[1], 7:281–282).

> wished, but had also given him, against his wish, the wages he merited.[65]

Beyond his homilies, Augustine continued to present Judas as betrayer and eschatologically hopeless. In gauging the nature of suicide in *City of God*, he judged Judas as doubly guilty, having killed Christ and himself. Thus, "by despairing of God's mercy in his sorrow that wrought death, he left to himself no place for a healing penitence."[66] In his *Answer to Petilian the Donatist*, Augustine related a dialog with a Donatist theologian in which Judas comes into view. In the process, they employed him as an invective of association against one another, including Augustine's statement: "Judas, who was the devil among the apostles, who imitate his deeds."[67] Régis Burnet recognizes that both Augustine and Chrysostom helped to fix a particular image of Judas for generations to follow, in which the church could not excuse Judas even though his actions resulted in atonement: "One does not judge behavior based on its consequences but on its intentions."[68]

Other Patristic Sources

When Athanasius of Alexandria (298–373) relates a description of the death of Arius in his *Letter to Serapion*, the guilt by association with the heresiarch is obvious. Reminiscent of the bowels named in Papias and Apollinaris, and the falling headlong with bursting entrails in Acts, Arius's ignoble death account is paralleled with that of Judas. In fact, Athanasius applies to Arius the very words from the Lucan account of Judas's deadly fall, implying a prophetic flare with "in the language of Scripture": κάτα τὸ γεγραμμένον, πρηνὴς γενόμενος ἐλάκησεν μέσος καὶ ἐξεχύθη πάντα τὰ σπάλγχνα αὐτοῦ.[69] Ellen Muehlberger remarks, "The overtones of judgement in his report are clear: Arius' pretensions were

65. Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 62.1, 4 (*NPNF*[1], 7:312–313).
66. Augustine, *Civ.* 1.17 (*NPNF*[1], 2:12).
67. Augustine, *C. litt. Petil.* 2.26 (*NPNF*[1], 4:535).
68. Burnet, "Judas," 942.
69. Athanasius, *Ep. mort. Ar.* 3 (*NPNF*[2], 4:565; *PG* 25.688); Acts 1:18.

foiled when God judged him as he had judged Judas, visiting on each of them a horrible, immediate death."[70]

In the *Paschale Carmen* (ca. 425–455), attributed to the early fifth century Sedulius, Judas's treachery is presented as "bribable" and Judas as "an impious mercenary." It employs the fullest extent of graphic guilt: "Are you not blood-spotted, proud, audacious, mad, rebellious, treacherous, cruel, deceitful, bribable, unjust, a harsh traitor, a wild traitor, an impious mercenary, a standard-bearer leading the way, accompanied by terrible swords?"[71]

The "Kathisma Hymn" briefly narrates the betrayal of Judas in Eastern Orthodox liturgy during Holy Week. This ancient text for worship came into development in the third century by the Church of Constantinople, with forms preserved by Basil and Chrysostom. It divides the psalms into manageable parts called "kathismata." The liturgy of Holy Week makes declaration about the condition of Judas with each line highlighting either his love for money or the darkness of his soul:

> Judas loves money with his mind.
> The impious one moves against the Master.
> He wills and plans the betrayal.
> Receiving darkness, he falls from the light.
> He agrees to the price and sells the priceless one.
> A payment for the deeds the wretch gains hanging and a terrible death.
> From his lot deliver us, O Christ God, granting remission of sins to those who celebrate Thine immaculate passion with love.[72]

Here, "money," "price," "payment," and "lot" find association with "impiety," "betrayal," "darkness," "falling from light," "wretched gain," and "death" in an indictment against Judas.

In a sermon delivered from Rome in the mid-fifth century, Leo (ca. 400–461) profiles Judas as liquidating Jesus with commercial rhetoric: "That evil heart, which was now given up to thievish frauds, and now busied with treacherous designs . . . he who had sold the Author of life to His murderers, even in dying increased the amount of sin which condemned him." Furthermore, Leo's

70. Muehlberger, "Legend," 7.
71. Sedulius, *Paschale Carmen* 2.59–62, cited in Gubar, *Judas*, 126.
72. "Kathisma Hymns," 26–27.

language employs the depth of Judas's sin: "The son of perdition, at whose right the devil stood, gave himself up to despair before Christ accomplished the mystery of universal redemption."[73] This is not the exclusive presentation of Judas by Leo. For example, he remarks in another sermon, "The devil entirely seized Judas . . . took possession of one whom he had already bound down by his evil designs," without mentioning avarice.[74] Here, the Satanic influence cuts across strains of reception in a sermon that seems even to invite Judas to repentance.

Conclusion

Amidst the missteps of the apostles in the Gospels, only one disciple among the twelve ultimately fails in discipleship. Only one disciple bears the legacy of a traitor. Even Doubting Thomas and Denying Peter find their way back into good standing with Jesus.[75] As a result, no disciple is more dubious than Judas Iscariot. At the Last Supper, the twelve sat shocked as Jesus declared, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me" (Matt 26:21). That betrayal would lead to Jesus' trail and death, stemming at least in part from a heart of thievery embodied by thirty pieces of silver. Afterwards, the same betrayal will lead to the regret and shame of the traitor, casting his earnings at the feet of the conspirators.

In this era, Papias and Apollinaris took liberty to reinterpret his death narratives to embellish the effects of avarice. Independent of his death, Origen and the New Testament Apocrypha provide his afterlife narratives to embellish the effects of avarice. Such embellishment was not necessary for Cyril, John Chrysostom, Augustine, and Leo, who simply employed Judas in life for homiletic judgment. Samuel Laeuchli attributes to other patristic authors a "desire to discover more and more ugly tendencies in the

73. Leo the Great, *Serm*. 62.4 (*NPNF*^{2}, 12:174–75) (italics original).

74. Leo the Great, *Serm*. 58.4 (*NPNF*^{2}, 12:170).

75. Porter and Heath emphasize this: "His [Judas's] act of denial was one of many acts of denial during Jesus' arrest . . . for Judas, it seems, there was no repentance and no forgiveness, because there was only remorse over sinfully motivated betrayal" (*Lost Gospel of Judas*, 21).

life of the twelfth disciple and to represent his death as being as frightful as possible."[76] Still, common to both strains that profile Judas is the destructive power of undisciplined possession of wealth. It leads to robbery of the poor. It leads to satanic influence. It leads to personal self-destruction. These consequences of greed can be collectively synthesized in a recognizable patristic theme that ensured Judas and his legacy continually suffered misery from his earned thirty pieces of silver. The dubious Judas Iscariot thus became an ancient, proliferated sermon illustration on the destructive power of money. Whether it drove him to a suicide or if it haunted him beyond an attempted suicide, the ancient message of caution is the same.

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76. Laeuchli, "Origen's Interpretation," 254.

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