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*Cowardice, Betrayal and Discipleship: Peter and Judas in the Gospels*

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**Abstract:** This thesis looks at the role of Peter and Judas in the four canonical gospels, seeking to answer the question of why two such dramatic examples of failure in discipleship became, from so early on, an established and central part of the gospel narrative.

The first chapter discusses the literary context of the gospels, considering issues such as the oral medium, the gospel communities, and the genre of the gospels. The second chapter examines the historical Peter and Judas, discussing the evidence in the rest of the New Testament and elsewhere in Christian tradition, followed by a range of parallel disciple figures in ancient literature, from the followers and debate partners of Plato's Socrates to the students of the neo-Platonic philosopher Plotinus, making the case that a literary archetype for a disciple exists and is made use of in all of these texts.

The third, fourth, fifth and sixth chapters look at each of the gospels in turn, discussing the way in which Peter and Judas correspond to the literary archetype and the ways that this archetype interacts both with the actual events of Jesus' career and arrest, and potentially ongoing or recent events in each evangelist's own community.

**Lay Summary:** This thesis examines the roles of the disciples Peter and Judas in the four canonical gospels, seeking to answer the question of how such clear and poignant instances of failure came to play such a central role in the Christian proclamation. In order to do this, it looks at a range of parallel figures in Graeco-Roman literature, before launching a detailed analysis of the portrayals of both disciples in the gospels.

**Declaration**

This thesis has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. It has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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A remarkable innovation was the first picture of the coward, but not so remarkable as the first picture that did not make him hateful.

-- Arthur Ransome, *A Study of Robert Louis Stevenson*

It was a shame that I did not see this change that came over Uiko at the moment when she decided on betrayal. If I had in fact seen it in all its details, there might have sprouted up within me a spirit of forgiveness for people, a spirit that would forgive every sort of ugliness.

-- Yukio Mishima, *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*

## Introduction

This thesis is a study of the portrayal of Peter and Judas in all four gospels, in particular their roles during the Passion narratives in which they respectively deny and betray Jesus. The question at the heart of my work is this: what does it mean that these two glaring instances of failure are placed at the very heart of the Christian kerygma? Are there significant differences between Judas' action and that of Peter?

It is clear from the anti-Christian writings of Celsus that for many sceptical Jews and pagans, Christian claims were fatally undermined by the multiple failures of the disciples, perhaps most strikingly Peter's denial and Judas' betrayal.<sup>1</sup> What kind of prophet was Jesus that he chose his followers so poorly? What kind of leader could he have been, to have inspired so little loyalty in them? Celsus' arguments can hardly have been unique to him. The behaviour of Peter and Judas seems like an obvious weak point in the gospel narrative, a major inconsistency in the flattering portrait of Jesus as divinely-inspired teacher and leader that the evangelists are attempting to build. There would seem to be three possible reasons why the evangelists should nevertheless have included the humiliating details of how those closest to Jesus failed him.

The first is that it was simply a matter of historical fact. The role that Judas played in Jesus' arrest, and the cowardice that Peter displayed on the same night, were widely reported and had become fixtures of the Christian message before the gospels were composed. They were too well-known, to both Christians and informed critics of Christianity such as Celsus, to be

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<sup>1</sup> Origen, *Against Celsus*, 2.12, 2.18. Celsus pairs Peter and Judas in the latter section, asking rhetorically "How is it that, if Jesus pointed out beforehand both the traitor and the perjurer, they did not fear him as a God, and cease, the one from his intended treason, and the other from his perjury?" The fact that Origen and Celsus are thinking of Peter and Judas is made clear by Origen's response: "... it was proved, with respect to the traitor, that it is false to say that he betrayed his master without an exhibition of anxiety regarding Him. And this was shown to be equally true of him who denied Him; for he went out, after the denial, and wept bitterly."

omitted and the evangelists, starting with Mark, simply had to do their best to mitigate the damage these aspects of the story caused.

There is certainly something to this. It seems unlikely that the first Christians would invent such scandalous details about members of the Twelve.<sup>2</sup> But it also cannot be said to be a satisfactory answer to the question. *Why* did the failures of Peter and Judas become a part of the Christian message? Why was this information preserved in the first place? It also only makes a detailed analysis of Peter and Judas' portrayals in the gospels all the more important. Presented, at least according to this viewpoint, with inescapable historical fact, how did the evangelists choose to address it?

This leads us to the second possible reason for including Peter's denial and Judas' betrayal, which is that they both perform important literary or theological functions. That rather than being a distraction or a problem for the message the evangelist wishes to present, they may in fact be key to it. This possibility requires us to discard our existing assumptions about what the gospels may be supposed to be about, what effects they wish to achieve, and the devices they use for doing so. Twenty-first century literary theory, as well as our own intuitive understanding of how characters and narrative function, may be unreliable guides.

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<sup>2</sup> This is the criterion known among historical Jesus scholars as the criterion of embarrassment: the principle that gospel material that would have caused the early church embarrassment or theological difficulty is *more likely* to be historically accurate. Like all the so-called criteria (see Dale C. Allison's *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998) for a thoughtful discussion of the use and over-use of these criteria), it has its weaknesses, in particular its implied confidence in knowing what the early church might or might not have found embarrassing. Rafael Rodríguez has also criticised some historians' obsession with the concept of 'authenticity' itself in "Authenticating Criteria: The Use and Misuse of a Critical Method", *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, 7 (2) (2009), pp. 152-16, and Jonathan Bernier's *The Quest for the Historical Jesus After the Demise of Authenticity: Towards a Critical Realist Philosophy of History in Jesus Studies* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016) takes this argument even further.

To try and grasp these potential meanings, I will be addressing the question of literary context for the two disciples: are there parallels for their behaviour in other texts from the Graeco-Roman world? If so, how are these analogous characters treated by their authors and what, as far as we can determine, is the intended effect on the audience?

The third possible reason is that both Peter and Judas may stand for something else outside the text: individuals or generic types of person known to the gospel audiences; aspects of their portrayal may be references to disputes between different groups. Are we, for instance, meant to read Peter in the light of his later role as a hugely influential pillar of the church? If so, is his portrayal in the gospels as a blustering coward meant as an attack on him in this capacity, and perhaps those who considered themselves his successors? Or is this extra-textual information meant, on the contrary, to excuse or at least contextualise Peter's cowardice within the narrative, to make it clear that his failure was only a temporary aberration and not permanent?

This potential layer, of social context, is even more slippery and hypothetical than that of literary context, since besides the New Testament texts themselves, we have little information on the Christians of the first century –and the entire essence of social context is the fact that it is ephemeral and unspoken. Nevertheless, we can at least speculate by looking at some later Christian texts, from the second and third centuries, and drawing analogies.

The question remains as to why this thesis focuses on Peter *and* Judas. Why not one or the other, or perhaps a study of the Twelve as a whole? The answer is that to me, Peter and Judas are a natural, logical pairing, connected by both the resemblance between their actions during the Passion and the disparity of their fates afterwards. These two figures both fail Jesus dramatically, but one goes on to lead the early church, earning unquestioning respect even from

ideological opponents such as Paul, and to become one of Christianity's revered, iconic founding figures. The other disappears from history proper, but becomes the subject of ever-more vindictive and vilifying Christian legends in the centuries to follow, his very name still a byword for treachery today. It is as though these two cross paths on the night of the Passion, one on the way to becoming a saint and the other a monster.

Is there anything, in the text of the gospels, which distinguishes Peter's denial from Judas' betrayal? Is it relevant that Judas' action was calculated and premeditated while Peter's was prompted by spur of the moment fear and confusion? Are we to assume instead that both had equal chances of redeeming themselves afterward, but only Peter availed himself of the opportunity? Or should we assume that, as far as the evangelists are concerned, the parts played by Peter and Judas in the drama of the Crucifixion were predestined and set down in Scripture centuries beforehand, and that they had no choice in either their actions or their subsequent fates?

In the case of Judas, it is the mystifying absence of motive that haunts and pulls at the reader. Following Mark, the other evangelists delve deeper into his motives, suggesting greed or demonic possession or both as the reason for his betrayal. Church tradition, beginning with Fragment 3 of Papias, has done even more to make Judas grotesque, a figure of repugnant, inhuman evil, located by Dante in Satan's mouth at the very bottom of Hell in Canto 34 of his *Inferno*.

This vilification has also inspired counter-reactions over the centuries. The second century Gnostic Gospel of Judas portrays its protagonist as doomed to betray his master and become a

demon without ever really understanding why.<sup>3</sup> The nineteenth century Romantics, with their fondness for doomed rebels against God such as Prometheus and Lucifer, naturally also tried to understand Judas in that light, most notably in Thomas de Quincey's essay of 1852, "Judas Iscariot", which did a great deal to popularise Reimarus' suggestion that Judas was trying to force Jesus' hand in bringing about the kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup> More recently, Judas has been understood by some Jewish writers, such as Hyam Maccoby, as the very first victim of Christian anti-Semitic libel.<sup>5</sup> In art and entertainment, it has almost become a cliché in itself at this point to reverse Judas' traditional characterisation and present him as a misunderstood hero, a tortured sceptic, or a well-meaning fanatic, as in the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* or the Nikos Kazantzakis novel and its film adaptation by Martin Scorsese, *The Last Temptation of Christ*.<sup>6</sup> Many liberal Christians also seem to feel a certain sympathy or at least pity for Judas.<sup>7</sup> In a world in which Christianity has become mainstream, it is now Judas who can seem like a model for Isaiah's man of sorrows, despised and rejected by mankind.

Whether in the form of fiction, scholarship, theological speculation, or some strange mixture of all three, like Borges' short story "Three Versions of Judas", all of these rethinkings and speculations, all of these vilifications and heroizations, have at their heart a certain discomfort

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<sup>3</sup> The Gospel of Judas has been analysed in April D. DeConick's *The Thirteenth Apostle: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says* (London: Continuum, 2007), which also contains a full translation of what survives of the text itself.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas de Quincey, *Richard Bentley and Other Writings* (Edinburgh: A&C Black, 1881), pp. 1-34. See Zwiep's discussion of Reimarus on Judas in Arie W. Zwiep, *Judas and the Choice of Matthias: A Study on Context and Concerns of Acts 1:15-26* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), p. 10. See Ruben van Luijk's "Sex, Science and Liberty: The Resurrection of Satan in 19th Century (Counter) Culture" in Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Devil's Party: Satanism and Modernity* (Oxford: OUP, 2013) for a discussion of the place of Satan and related figures in the Romantic era.

<sup>5</sup> Hyam Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil* (London: Peter Halborn, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> Indeed, it is actually somewhat refreshing when an otherwise revisionist novel such as Michel Faber's satirical *The Fire Gospel* paints Judas as an informant with straightforward, mercenary motivations.

<sup>7</sup> While I was writing this thesis, various people expressed to me their conviction that Judas had been misunderstood and misrepresented in the gospels. This is also a prevailing theme in much of the literature on Judas.

with the disquieting mystery of Judas as we first find him in Mark.<sup>8</sup> That chafing irritation is also part of what motivates this thesis.

Peter's motivation in denying Jesus is, on the other hand, crystal-clear: his own cowardice. In fact, this clarity may be the source of its own discomfort. In all four gospels, the mechanics of Judas' betrayal are vague and elliptical. Key scenes such as Mark 14:10-11 are simply brief, rapid summaries of the exchange between Judas and the temple authorities, with no direct speech given. By contrast, time slows down and there is an agonising level of detail to all four versions of Peter's denial as his interlocutors ask their incantatory questions. It reads like what, at least in some sense, it must be: a painfully crisp and clear memory of a supremely humiliating moment of failure.

It is little wonder that later traditions and scholarship, beginning with Luke's own Acts of the Apostles and extra-canonical texts such as the Acts of Peter to popular contemporary biographies such as that of Michael Grant, have tried to alleviate the rawness and pain of that moment by yielding to the urge to 'complete' Peter's story, to show his transition from a frightened man lying to save himself to a staunch, unyielding rock, prepared to face prison and execution for the sake of his master.<sup>9</sup> Since it is so easy to identify with Peter in his moment of weakness, perhaps we are afforded some relief or vindication by the idea that he ultimately becomes a figure of conventional strength and authority.

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<sup>8</sup> The Borges story can be found in English in *Labyrinths* (trans. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby) (New York, NY: New Directions, 2007), pp. 95-100.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Grant, *Saint Peter* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1994). Peter's personal growth after the Resurrection is also a major theme of works such as Jack J. Gibson's *Peter between Jerusalem and Antioch: Peter, James, and the Gentiles* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) and Yvan Mathieu's *La Figure de Pierre dans l'Oeuvre de Luc* (Paris: Gabalda, 2004).

Peter and Judas therefore are two figures that intrigue or at least provoke us for opposite reasons: one because we do not understand him and the other because we understand him all too well. It is my belief that we can gain a better understanding of both by placing them side by side in this inspection of their role in the gospels, that one can be made to comment on the other and that we can gain insight into the evangelists' thought processes and literary techniques by comparing the way the two are portrayed. This is the aim of this thesis.

## **Scholarship Overview**

### **Characterisation**

This thesis is not on the historical Peter and Judas, except incidentally, but rather on their portrayal within the gospels. Therefore, before engaging in an overview of the scholarship on Peter and Judas, it is necessary to also give a brief history of the state of the question on characterisation within biblical criticism.

At the dawn of the discipline in the nineteenth century, this approach would have been unlikely to have even occurred to scholars as a possibility. These scholars took the gospels at face-value, as history, and assessed them as such.<sup>10</sup> Mark's account of what Peter said and did, for instance, was not an attempt to create a literary character or follow the model of an 'archetype' but a putative historical record of a real person, albeit one that might not be

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<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Ernest Renan (trans. Charles E. Wilbour), *Life of Jesus* (London: Kegan Paul, 1893), pp. 1-34.

accurate.<sup>11</sup> This indeed is still a potential objection to the project of this thesis. The evangelists were writing historical accounts of Jesus' life, passed down to them (perhaps even directly, in some cases) by participants in the events they were chronicling. Were they not simply writing down as truthful and accurate a record of these events as possible? Does it make sense to even talk of 'characterisation' at all given this fact?

The answer has the potential to go deeper into questions of truth, genre, and history than space allows. But it suffices to say that there can be more nuance to this question than a direct opposition between literary goals and historical truth. Tacitus, for instance, knew the Roman general Agricola well; he was Tacitus' father-in-law. But in his biography of Agricola, the general is portrayed in stereotypical terms, as a great warrior serving an unworthy ruler.<sup>12</sup> But that does not mean that nothing about Agricola's portrayal, beyond the merely factual details of his career, is true to life or displays his real personality. As Richard Burridge has put it, the 'tension between the real and the stereotype' is at the heart of ancient biography.<sup>13</sup> Particularly in the case of Peter, a distinct personality emerges (bolstered by the tantalising hints supplied by Paul's infrequent references to him). By analysing the layers of genre convention and pastoral concerns that go into the creation of the Peter of the gospels, this thesis is not trying to strip away or undo this Peter but rather further our understanding of him.

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<sup>11</sup> Throughout this thesis, 'archetype' is used in Northrop Frye's literary sense, rather than the Jungian psychological sense. In *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 1957), pp. 131-51. Frye defines an archetype as a recurring symbol in myth and literature that appears frequently enough to be recognisable independent of its different contexts.

<sup>12</sup> The biography also serves as a defence of the idea of duty and loyalty owed even to despicable emperors such as Domitian. Tacitus, who himself first rose to prominence under Domitian, had an obvious personal investment in making this case. On Agricola's status as a servant of an unworthy emperor, see Richard B. Rutherford, "Voices of Resistance" in Christina Shuttleworth Kraus, John Marincola, and Christopher Pelling (eds.), *Ancient Historiography and its Contexts: Studies in Honour of A. J. Woodman* (Oxford: OUP, 2010), pp. 312-330.

<sup>13</sup> Richard A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), p. 212.

The nineteenth century historical approach gave way, after the broadside that was Albert Schweitzer's publication of *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* in 1906.<sup>14</sup> The next step forward in characterisation came in the 1950s and '60s, with the development of redaction criticism thanks to works such as Gunther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth and Heinz Joachim Held's *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, Hans Conzelmann's *Theology of St Luke* and Willi Marxsen's *Mark the Evangelist*.<sup>15</sup> This new school of thought proposed the evangelist as the compiler of various different sources, putting them all together while making decisions as to what to highlight, what to edit, and what to omit altogether. This allows for the possibility of conscious characterisation existing since the evangelist is playing a distinct creative role in their work. This approach was often used to examine the characterisation of Peter and the other disciples, notably in Theodore J. Weeden's *Mark: Traditions in Conflict*.<sup>16</sup>

However, C. Clifton Black's 1989 *The Disciples According to Mark*, criticised Weeden and the other redaction critics.<sup>17</sup> In an extensive overview of three different schools of redaction criticism (labelled by Black as being respectively conservative, median, and liberal in tendency), Black found that redaction criticism, rather than being a tool to learn more about what the text says, actually more often than not simply becomes a way for the critic to find what they expect or want to find in the text. In fact, Black's argument is strikingly similar to that of Albert Schweitzer almost a century earlier, suggesting a depressingly cyclical nature to biblical criticism in general.

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<sup>14</sup> Albert Schweitzer (trans. John Bowden), *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: A&C Black, 1910).

<sup>15</sup> Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London: SCM, 1963), Hans Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit: Studien zur Theologie des Lukas* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1954), and Willi Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1969).

<sup>16</sup> Theodore J. Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1971), pp. 23-6. This text will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

<sup>17</sup> C. Clifton Black, *The Disciples According to Mark* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2012; first edition 1989).

In any case, a new approach was emerging within biblical studies in the late '70s and early '80s, influenced by developments outside the field: that of narrative criticism. This approach rejected the naïve historical approach of the nineteenth century critics, and also redaction criticism's division of each text into sets of different source documents and traditions.

Instead, narrative criticism approached the final form of the text of each gospel as a complete and unified text, and critically engaged with it as such, much as one might approach a novel such as *Ulysses* or *Pride and Prejudice*.<sup>18</sup> At least for the purposes of the literary critic, the gospel's relation to history could be temporarily put aside, as could the question of the evangelist's sources. Since the evangelist is being taken seriously as a creative force, it is legitimate to assess their decisions regarding characterisation, which can be presented through direct disclosure, indirect presentation, or analogy.<sup>19</sup>

Among the first works of narrative criticism done on the gospels were Frank Kermode's *The Genesis of Secrecy*, David Rhoads and Donald Michie's *Mark as Story*, and R.A. Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Design* (Rhoads was the first to use the term 'narrative criticism').<sup>20</sup> The first two deal with the Gospel of Mark; Culpepper's book

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<sup>18</sup> Although few scholars embraced this approach as wholeheartedly as Jack Miles in the fascinating *God: A Biography*, which consciously sets aside all contextual information to write a life of God, as he is presented in the Old Testament.

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni (eds.), *Characterisation in the Gospel: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (Sheffield: SAP, 1999), Christopher W. Skinner (ed.), *Characters and Characterisation in the Gospel of John* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), or Christopher W. Skinner and Matthew Ryan Hauge (eds.), *Character Studies and the Gospel of Mark* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy* (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1979), David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2012; first edition 1982), and R.A. Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983). Northrop Frye's *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), while it does not focus on the gospels, should also be mentioned as part of this trend. Works specific to the other gospels, notably Jack Dean Kingsbury's *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986) and R.A. Tannehill's *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989). Mark Allan Powell reviewed a decade of narrative critical studies in *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990). More

addresses the Gospel of John. The influence of developments in English criticism at the time are very clear: Kermode and Michie were both professors of English by training rather than biblical scholars. Culpepper devotes the most time to discussing characterisation. He draws his model for characterisation from E.M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*, specifically Forster's understanding of characters as either 'flat', meaning possessing just one character trait or consistent set of character traits, or 'round', meaning possessing a varied and perhaps contradictory range of character traits.<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Struthers Malbon has become particularly associated with narrative critical questions of character, especially in the Gospel of Mark.<sup>22</sup>

Culpepper's use of Forster has been criticised since then as not being necessarily appropriate for use on first-century texts such as the gospels, and insights into ancient rhetoric and literature from the classical field have been applied in an attempt to balance the influence of English criticism.<sup>23</sup> In particular, the Christopher Pelling-edited *Characterisation and Individuality in Greek Literature*, published in 1990, has contributed some key insights.<sup>24</sup> One of these is the realisation that, since the nineteenth century, the interest of authors and readers has been increasingly in their subjects' psychology, motivations, and background. Introspection rather than action is key to the modern literary novel. This is, of course, a tradition with which E.M. Forster was very much in line, as a novelist as well as a literary

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recent works include Stephen Smith, *A Lion With Wings: A Narrative-Critical Approach to Mark's Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), Nicolas Farrelly, *The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel: A Narrative Analysis of their Faith and Understanding* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) Alicia D. Myers, *Characterising Jesus: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Fourth Gospel's Use of Scripture in its Presentation of Jesus* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), Alan J. Bale, *Genre and Narrative Coherence in the Acts of the Apostles* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015). Mark and John tend to be more popular for such treatments than Matthew and Luke, perhaps because of the complications which their likely dependence on Mark introduces to the narrative critical approach.

<sup>21</sup> E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (London: Edward Arnold, 1927). Culpepper discusses characterisation in *Anatomy*, pp. 102-5.

<sup>22</sup> See, for instance, "Disciples/Crowds/Whoever: Markan Characters and Readers", *NovT* 28 (1986) or her more recent *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> See Myers, *Characterising Jesus*, p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> Christopher Pelling (ed.), *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

theorist, and so the distinction between ‘round’ and ‘flat’ characters played a crucial part in his literary theory.<sup>25</sup> Ancient authors, on the other hand, believed that the true nature of an individual was revealed through action, and traded heavily in types rather than individuals.<sup>26</sup> We should recall this when considering, for instance, the apparently minimal characterisation Judas receives in Mark’s Gospel. A modern reader wonders why Judas carried out the betrayal, but this may have seemed less important to Mark’s audience. Like the scorpion in the fable, Judas betrayed Jesus because he was a traitor and it was in his nature to do so, as evidenced by the fact that he did so.<sup>27</sup>

Gill’s distinction between character and personality is important in understanding the difficulties with Culpepper’s use of Forster.<sup>28</sup> As Gill defines the two words, ‘character’ involves the outside assessment of a person based on a generally accepted code of morality; ‘personality’ involves an empathetic understanding of them as a unique individual. Ancient texts were generally more concerned with the former, and modern texts (whether biographies or psychologically realistic novels) the latter.<sup>29</sup> We could understand Mark as delivering an emphatic final judgement on Judas’ *character* –he is a traitor and it would have been better

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<sup>25</sup> Another point to bear in mind is that, since the era of the New Biography, modern biographers are interested in and seek out contradictions in their subject, while ancient biographers such as Plutarch sought to render a portrait of their subject as an integrated and coherent personality, smoothing over or resolving rather than drawing attention to the traits that did not fit this portrait. See Christopher Pelling, “Childhood and Personality in Biography” in Pelling (ed.), *Characterization*, pp. 213-45. Walter Ong sees this tendency towards ‘types’ as characteristic of oral storytelling in general –see Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 70.

<sup>26</sup> This will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, on genre.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Good people who became bad had not “changed”, they just stopped masquerading’, as Aune puts it, citing Livy’s description of how Appius ‘revealed’ his true nature after securing power. David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1987), p. 28.

<sup>28</sup> Christopher Gill, “The Character-Personality Distinction” in Pelling, *Characterization*, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> See also Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, “First Century Personality: Dyadic not Individual” in Jerome H. Neyrey (ed.), *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), even though they somewhat overstate their case in seemingly denying any sense of individuality to people in the ancient world.

had he never been born, while leaving his personality (*why* is he a traitor?) entirely untouched.

This debate on characterisation is part of a more general engagement with the social sciences and classical history. Increasingly, historians such as Loveday Alexander have been reminding narrative critics that the gospel narratives take place not in the ‘timeless mythic space’ sometimes imagined by literary criticism but in very specific social and historical circumstances.<sup>30</sup> If, as Mark Alan Powell would have it, the goal of narrative criticism is ‘to determine the effects the stories are expected to have on their audience’, the question arises as to who and where this audience is.<sup>31</sup> Although the goal of some narrative critics might be solely to establish the effect of the narrative on the reader in the present day, a scholar with any interest at all in the text’s historical context must be asking, at least in addition, what the intended effect of the narrative was on its original first-century audiences. Bruce Malina, Eric C. Stewart, and Jerome Neyrey, in works such as 1991’s *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* and 2008’s *The Social World of the New Testament: Insights and Models* have been examining the impact of the social setting of the text on narrative ‘building blocks’ such as the characters.<sup>32</sup>

One of the key insights of the move away from traditional literary criticism to a greater emphasis on the original setting of these texts is a new interest in oral criticism. The question

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<sup>30</sup> Loveday Alexander, “The Relevance of Greco-Roman Literature and Culture to New Testament Study” in Joel B. Green (ed.), *Hearing the New Testament* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), p. 113.

<sup>31</sup> Powell, “Narrative Criticism”, in Joel B. Green (ed.), *Hearing the New Testament* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995) p. 239.

<sup>32</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey (ed.), *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991) and Jerome H. Neyrey and Eric C. Stewart (eds.), *The Social World of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008).

of how much significance to place on the fact that these texts' original medium was oral is hotly disputed and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1. It suffices for the moment to note that several scholars have applied orality to the question of characterisation. Thomas Boomershine's "Peter's Denial as Polemic or Confession: The Implications of Media Criticism for Biblical Hermeneutics" makes the case that Peter's denial, understood as an oral narrative, makes the character of Peter much more sympathetic and his failure more understandable.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, Holly Hearon's "Characters and Text in Performance: The Gospel of John" makes the case that the reciter of these texts has a great deal of leeway in deciding how a particular character will come across to the audience.<sup>34</sup> Nicodemus, for instance, can be 'played' as a sincere would-be follower of Jesus, a hapless dupe, or a cynical opportunist.

Finally, a noticeable recent trend in biblical studies has placed a renewed importance on the historical relevance of the gospels' use of characterisation. James Dunn has argued that, due to the mechanics of social memory and the impact that charismatic figures such as Jesus would have had on their followers, the way characters are portrayed in the gospels may be a more reliable indication of the historical reality than hitherto accepted.<sup>35</sup> The story of the wedding at Cana, for instance, might not be historically accurate but it does tell us something about who Jesus' followers thought he was and how he might behave, which in turn tells us something about the sort of person that he was. Markus Bockmuehl has applied this approach

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<sup>33</sup> Thomas Boomershine, "Peter's Denial as Polemic or Confession: The Implications of Media Criticism for Biblical Hermeneutics", *Semeia* 39 (1987)

<sup>34</sup> Holly Hearon, "Characters and Text in Performance: The Gospel of John" in Kelly R. Iverson (ed.), *From Text to Performance: Narrative and Performance Criticism in Dialogue and Debate* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003). For a more recent appraisal of Dunn's contribution, see Jonathan Bernier, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus After the Demise of Authenticity: Towards a Critical Realist Philosophy of History in Jesus Studies* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

to Peter in two recent books.<sup>36</sup> However, in accepting this insight, one must be wary and bear in mind the previously discussed tendency for the ancient world to think in terms of types rather than individuals. However important and unique Jesus' followers thought him, most of their stories about him still fit into a recognisable Jewish and Graeco-Roman model – stories about the teachings and mighty deeds of a prophet or holy man. Similarly, although they were unique, historical individuals who played roles of critical importance in the drama of Jesus' execution, Peter and Judas can also often be reduced to the 'types' they play in the stories that feature them. Once again, there is a creative friction between literature and history, between the events that happened and the ways that people came to understand those events.

## Peter

As a central figure to Christianity, and one of particular importance to Catholic doctrine, Peter has always been the subject of attention for many Biblical scholars, and rarely more so than in the present day.

Confessional politics has always played a role in work done on Peter, thanks to the anachronistic idea, going back to Luther himself, that Paul belongs to the Protestants and that Peter, in his role as founder of the Papacy, the Catholics.<sup>37</sup> The idea of Peter and Paul standing in eternal, historic conflict has never been better exemplified than in the work of the nineteenth century Tübingen School, particularly its leader F.C. Baur. In works such as *Paul the Apostle*

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<sup>36</sup> Markus Bockmuehl, *The Remembered Peter* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) and *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2012).

<sup>37</sup> See Martin Luther (trans. Theodore Graebner), *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1949), p. 60: 'No one except Paul had his eyes open. Consequently it was his duty to reprove Peter and his followers for swerving from the truth of the Gospel.' For an overview of significant Protestant scholarship on Peter, see Larry W. Hurtado, "The Apostle Peter in Protestant Scholarship" in Helen K. Bond and Larry W. Hurtado (eds.), *Peter in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), pp. 1-15.

of *Jesus Christ* and *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*, Baur argued that texts of the entire New Testament had been composed by adherents of one or the other and in particular that the apparently negative portrayal of Peter in the Gospel of Mark is accounted for by Mark's Pauline beliefs.<sup>38</sup>

The Tübingen School's theories have not been in fashion since the early twentieth century but they nevertheless exert a subtle influence on the debate today. The idea that the oddities of Peter's less than reverent portrayal in Mark and elsewhere can be explained by heated theological disputes is undeniably attractive.

Much more than that of F.C. Baur, at least directly, Oscar Cullman's work of 1952, *Peter: Disciple. Apostle. Martyr* is the foundation of much contemporary work on Peter.<sup>39</sup> Cullman's work is partly a biography and partly a theological and exegetical reading of the role of Peter, arguing against the traditional Catholic conception of Peter as inaugurating a line of uniquely authoritative succession as the first bishop of Rome.<sup>40</sup> Cullman's arguments are more sophisticated and nuanced, however, than previous Protestant ideologues.

The next major work on Peter was done in 1974, when a team of Catholic and Protestant scholars, under Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, and John Reumann wrote *Peter in the New Testament*, a comparatively brief but hugely influential examination of Peter's portrayal throughout the New Testament.<sup>41</sup> As the group's mixed confessional status would suggest, it

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<sup>38</sup> F.C. Baur, (trans. Eduard Zeller), *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1876) and *The Church History of the First Three Centuries* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1878).

<sup>39</sup> Oscar Cullman (trans. Floyd V. Filson), *Peter: Disciple. Apostle. Martyr* (London: SCM, 1952).

<sup>40</sup> This idea, of Peter's transferable authority, is still contested enough to warrant indignant book-length refutations such as Peter Westcott's *Whatever Happened to the Big Fisherman?* (Oxford: Alverscot Press, 1984).

<sup>41</sup> Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried and John Reumann (eds.), *Peter in the New Testament* (Minnesota, MN: Augsburg, 1974).

was at least in part an attempt to get away from the binary of much of the previous work concerning Peter, in which the only important question often seemed to be the issue of the authority he received from Jesus, and whether it was transferable to his successors.

*Peter in the New Testament*, particularly Brown's own work within it (along with his *magnum opus*, *The Death of the Messiah*) was a major contributor to my understanding of the role Peter plays in the gospels and is one of this thesis' key texts.<sup>42</sup> Brown's interest in literary theory allowed him to propose a sympathetic, reader-response oriented understanding of Peter's denial that finally moved the discussion past either the Tübingen School-influenced idea that Mark was attacking Peter, or the alternative, that Peter's denial was his own self-castigating recollection, told and retold by him on numerous occasions and finally set down in writing by Mark.

Two more recent works of literary criticism on Peter, both published in 2000, have developed Brown's ideas in interesting directions. In Timothy Wiarda's *Peter in the Gospels*, Wiarda argues that a distinct pattern can be seen in almost all of Peter's actions in the gospels, a kind of 'two steps forward, one step back' pattern of advances and setbacks, which ultimately earn the reader's sympathy.<sup>43</sup> PHEME PERKINS has likewise argued for the universality of Peter's appeal, across confessional lines, in *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church*.<sup>44</sup> Since then, in 2007, Richard J. Cassidy's *Four Times Peter: Portrayals of Peter in the Four Gospels and at Philippi* considers the portrayal of Peter in each gospel from the point of view of their original audiences, arguing (as this thesis will) that the background information that each community

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<sup>42</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave* (2 vols.) (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1994).

<sup>43</sup> Timothy Wiarda, *Peter in the Gospels* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

<sup>44</sup> PHEME PERKINS, *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000).

would already have on Peter should dramatically affect our understanding of the portrait being constructed.<sup>45</sup>

Martin Hengel's final work, published in 2010, was a historical study of Peter. Entitled *Saint Peter: the Underestimated Apostle*, the book is, as the title implies, a defence of Peter, in particular of Peter's courage and diplomatic abilities in later life.<sup>46</sup> The events in Antioch, described by Paul in Galatians 2:11-14, are often seen as Peter once again failing to show true courage at a critical point in church history. Hengel, on the other hand, suggests that it was Paul who was at fault in this instance, being narrow-minded and inflexible and failing to heed his own advice from 1 Corinthians 10:23-30, in which he calls for believers to take care to avoid giving offence to others in dietary matters, even when they themselves disagree.

There have also been some exceptional reception histories done on Peter, notably Terence Smith's *Petrine Controversies in the Early Church* from 1985 and Markus Bockmuehl's more recent pair of books *The Remembered Peter* (2010) and *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory* (2012).<sup>47</sup> Smith's approach, with which Bockmuehl disagrees, is to see Peter as a kind of symbol, potent but of negotiable meaning, in canonical and non-canonical texts of the early church. Bockmuehl, by contrast, places much importance on the essential reliability of traditions concerning Peter.

Finally, a recent anthology that contains a variety of essays on Peter from historical, literary and reception history perceptions, and so combines all three elements we have been

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<sup>45</sup> Richard J. Cassidy, *Four Times Peter: Portrayals of Peter in the Four Gospels and at Philippi* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2007).

<sup>46</sup> Martin Hengel (trans. John Bowden), *Saint Peter: the Underestimated Apostle* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> Terence V. Smith, *Petrine Controversies in Early Christianity* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1985), Markus Bockmuehl, *The Remembered Peter* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) and *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2012).

considering, is the Helen Bond and Larry Hurtado-edited volume, *Peter in Early Christianity*.<sup>48</sup> One essay in this collection that has been particularly helpful in considering the evidence for Peter's martyrdom, and early Christian traditions regarding it, is Timothy Barnes' "'Another Shall Gird Thee": Probative Evidence for the Death of Peter." Another that has been helpful in considering questions of the literary intent behind Peter's lack of perception in the gospels is John Markley's "Reassessing Peter's Imperception in Synoptic Tradition", which makes the case for understanding Peter's lack of perception as a standard literary motif in apocalyptic writings. Although my thesis approaches the issue from a different perspective, that of Graeco-Roman biography rather than Jewish apocalyptic, it reaches a very similar conclusion with regard to Peter's portrayal in the gospels.

## **Judas**

Unsurprisingly, far fewer book-length studies have been produced on Judas. The fact is that there is very little material on him in the gospels and Acts, and he is mentioned nowhere else in the New Testament, with the possible exception of 1 Corinthians 11:23 (which does not mention him by name and may simply be a reference to Jesus' arrest).<sup>49</sup> With this paucity of material, a study of Judas is going to be either highly speculative or else primarily concerned with reception history. Judas is largely the province of mavericks and eccentrics such as Borges' fictional Nils Runeberg of his story "Three Versions of Judas".

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<sup>48</sup> Bond and Hurtado (eds.), *Peter*.

<sup>49</sup> See below, p. 24.

The most substantial historical work on Judas in English is William Klassen's 1996 *Judas: Friend or Betrayer of Jesus?*<sup>50</sup> This work, in which Klassen argues that Judas' action has been misremembered by history and that he was merely trying to arrange a meeting between Jesus and the temple authorities, is built on solid linguistic scholarship but the argument itself is extremely weak and speculative, degenerating at the end into what J.P. Meier has described as a novel.<sup>51</sup>

As previously mentioned, Hyam Maccoby has also written a 1992 book on Judas, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil*, in which he makes the convoluted argument that Judas the alleged traitor was none other than Jesus' brother Judas, that he did not betray Jesus but on the contrary eventually succeeded to the leadership of the Jerusalem church, and that the story that he did betray his brother was the result of a series of escalating slanders from the Pauline faction within the church.<sup>52</sup> The case Maccoby makes is deeply implausible, if creative, making an unwarranted leap between the undeniable facts of Christian anti-Semitism and the role that Judas has played in this prejudice over the centuries and the idea that the real, historical Judas must have been the very first victim of the blood libel. Another odd work on Judas is A.M.H. Saari's *The Many Deaths of Judas Iscariot* (2006), a curious mixture of historical scholarship and deeply personal memoir that does not contribute much to the debate.<sup>53</sup>

It is undoubtedly easier and more profitable to discuss Judas in terms of his often fascinating reception history, the role the figure of Judas has played in art, theology, and literature over the millennia. Four important works have been published in this field: Donatus Haugg's *Judas*

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<sup>50</sup> William Klassen, *Judas: Friend or Betrayer of Jesus?* (London: SCM Press, 1996).

<sup>51</sup> J.P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume Three: Companions and Competitors* (New Haven, CT: YUP, 2001), p. 179.

<sup>52</sup> Hyam Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil* (London: Peter Halborn, 1992).

<sup>53</sup> A.M.H. Saari, *The Many Deaths of Judas Iscariot: a meditation on suicide* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006).

*Iskarioth in den neutestamentlichen Berichten*, Kim Paffenroth's *Judas: Images of the Lost Disciple* (2001), Anthony Cane's *The Place of Judas Iscariot in Christology* (2005) and Susan Gubar's *Judas: A Biography* (2009).<sup>54</sup> With the exception of Cane, all these authors understand and categorise Judas' various roles in theology, art, and folklore according to a number of different models, such as object of sympathy, object of revulsion, etc.. Although this thesis is not concerned with reception history as such, all four authors often have interesting insights into the role Judas plays in the gospels themselves.

Two studies have been published on the literary and social context of Judas: Arie W. Zwiep's *Judas and the Choice of Matthias* (2004), an in-depth analysis of the significance of Judas' death and replacement among the Twelve in Acts, and B.J. Oropeza's 2011 *In the Footsteps of Judas and Other Defectors*, a study of apostasy in the gospels, Acts, and the Johannine Letters.<sup>55</sup> Although I do not always agree with Oropeza's assumptions and conclusions, his work has been very stimulating for me and this thesis owes a great deal to his approach.

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<sup>54</sup> Donatus Haugg, *Judas Iskarioth in den neutestamentlichen Berichten* (Freiburg: Herder, 1930) Kim Paffenroth, *Judas: Images of the Lost Disciple* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), Anthony Cane, *The Place of Judas Iscariot in Christology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), Susan Gubar, *Judas: a Biography* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009).

<sup>55</sup> Arie W. Zwiep, *Judas and the Choice of Matthias: A Study on Context and Concerns of Acts 1:15-26* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), B.J. Oropeza, *In the Footsteps of Judas and Other Defectors: The Gospels, Acts and Johannine Letters* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011).

## **Thesis Overview**

The following is the structure of my thesis, and the route my inquiry will take.

### **Chapter 1: Literary Context**

This chapter will consider the question of medium and genre in ancient works of literature such as the gospels, discussing questions such as that of literacy, oral performance of texts, and genre.

### **Chapter 2: The Historical Judas and Peter and Literary Parallels**

In the first half of this chapter, I will consider the historical evidence regarding Peter and Judas, and try to create a speculative portrait of these men themselves and their possible motivations. I will then compare them with parallel figures in a number of comparable texts: disciples in Plato's Socratic dialogues, Damis in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, and Amelius in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*.

### **Chapter 3: Peter and Judas in Mark's Gospel**

In one of the longest chapters of the thesis, I will examine the way Peter and Judas are portrayed in the earliest gospel. Since Matthew and Luke relied on Mark, and John may have as well, Mark is one of the key texts in trying to understand how Peter and Judas are used throughout the gospels.

#### **Chapter 4: Peter and Judas in Matthew's Gospel**

This chapter will look at the ways in which Matthew adapts Mark's treatment of Peter and Judas and the key changes he makes to both figures, in an attempt to understand the debates going on within the early church concerning both men.

#### **Chapter 5: Peter and Judas in Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles**

This chapter will look in turn at Luke's handling of Peter and Judas, but also at the way that, uniquely among the gospels, Luke seems to 'complete' both characters' stories in Acts, the second volume of his narrative.

#### **Chapter 6: Peter and Judas in John's Gospel**

The final chapter, on John's Gospel, will examine the additions and changes John makes to the traditional portrayal of Peter and Judas, and also of the key change he makes to the dynamic of the Passion and the relationship between Jesus, Peter, and Judas through the addition of a new character, the mysterious and anonymous beloved disciple.



## **Chapter 1: Literary Context**

### **Introduction**

Before entering into in-depth analysis of Peter and Judas in the gospels, it is important to first establish a number of things regarding the literary context of these first-century works, with particular reference to how this context may affect the portrayal of the two disciples.

The first issue it will address is that of literacy and orality. Were the gospels more likely to be read aloud to a community or read individually, as modern texts generally are? And if we assume a community reading, how does this affect the contents and narrative of the gospel? How does an oral group reading differ from a silent individual reading? And do the factors involved potentially change how we should view the characterisation of both Peter and Judas in the gospels?

The second issue is that of the gospel community. It has been generally assumed among biblical scholars since the early twentieth century that the evangelists wrote for specific communities, tacitly addressing pastoral concerns in their gospels much as Paul's letters do more explicitly. But this view has been challenged recently, by Richard Bauckham and other scholars. The second section of this chapter will address these objections, and go on to discuss factors that may influence the portrayal of Peter and Judas in the light of local community issues.

The third section will deal with the question of the gospels' genre and to what degree genre affected the contents of a work in the ancient world. It is important for our purposes to clearly

delineate the genre of the gospels because knowing the genre of a text is all-important to understanding its approach to narrative elements such as characterisation.

## 1. Literacy and Orality

The landmark work on issues of literacy rates and orality in antiquity is William Harris' book of 1989, *Ancient Literacy*. Harris makes two major claims in this book. The first is that ancient literacy was very low indeed –perhaps 15% in Italy, and as low as 5-10% in the western provinces of the Roman empire.<sup>1</sup> His second claim is that oral culture was dominant in this era, even among literate and educated people. Of course, technically, a fully oral culture is one in which writing does not exist at all, which was obviously not the case in the first-century Mediterranean world. Vernon Robbins recommend the term 'rhetorical culture' for a society, like this one, in which written texts existed and were frequently used but prevailing assumptions and means of transmission remained oral in nature.<sup>2</sup> Such a society has been defined by James Dunn as 'one where information would be passed from one to another by word of mouth, where teaching and storytelling would be orally communicated.'<sup>3</sup>

Harris argues that literacy rates were so low because the ancient world lacked a number of prerequisites for mass literacy, among them the printing press, industrialisation, urbanisation, and a programmatic system of public education funded by the state.<sup>4</sup> In addition, at least a dozen languages were used throughout the Roman Empire, making literacy and written texts less inherently useful, and writing materials such as papyrus and parchment were costly in most parts of the world. Written texts, such as inscriptions, were common in Rome and other

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<sup>1</sup> William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 267-72.

<sup>2</sup> Vernon Robbins, "Progymnastic Rhetorical Composition and Pre-Gospel Traditions –A New Approach" in Camille Focant (ed.), *The Synoptic Gospels: Source Criticism and the New Literary Criticism* (Leuven: Peeters, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *The Oral Gospel Tradition* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2013), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Harris, *Literacy*, p. 12.

important cities but the majority of the empire's population lived in rural areas, which were proverbially illiterate.<sup>5</sup>

The claim concerning the dominance of oral culture is based on evidence from ancient texts such as Strabo and Dio Chrysostom, which seem to take for granted the importance of spoken entertainment to the masses.<sup>6</sup> But even for aristocrats, the dominant mode of transmitting a text seems to have been oral. Harris cites the opening of Tacitus' *Dialogue on Oratory*, in which Curiatius Maternus has just delivered his book on Cato in the form of a lecture and is now preparing to publish it. Harris suggests that this was the normal publication procedure for authors. Book-dealers were rare, even in Rome, so authors seeking public attention would give public recitations of their work.<sup>7</sup> A limited number of copies of the text would then be made available to those who wished to study it in more detail, but the recitation itself would be the primary method of the text's delivery.

Harris' low estimate of the literacy rates has been challenged to a certain extent more recently, by scholars such as Teresa Morgan and Raffaella Cribiore, who argue that the first century was a time of remarkable growth in mass literacy and education.<sup>8</sup> However, the judgement of Chris Keith, in 2011, is that over-all Harris' verdict has been 'qualified but overwhelmingly affirmed' by the critical consensus.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Harris, *Literacy*, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Harris, *Literacy*, p. 226.

<sup>7</sup> Harris, *Literacy*, p. 225. There are other examples of this practice in the ancient world – see, for instance, Suetonius' *Life of Augustus* 85:1.

<sup>8</sup> See Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 2001) and Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Chris Keith, *Jesus' Literacy: Scribal Culture and the Teacher from Galilee* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2011), p. 73. See also Mary Beard (ed.), *Literacy in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor, MI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1991), Catherine Hezser's *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), and Alan Millard's *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus* (Sheffield: SAP, 2000).

Estimations of the literacy rates among Christians in particular vary. Wayne Meeks, in *The First Urban Christians*, argues for a range of social status within the first-century Pauline communities, and suggests that the typical Christian in this setting was an artisan (and thus more likely to be literate than the average person).<sup>10</sup> But Meeks' book is a treatment of a particular kind of Christians, specifically urban Christians.<sup>11</sup> The evidence from, for instance, Pliny's letter to Trajan concerning Christians in Bithynia does seem to link them at least partially with the countryside: 'It is not only the towns, but villages and rural districts too which are infected by this wretched cult.'<sup>12</sup> As already discussed, rural populations would have had far lower literacy rates than their urban counterparts, since there were many practical difficulties in establishing schools in such areas, for instance the much lower population density and the greater distances involved. In a discussion of the evidence, Harry Gamble has argued that the literacy rate among Christians was certainly unlikely to have been higher than Harris' general average of 10-15%, and it is quite likely to have been lower, since fewer elites were represented in the Christian movement.<sup>13</sup>

Even if the literacy rates among Christians were higher than the average, for which there is no strong evidence, it is not under dispute that the medium for compositions such as gospels would have been oral delivery.<sup>14</sup> Many studies have analysed them from the perspective of an oral performance, deliberately moving away from the text-based criticism of form critics such as

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<sup>10</sup> Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: YUP, 1983), p. 73.

<sup>11</sup> It is also worth noting that the only Christians we will have detailed information on from this period will either be literate or at least subjects of interest to literate writers. See Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven, CT: YUP, 1995), p. 4

<sup>12</sup> Pliny (trans. Betty Radice), *The Letters of the Younger Pliny* (London: Penguin Books, 1963), pp. 294-95. Of course, Pliny may have an interest in exaggerating Christianity's influence, the better to promote his own swift and efficient handling of the problem. Robin Lane Fox discusses the evidence for rural Christians in the first centuries CE in *Pagans and Christians* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), pp. 287-93.

<sup>13</sup> Gamble, *Books and Readers*, pp. 5-10.

<sup>14</sup> See Henry Wansbrough, *Introducing the New Testament* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 15-16.

Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann.<sup>15</sup> One of the most influential pioneers of this method of criticism has been Werner Kelber, whose 1983 book *The Oral and the Written Gospel* influenced a generation of biblical scholars.<sup>16</sup> Kelber's description of oral and written tradition as 'fluid' and 'fixed' respectively, and his analysis of the interplay between the two in the gospels' conception, led to the conception among many scholars of a 'Great Divide' between orality and written texts, in which the composition of a written text was a dramatic and revolutionary innovation.<sup>17</sup> But it has since been pointed out that the first century was always more of a mixed media culture than the concept of the Great Divide allows for, and that in particular, the wide variation in the gospels' manuscript tradition suggests that the supposedly 'fixed', unalterable written tradition was just as malleable and subject to change as its oral equivalent.<sup>18</sup> In addition, pre-gospel Christian tradition was hardly a 'pure' oral culture in that

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<sup>15</sup> To name just a few: Alan Dundes' *Holy Writ as Oral Lit: The Bible as Folklore* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), Richard Horsley, Jonathan Draper and John Miles Foley's anthology, *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory and Mark* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie's *Mark as Story* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2012), Whitney Shiner's *Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), Bridget Gilfillan Upton's *Hearing Mark's Endings* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), James Dunn's *The Oral Gospel Tradition*, and most recently the Kelly R. Iverson-edited anthology *From Text to Performance: Narrative and Performance Criticism in Dialogue and Debate* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2015). In works such as Dibelius' *From Tradition to Gospel* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1934) and Bultmann's *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), these prominent form critics had argued that the early Christian output should be understood as *Kleinliteratur*, the oral folk traditions of the people as opposed to the *Hochliteratur* produced by the elite. The transition from oral to written simply involved the evangelists recording this oral *Kleinliteratur* tradition (the two terms were first used by K.L. Schmidt). This idea has been criticised more recently on a number of points, by Werner Kelber and others. Among the perceived problems with it are its failure to consider the difference of dynamics between oral and written texts, its failure to acknowledge the creative power and independence of the evangelists as authors, and the misleading rigidity of the line drawn between 'low' and 'high' culture in the ancient world when, at least in an urban environment, even commoners and slaves had many opportunities to be exposed to high culture. See Terence C. Mournet's *Oral Tradition and Literary Dependency: Variability and Stability in the Synoptic Tradition and Q* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel* (Indianapolis, IN: IUP, 1983). Kelber's influence is still clear, for instance, in a recent work such as Tom Thatcher's *Why John Wrote a Gospel: Jesus, Memory, History* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006). Kenneth Bailey's "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels" in the *Asia Journal of Theology* 5 (1991), has also been influential in its claims for an unbroken chain of oral practise in Middle Eastern villages dating from before Jesus' time to the present day.

<sup>17</sup> See Chris Keith, "A Performance of the Text: The Adultress' Entrance into John's Gospel" in Anthony Le Donne & Tom Thatcher (eds.), *The Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), p. 54.

<sup>18</sup> Barry Schwartz, "What Difference Does the Medium Make?", in Le Donne and Thatcher, *Fourth Gospel*, p. 236. See also Gamble, *Books and Readers*, pp. 82-144 on the malleability of written texts. Warnings such as that of Revelation 22:18 betray a clear anxiety about such issues.

Christians were constantly engaging with and reflecting on a large body of written texts –the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Larry Hurtado has argued that performance criticism’s course-correction has been taken too far, and that critics who picture readings from the gospel as theatrical, semi-improvised performances, or suggest a world of texts written solely for the ear and not the eye, are ignoring considerable evidence to the contrary.<sup>20</sup>

But we need not go as far as this to recognise the critical, and long-ignored, importance of the original oral context of the gospels. As Rafael Rodriguez puts it, ‘oral performances contextualised our texts’ reception.’<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, we have no access to the context of these oral performances which, as Rodriguez suggests, must be considered a vital missing part of the puzzles that are the four gospels. But the context of these performances –how much prior information the evangelist assumed on the part of his audience, for instance, is itself mainly a matter of speculation. Throughout this thesis, one of my major concerns will be to try and identify some of this elusive subtext as regards Peter and Judas –the kind of references that might have been instantly clear to the gospels’ audiences, but which have been lost to us. As Bruce Malina says:

The social-scientific approach to studying the New Testament has as its goal to find out what an initial audience understood when it heard some person read a given document aloud. We wish to know what the author of the document said and meant to say. Since a psychological analysis of an individual author of the past is impossible, and

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<sup>19</sup> Gamble, *Books and Readers*, p. 24.

<sup>20</sup> Larry W. Hurtado, “Oral Fixation and New Testament Studies? ‘Orality’, ‘Performance’, and Reading Texts in Early Christianity, *NTS* 60 (2014) pp. 321-40.

<sup>21</sup> Rafael Rodriguez, *Structuring Early Christian Memory: Jesus in Tradition, Performance and Text* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), p. 4.

psycholinguistic analysis is equally impossible to carry out without the physical presence of the speaker, the next-best approach would be to focus on the audience.<sup>22</sup>

Our first concern, when addressing the characterisation of Peter and Judas in the Gospels, is to bear in mind that because of this original intimate oral setting, important knowledge regarding both of them may have been taken for granted by the evangelists.<sup>23</sup> This knowledge may have contextualised both characters in ways that we are unaware of, and completely changed aspects of their portrayal.

We can see an example of this assumption of prior knowledge in a very different first-century text. In the opening of his life of Alexander, Plutarch makes it clear that his biography should be seen as a supplement to other histories, not a complete account in itself:

It is the life of Alexander the king, and of Caesar, who overthrew Pompey, that I am writing in this book, and the multitude of the deeds to be treated is so great that I shall make no other preface than to entreat my readers, in case I do not tell of all the famous actions of these men, nor even speak exhaustively at all in each particular case, but in epitome for the most part, not to complain. For it is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives; and in the most illustrious deeds there is not always a manifestation of virtue or vice, nay, a slight thing like a phrase or a jest often makes a greater revelation of

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<sup>22</sup> Bruce Malina, "Rhetorical Criticism and Social Scientific Criticism: Why Won't Romanticism Leave Us Alone?" p. 6, in Jerome H. Neyrey and Eric C. Stewart (eds.), *The Social World of the New Testament: Insights and Models* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> For instance, Bridget Gilfillan Upton has argued that the original short ending of Mark was intolerable to later editors (among them Matthew and Luke) primarily because they lacked the original oral context which clarified a great deal of the supposedly ambiguous ending. See Upton, *Hearing*, p. 135. See also Dunn, *The Oral Gospel Tradition*, p. 54.

character than battles when thousands fall, or the greatest armaments, or sieges of cities.

(Plutarch, *Alexander*, 1.1-2)<sup>24</sup>

Plutarch makes an all-important distinction between *ιστόρημα* and *βίος*. We will return to questions of genre later in this chapter, but for the time being it is sufficient to note that if the gospels are indeed biography, it was evidently common practise to assume a prior knowledge of the basic facts of the subject's life and career on the part of the reader.<sup>25</sup>

What is the basic significance of the original oral medium for the gospels? It is that there are a number of key differences between oral and literary media. In the first place, when an individual reader reads a book, he or she exercises control over the way and pace that the text is read. The reader has the option of referring back to earlier sections, for instance to remind themselves of a character's identity or a line of dialogue. The *writer* of such a text can write it with this method of reading in mind.

With an orally delivered text, on the other hand, one person is reading out loud and the audience does not have the option of skipping back and forth through the text. We should expect this to have an impact on characterisation in particular, because in order to be memorable, characters need to be introduced in a way that makes their relevance to the narrative clear, even if that also violates the logic of the plot to a certain extent.<sup>26</sup> As Ong describes it, these characters are made 'thicker' than they might be in a literary narrative, reduced down to a small number of

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<sup>24</sup> Plutarch (trans. Bernadotte Perrin), *Parallel Lives* (London: London Heinemann, 1914), p. 224.

<sup>25</sup> Although Paul's letters are not biographies, he also adopts the same policy of assuming a basic level of knowledge on the part of his audience, taking it for granted, for instance, that the Galatians know who Peter is. Cassidy's *Four Times Peter* is a good example of a recent in-depth attempt to determine exactly what prior knowledge of Peter is being assumed in the case of each gospel, as well as in Paul's letter to the Galatians.

<sup>26</sup> James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 57. The example Fentress and Wickham choose to give is of another traitor, Ganelon in the Song of Roland. Charlemagne is presented as somehow being aware of Ganelon's treachery yet he does not act upon this knowledge.

essential qualities, of which we are reminded in each of their appearances.<sup>27</sup> We need to bear this in mind when considering Peter and Judas' presentation in the gospels.

The other issue regarding characterisation relevant to the original oral delivery has already been discussed: it is that of the absent context. Unlike a written text, which can be read and reread an infinite number of times, an oral performance is a single event which takes place at a certain time and in a certain context.<sup>28</sup> The authors of a text designed for oral performance wrote with various expectations and assumptions regarding this context, just as the author of a sermon, a stand-up comedy monologue, a university lecture, or a political speech writes with assumptions about who the audience will be, what existing knowledge they have, what they believe, and how much attention they will be paying.<sup>29</sup>

In the following chapter, I will try to achieve an understanding of this absent context by drawing on a range of texts and other evidence from antiquity, often because they seem to offer suggestive or provocative parallels rather than because of any direct connection. However, the very speculative nature of this work must always be recognised. For instance, two of the texts concerning disciples which I will examine in detail are both from later periods than that of the gospels, and it is possible that they have been influenced by them, while the first set of texts, Plato's Socratic dialogues, are in a different genre. In any case, the work involves discussing the community behind each gospel, to which we now turn.

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<sup>27</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 70.

<sup>28</sup> Dunn, *Oral Gospel*, p. 52.

<sup>29</sup> Cassidy suggests that the evangelists may expect different levels of comprehension amongst their audience, proposing a division between the ordinary readers and the hypothetical 'paradigmatic readers', who are perfect in understanding (Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, p. 7). This device feels suspiciously like an attempt to smuggle more complex readings of the text in without sacrificing realism regarding the limitations of the oral context.

## 2. The Gospel Communities

Ever since the traditional view of gospel authorship was brought into question and the rise of redaction criticism, it has become more common to discuss the communities behind each gospel.<sup>30</sup> If the gospels were not, as the tradition based on Eusebius' testimony averred, written either by members of the Twelve (Matthew, John), or at least close associates of leading apostles (Mark, Luke), but at least a generation after the death of Jesus, the setting of these texts becomes an important question.

Until recently, the validity of inquiring into the community behind each gospel was generally accepted within biblical scholarship, except in the conservative circles that still maintained the gospels' traditional authorship. The basic principle was that each evangelist, while certainly conscious of a potential wider audience, wrote primarily with an immediate audience in mind—their local church or network of churches. This was based on the image of first-century Christianity which we can derive from the letters of Paul, the Johannine Letters and 1 Clement. In these texts, Christians seem to form mostly self-sufficient communities in different areas and cities. Given our understanding of the gospels as being originally transmitted orally, as outlined above, it seemed warranted to assume that the evangelists were writing with a sensitivity to local affairs, and that their texts sometimes presume knowledge on their

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<sup>30</sup> Sometimes described as the *Sitz im Leben*, although as Tuckett points out, the original term, as used by Hermann Gunkel referred to a particular situation *within* the life of a community, and not the community's life as a whole. See C.M. Tuckett, *Reading the New Testament: Methods of Interpretation* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1987), p. 200.

audience's part which is inaccessible to us.<sup>31</sup> As such, it is important to avoid the fallacy of the 'virgin reader', sometimes advocated by literary critics as a way of approaching the text.<sup>32</sup>

However, Richard Bauckham has challenged this tendency of biblical scholars to think in terms of the evangelists' communities, arguing that the evangelists wrote the 'gospel for all Christians', without regard to specific local concerns such as one finds in Paul's letters. Bauckham has argued that the idea that Mark (or any evangelist) wrote exclusively for a single community is an entirely unwarranted assumption, given the evidence of widespread travel and communication between first century Christian communities.<sup>33</sup>

Although his argument is made forcefully and with some compelling insights, Bauckham's suggestion has met with a mixed reaction.<sup>34</sup> One thoughtful response has been that of Philip Esler, who argues that Bauckham's argument creates a misleading false dichotomy, in which the evangelists must either have been writing exclusively for the community surrounding them or for all Christians of all times and places everywhere.<sup>35</sup> It is possible to imagine, instead, that the evangelists wrote for a primary audience consisting of their own local community, and

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<sup>31</sup> The simplest and most commonly-cited examples being Mark's offhand, unexplained references to Alexander and Rufus in Mark 15:21 or James the younger and Joses in 15:40, or Pilate's context-free introduction in 15:1. He seems confident that his audience will know who these people are and that they need no further introduction (indeed, serving as a means of introduction to other characters). See Hendrika Roskam, *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark in its Historical and Social Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> See M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: a Commentary* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), p. 103. See also Mary Anne Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), pp. 52-55, on the audience of the gospels.

<sup>33</sup> See Richard Bauckham (ed), *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998), particularly the Bauckham essay "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?", p. 30. Although her argument is different, Tolbert made a similar case in *Sowing*, pp. 303-04, comparing the gospels in this case to ancient novels.

<sup>34</sup> See Adele Reinhartz, "Gospel Audiences: Variations on a Theme" (in Klink III, Edward W. (ed.), *The Audience of the Gospels: The Origin and Function of the Gospels in Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), in which she argues that Bauckham is allowing theological considerations to trump historical inquiry, David Sim's "The gospels for all Christians?: a response to Richard Bauckham", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 84 Dec 2001, pp. 3-27, which accuses Bauckham of downplaying very real and evident rifts between rival early Christian factions in the interests of his thesis, Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2008), p. 25-8, or Roskam, *Purpose*, pp. 17-21.

<sup>35</sup> Philip F. Esler, "Community and Gospel in Early Christianity: A Response to Richard Bauckham's Gospels for all Christians", *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 51 (1998).

perhaps also a network of like-minded churches known to them in mind but possibly in the hopes that their texts would also reach a wider, unknown audience.<sup>36</sup> Justin Marc Smith refers to this primary audience, perhaps a little mischievously, as the evangelists' 'market niche'.<sup>37</sup>

In addition, as Birger Gerhardsson pointed out in his highly influential work of 1961, *Memory and Manuscript*, it is misguided to think of an amorphous, anonymous 'community' as guiding the work of transmitting, editing, and creating traditions.<sup>38</sup> It makes much more sense to think of the process as being under the control of certain figures of authority within the early Christian church. And, as Christopher Tuckett points out, these figures can be understood as speaking *to* their community as much or more than they speak *for* it.<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, after bearing in mind the original oral context, our second concern is to bear in mind this community setting, and the sensitivity to local concerns that each evangelist may be showing when he deals with Peter and Judas.<sup>40</sup> Along with the issue of prior knowledge, this is another hidden factor we have to bear in mind when assessing the characterisation of the two disciples. It is, once again, difficult to ascertain since its distinguishing feature is the fact that it is unspoken and relies on presumed knowledge, in this case of the community (and perhaps wider issues facing first century Christians generally).

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<sup>36</sup> That the gospels are not aimed at converting non-Christians is generally agreed by both sides in this dispute. See Bauckham, "Gospels" in Bauckham, *The Gospels for All Christians*, pp. 10-11. But one exception among the contributors to Bauckham's book is S.C. Barton, in "Can We Identify the Gospel Audiences?", p. 194. Barton suggests that the gospels may have been written for both Christians and non-Christians.

<sup>37</sup> Justin Marc Smith, *Why βίος? On the Relationship between Gospel Genre and Implied Audience* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 55.

<sup>38</sup> Birger Gerhardsson (trans. Eric J. Sharpe), *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Uppsala: Almqvist: Wiksells, 1961), pp. 329-335.

<sup>39</sup> Christopher Tuckett, "Form Criticism" in Werner H. Kelber and Samuel Byrskog (eds), *Jesus in Memory: Traditions in Oral and Scribal Perspectives* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), p. 35.

<sup>40</sup> This is the approach taken by B.J. Oropeza in *Footsteps*, although he is over-confident in determining the exact social and geographic location of each gospel community.

### 3. Genre

Among intellectual circles, the ancient world was as preoccupied with the question of genre as our own, as laid out in texts such as Aristotle's *Poetics*. To the Graeco-Roman way of thinking, certain poetic forms, certain modes of expression, certain types of language, certain plots, and certain types of character were appropriate to certain types of subject matter. For instance, Aristotle argues that tragedy must deal with serious and virtuous characters, while comedy's characters must be more frivolous and less virtuous.<sup>41</sup> But what exactly is a genre?

Genre has been described by Hirsch as a 'system of expectations' and by Dubrow as a contract between the reader and the author.<sup>42</sup> As with the two previous factors discussed above, issues of genre depend on prior knowledge on the reader's part for a text to be fully understood -in this case, knowledge of the genre to which the text belongs and previous experience with texts belonging to that genre, thus leading to Hirsch's expectations. A genre can be more narrowly defined as a set of motifs and artistic style deemed appropriate to a certain subject matter or mode of expression. But the motifs of genres can overlap, and their use is conditioned by the readers' *expectations* for that genre. To quote an example from Burrige, a fight on top of a moving train in a film could be used to generate tension in a spy thriller. But the same motif could also be used for the purposes of humour, if the genre of the film were comic parody.<sup>43</sup> The intended effect of this second example relies not solely on the viewer's knowledge of the *film's* genre (comedy) but also takes for granted a basic knowledge of the spy thriller genre. If the viewer is not aware that fights on top of moving trains are one of the conventions of the spy thriller, the humour of the scene and thus its entire purpose is lost. To use an example from

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<sup>41</sup> See Stephen Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 270.

<sup>42</sup> E.D. Hirsch, Jr, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: YUP, 1967), p. 83 and Heather Dubrow, *Genre* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 31.

<sup>43</sup> Burrige, *Gospels*, p. 35.

the ancient world, Aristophanes' comedies frequently introduce passages of high-flown rhetoric parodying the dramatic speeches of the tragic tradition (for instance, the competition between Euripides and Aeschylus in *The Frogs*). The humour of these moments depends on the audience's recognition of the style's provenance, and the contrast between the tragic manner and the comic setting and characters.<sup>44</sup>

Bearing this in mind, it becomes vital to establish the genre of the gospels. The evangelists may be giving various kinds of signals regarding Peter and Judas, based on conventional expectations for these kinds of characters in one particular genre or another. If we do not know the genre of the text, we remain deaf to these signals and our interpretation of the characters may diverge widely from those of the text's original audience.

The debate concerning the genre with which the gospels should be identified has been in existence since the nineteenth century. It was commonplace then to see the gospels as belonging to the genre of biography, with authors such as Ernest Renan seeing no essential distinction between his own work in writing a life of Jesus and that of the evangelists.<sup>45</sup> This changed in the twentieth century, with the advent of Rudolf Bultmann and the abandoning of the First Quest of the Historical Jesus. In *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, Bultmann maintained that the gospels belonged to no previously existing genre whatsoever; that Mark and his fellows had invented an entirely new form wholesale. This was also the view of K.L. Schmidt in *The Place of the Gospels in the General History of Literature*.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Peter Levi, "Greek Drama" in John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, Oswyn Murray (eds.), *The Oxford History of the Classical World* (Oxford: OUP, 1986), p. 176.

<sup>45</sup> Renan, *Life*, pp. 1-34. See James D.G. Dunn, *The Living Word* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1987), p. 31.

<sup>46</sup> See Bultmann, *History* or Byron R. McCane's recent English translation of K.L. Schmidt's 1923 work, *The Place of the Gospels in the General History of Literature* (Columbia, SC: USCP, 2002). William Beardslee makes clear the widely-held nature of this view by the 1970s in *Literary Criticism of the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1970), p. 4.

In the modern day, consensus has swung back to the idea that the gospels are best understood as biography, albeit specifically Graeco-Roman biography.<sup>47</sup> It is true that other ancient genres have also recently been considered as possible ways of understanding the gospels, among them Greek epic and the popular Hellenistic novel.<sup>48</sup> But Bultmann's claim, that Mark's Gospel was the first of an entirely new genre, is now seen as based on a faulty understanding of the exact meaning of genre. One single text cannot simply launch an entirely new genre, any more than one could be used to start a new language, without any references to pre-existing languages. And Richard Burridge's groundbreaking work of 1992, *What are the Gospels?*, has for many scholars answered the question once and for all.<sup>49</sup>

Through a detailed comparison with ten biographies from the ancient world, five written before the gospels and five afterwards, Burridge is able convincingly to show that the gospels share a wide number of characteristics with most works of Graeco-Roman biography, a genre defined by Momigliano as properly beginning in the fourth century with Aristoxenus of Tarentum.<sup>50</sup> Previous objections to this genre classification, such as the lack of information on Jesus' education and upbringing or the disproportionate focus on Jesus' death, are shown to be misplaced, since other ancient biographies share both these features with regard to their subject.

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<sup>47</sup> See, for instance, Wansbrough, *New Testament*, p. 40.

<sup>48</sup> See Dennis R. Macdonald's *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven, CT: YUP, 2000) and Upton's *Endings* for comparisons between Mark and Greek epic and Mark and the ancient popular novel respectively.

<sup>49</sup> Burridge's 1992 work was preceded by two other books which argued for biography as the gospels' genre: Charles H. Talbert's *What is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1977) and Philip L. Shuler's *A Genre for the Gospels: The Biographical Character of Matthew* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1982). But although he agreed with their conclusions, Burridge thought that both Talbert and Shuler's arguments were lacking (see Burridge, *Gospels*, pp. 84-89).

<sup>50</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1977), p103. Momigliano sees predecessors to Aristoxenus in, among other things, the Peripatetic School's love of anecdotes and Xenophon's 'philosophical novel' *Cyropaedia* but he argues that the distinctive features of Hellenistic biography, 'erudition, scholarly zeal, realism of details, and gossip' are all owed to Aristoxenus' work on his lives of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato.

Of course, genre classifications are fluid and should not be taken as restricting the evangelists' creativity, but rather giving them a vocabulary of tropes and characters with which to express their message.

Since this thesis is concerned with Peter and Judas, it seems appropriate to look at the role of disciple characters within the genre of biography, specifically 'intellectual biography' featuring subjects with disciples, in the hope of gaining some insight into aspects of the characterisation of both figures.<sup>51</sup> How are disciples typically portrayed in these texts? Do the gospels reinforce these expectations, or subvert them? This examination will be carried out in the following chapter.

## Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to establish a plausible literary context for the portrayal of Peter and Judas in the gospels, and raise some possible concerns or hidden factors to be taken into account when reading the evangelists' accounts of the two disciples. This conclusion will

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<sup>51</sup> See Wiarda, *Peter*, pp. 120-24, on the concept of pair-roles in ancient literary culture generally, and of Jesus and Peter as master and disciple in particular. On the term 'intellectual biography', see L.C.A. Alexander, "Acts and Intellectual Biography" in Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke (eds), *The Book of Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1993), p. 34. I am aware that there is at least one major lacuna in the following discussion, which is the question of *Jewish* expectations regarding discipleship, whether looking at relationships such as the one that existed between Elijah and Elisha in the Hebrew Scriptures, or those between rabbis and their students in rabbinic material. I can only say that lack of time, space, and expertise precluded a thorough investigation of this along with the Graeco-Roman material on my part, and it seemed better to simply acknowledge the lack rather than perform a necessarily shallow and rushed analysis. There is certainly further work to be done in this respect.

rehearse these, and also offer some examples of the way in which they may indeed affect perceptions of Peter and Judas for the original writers and audiences, although these points will only be expanded upon in the following chapters.

In the first section, my conclusion is that the orality of the original texts' delivery must be taken seriously. Without necessarily agreeing with all of the conclusions of the recently born discipline of performance criticism, it seems to me that the very fact of these texts being transmitted primarily orally makes an important difference to how we should read the gospels. A text designed primarily for individual readings, as with most Western novels, can at least in theory be discussed and criticized as a self-contained world unto itself, but oral performance by its very nature suggests a context both geographical and cultural for the text, one to which we do not have access. We do not know what information was assumed as part of this context. However, it is very probable, for instance, that given Peter's apparent prominence within the early Christian movement, the first audiences of, say, Mark's Gospel, had a knowledge and understanding of who this figure was that went beyond what the text contains. The same may be true of Judas as well, although he is obviously a much less important figure to early Christian self-understanding. But he is introduced in Mark 3:19 as 'Judas Iscariot, who handed him over', as though Mark expects his hearers to be already familiar with at least the key fact about this character's role.

In the second section, it was my conclusion that there is good reason for believing that the evangelists were writing for their individual communities and not for 'all Christians'. This means that some aspects of the portrayal of Peter and Judas may reflect local situations and concerns. For instance, Peter's denial in all four gospels, while it may well reflect some kind of historical reminiscence, may *also* reflect the problem of Christians committing apostasy

under pressure. Judas' portrayal as a hypocritical thief in John 12:6 may not be simply a gratuitous further blackening of the traitor disciple's name, but in fact something of a wry comment on the frequency with which early Christian communities seem to have suffered exploitation by charlatans and false prophets.

It is this principle, of the assumption of a specific community audience for these texts, which requires us to go beyond the methods of narrative criticism. As already discussed, as insightful as the discipline can be, it also enforces a kind of *faux-naïveté* in which we treat Mark's Peter or Judas as a character existing purely in the self-contained world of the narrative. We are encouraged to lay to one side our preconceptions and know only what the narrative tells us about him. Needless to say, this would have been impossible for the intended audiences of the gospels, and I follow Mary Anne Tolbert in supposing that Mark and his fellows did have a specific audience in mind, even if it was a somewhat idealized audience with an idealized understanding of their texts, and this audience was Christian.<sup>52</sup> Paul's letters make it clear that, even as far as Corinth, Peter was a household name among Christians –the apostle *par excellence*, the first to witness the risen Jesus.<sup>53</sup> A story featuring Peter during Jesus' ministry among early Christians would have been the equivalent of a modern-day story about a young Barack Obama.<sup>54</sup> Even if Obama's future role as president of the USA is never directly alluded to, the audience would justly presume that it has an important bearing on the story. Consider the way that Origen rebukes Celsus (in *Against Celsus* 2:45) for referring only to the disciples' failures, as recorded by the gospels, and not to the glorious martyrdoms which most of them

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<sup>52</sup> See Mary Anne Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), pp. 52-55.

<sup>53</sup> Peter's significance is all the more striking in that it is by no means in Paul's interests to play it up. Even if they were no longer in conflict at the time of 1 Corinthians, Paul still seems dogged by the criticism that he himself is not a 'legitimate' apostle, in contrast with Peter.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Tanne's film of 2016, *Southside with You*, about the first date between Barack Obama and his future wife Michelle Robinson, is an apt example.

went on to endure for Jesus' sake. Origen clearly feels that Celsus is deliberately and maliciously ignoring the all-important context of the story of Peter's failure, this being his later self-sacrifice for Jesus' sake.

Over time, these associations and ideas become less about the historical individual as such, and more about their memory and their myth. To continue using analogies drawn from modern politics, the late Margaret Thatcher remains an extraordinarily divisive figure in Britain, even among people too young to remember her tenure as prime minister. One's attitude to Thatcher is a political litmus test; one of the ways one defines oneself as left or right-wing. Peter seems to have become a similar figure in early Christianity. Christian communities had an understanding of who Peter was and what he stood for and embraced him or rejected him as their own beliefs dictated. This is the afterlife of Peter with which recent works such as Markus Bockmuehl's *The Remembered Peter* and *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory* and Terence V. Smith's *Petrine Controversies in Early Christianity* are concerned. Over time, Peter seems to have become increasingly understood as simply emblematic of the 'mainstream' or apostolic church.<sup>55</sup> Communities that saw themselves as separate from the apostolic church (for instance, Gnostic groups) could either discredit Peter as a false, unworthy apostle (the approach taken by texts such as the Gospel of Judas and the Gospel of Mary) or else claim Peter as the original source of their teachings (the approach of texts such as the Gospel of Peter). The position of the Tübingen School is that this kind of manoeuvring and use of Peter as a 'flag or hostage'<sup>56</sup> goes back to the texts of the New Testament itself.

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<sup>55</sup> The quotation marks around the word 'mainstream' indicate the problems involved in using it.

<sup>56</sup> Susan Gubar's apt phrase for the use of Judas in Gnostic texts applies equally well to Peter. Gubar, *Judas*, p. 125. Less elegantly, Peter is 'a plaything hijacked this way and that in the service of contradictory political ends', in Markus Bockmuehl, *The Remembered Peter*, p. 119, although this image of Peter in the sources is something that Bockmuehl is arguing against rather than endorsing.

Finally, my examination of genre in the ancient world shows that audiences in antiquity would have had clear expectations for characters within a narrative, based on their understanding of that narrative's genre. I have agreed with the evidence presented by Burrige and others that 'intellectual biography' is the best way to understand the genre of the gospels. As such, in the next chapter, I will be drawing parallels between the figures of Peter and Judas and those of other disciples in intellectual biography, or texts that are at least aligned with the intellectual biography genre. But first I will examine our historical evidence for Peter and Judas themselves.

## Chapter 2: The Historical Peter and Judas and their Literary Parallels

### Introduction

Any number of books have been written on Peter (and to a lesser extent Judas) from a historical perspective, aiming to write more or less traditional biographies of their life and careers. As discussed in the Introduction, earlier texts include F.J. Foakes-Jackson's *Peter: Prince of Apostles*; later ones Martin Hengel's *Peter: the Underestimated Apostle* and William Klassen's *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?*. The practicality of writing a historical account of these figures requires a closer look at both the evidence and the theory behind the authors' historical approach.

This chapter will first consider such historical evidence as we have for the lives and motives of both Peter and Judas, and then turn to potentially helpful parallels for them in other ancient works of literature featuring disciples.

## 1. The Historical Judas

Judas is only mentioned in the gospels and Acts in the New Testament (with the debatable exception of the mention of the night of Jesus' arrest in 1 Corinthians). He appears very briefly even there –there are five references to Judas Iscariot in Matthew (Matthew 10:4, 26:14-16, 26:20-26, 26:47-50, and 27:1-5), three in Mark (Mark 3:19, 14:10-11 and 14:43-45), four in Luke-Acts (Luke 6:16, 22:3-6, 22:47-48, and Acts 1:15-20) and five in John, at least if we count the separate references to Judas during the Last Supper as independent (John 6:70-71, 12:4-7, 13:2, 13:11, and 13:21-30). The evangelists all agree that he was one of the Twelve and that he betrayed or 'handed over' Jesus to the authorities. Mark, the earliest of the gospels, gives only this minimal account. Matthew adds the detail of the exact sum that Judas was paid (the infamous thirty pieces of silver, Matthew 26:14); the fact that Judas repented, returned the money and hanged himself; and the fact that the priests then used the money to buy a potter's field as a burial ground for foreigners, the Field of Blood (Matthew 27:1-5). Luke suggests that Judas was possessed by Satan, leading him to carry out his betrayal (Luke 22:3), and that afterwards he used the money he was paid to buy a plot of land, later known as the Field of Blood, where he suffered a horrific accidental death (Acts 1:15-20), which Luke represents as divine retribution. John adapts a story which also appears in the Synoptic Gospels to portray Judas as the treasurer of the group and as a thief who was using his position to rob the others (John 12:4-7). Despite this evidence of Judas' greed, like Luke he attributes Judas' betrayal of Jesus to demonic possession rather than greed for money (John 6:70-71, 13:27).

The problems with using material of this nature as the basis for an historical biography should be evident. In the first place, it is extremely scant. Some scholars, such as Alfred Loisy and Frank Kermode, have argued that Judas is a purely fictional character and there is no historical

basis for any of the material concerning him, arguing that Judas was a symbolic figure intended to represent Judaism's rejection of Jesus and to parallel Ahitophel, the advisor who betrayed David and later killed himself in 2 Samuel 17:23.<sup>1</sup> Others, such as Hyam Maccoby, accept Judas' existence but view the accounts of his betrayal as later politically or doctrinally motivated libel, intended to distance the Pauline, Gentile church from its Jewish roots or to make room to place Paul among the twelve apostles.<sup>2</sup> A biographer who first has to prove their subject's existence has clearly taken on quite a task!<sup>3</sup> However, it is generally accepted that Judas is much more likely than not to be a historical figure, since the difficulties of inventing a traitor disciple outweigh the theoretical benefits.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, although the gospels are all consistent on Judas' surname and the fact that he was one of the Twelve, neither of these are necessarily helpful points of historical information. Scholars such as J.D. Crossan have argued that the idea of the Twelve itself is a construct retroactively imposed on Jesus' movement by the early church.<sup>5</sup> There would therefore be no historical value to the fact that Judas was one of the Twelve, since the idea of Jesus having twelve particularly favoured disciples did not exist in his own lifetime.<sup>6</sup> As for Judas' surname,

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Loisy (trans. L.P. Jacks), *The Origins of the New Testament* (New York, NY: Collier Books, 1962), p. 115, Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy* (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1979), pp. 75-99. See Kurt Lüthi, *Judas Iskariot in der Gesicht der Auslegung von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart* (Zurich: Zwingli, 1955), pp. 121-27, for an overview of the position that Judas was a fictional character.

<sup>2</sup> Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> There are obvious parallels with the 'Jesus myth' argument put forth historically by writers such as J.M. Robertson, Arthur Drews and P.L. Couchoud, and more recently by G.A. Wells and Robert Price but there is a crucial difference between the amount of material available on Jesus and on Judas. Maurice Casey's *Jesus: Evidence and Argument or Mythicist Myths?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014) rebuts the Jesus myth itself at some length. But in many ways the best response remains Richard Whately's deadpan essay of 1818, *Historic Doubts Regarding Napoleon Bonaparte* (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1860), in which he presents unassailable evidence that Napoleon Bonaparte was a solar deity and not a historical figure at all. The reality of Peter's historical existence has likewise been questioned, but is likewise not held in any doubt by most scholars – see Cullman, *Peter*, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Wilhelm Pratscher, "Judas Iskariot im Neuen Testament und im Judasevangelium", *Novum Testamentum*, 52 (1) (2010), pp. 1-23.

<sup>5</sup> J.D. Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1975), p. 75. See also Loisy, *Origins*, p. 95 and Philip Vielhauer, "Gottensreich und Menschensohn in der Verkündigung Jesus" in Wilhelm Schneemelcher (ed.), *Festschrift für Günther Dehn zum 75. Geburtstag* (Neukirchen: Kreis oers, 1957), pp. 68-71.

<sup>6</sup> J.P. Meier has written a characteristically thoughtful and persuasive defence of the idea of the Twelve existing in Jesus' lifetime (Meier, *Marginal Jew*, pp. 125-67). It does seem likely that a Jewish religious leader such as

an endless debate rages as to its significance and provenance.<sup>7</sup> It is, of course, perfectly natural that Judas gets a nickname of some kind to distinguish him. Since it was a Hasmonean name (and also the name of the patriarch Judah, although the Hasmonean connection is more relevant to its popularity), it would have been extremely common in Judea and Galilee.<sup>8</sup> In fact, it was the fourth most common Jewish name in this period.<sup>9</sup> But John's evidence complicates this when he refers to Judas as 'Judas son of Simon Iscariot' in John 6:71. If this is just a nickname which applies only to Judas, as some theories suggest, then it makes no sense for Judas' father to have the same nickname.<sup>10</sup> One popular theory is that it is a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic *ish Kerioth*, meaning 'man of Kerioth' and placing Judas' origins in the town of Kerioth.<sup>11</sup> Many commentators have embraced this explanation and then used this to speculate on possibilities such as southerner Judas' discomfort as an outsider among the closely-knit Galilean disciples or the idea that pressure could be more easily applied to Judas by the Temple authorities, as a man based in Judea.<sup>12</sup> As intriguing as these theories may be, they are based

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Jesus would name his closest disciples the Twelve, with the immense historic resonance the number held for Israel, but it is worth bearing in mind that this does not mean that there were in fact exactly twelve of them. The gospels present us with conflicting lists and we can see, for instance, the way that Peter's brother Andrew is sometimes present for major events and sometimes not. See the discussion in E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984) p. 75. See also Warren Carter, "The Disciples" in Chris Keith and Larry Hurtado (eds.), *Jesus Among Friends and Enemies: A Historical and Literary Introduction to Jesus in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, C.C. Torrey, "The Name Iscariot", *HTR* 36 (1943); Yoel Arbeitman, "The Suffix of Iscariot", *JBL* 99 (1980); Albert Ehrman, "Judas Iscariot and the Abba Saqqara", *JBL* 97 (1978); or Harald Ingholt, "The Surname of Judas Iscariot" in *Studia Orientalia Ioanni Pedersen Septuagenario* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1953).

<sup>8</sup> Consider the way that Josephus refers to the founder of the Fourth Philosophy as 'Judas the Galilean', also mentioned in Acts 5:37, in *Jewish Antiquities* 18:1:6, distinguishing him among the nine different men of that name mentioned in his histories. See Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, p. 102.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, regarding the nickname theories, Torrey's suggestion that the Aramaic appellation *Isqarya* meaning 'false one' or 'liar' had become attached to Judas' name after his betrayal and was rendered in Greek as Ἰσκαριώθ (Torrey, "The Name Iscariot", *HTR*) or the popular theory that it was based on the Latin *sicarius*, making Judas one of the extremist Jewish terrorists mentioned by Josephus in *Antiquities* 20:9:4.

<sup>11</sup> Writing in 1896, Ezra Gould gave this explanation with great confidence. See Ezra P. Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1896), p. 59.

<sup>12</sup> For instance, Charlesworth's offhand suggestion that Judas' messianic expectations may have been influenced by the Judean Psalms of Solomon (James Charlesworth, "Jesus Research Expands with Chaotic Creativity" in James H. Charlesworth & Walter P. Weaver (eds.), *Images of Jesus Today* (Valley Forge, PA.: Trinity Press International, 1994), p. 9 or Klausner's portrait of Judas as an educated Judean intellectual surrounded by bucolic Galileans (J. Klausner (trans. H. Danby), *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times and Teaching* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1929), pp. 324-5).

solely on one possible reading of a highly obscure word. Furthermore, they take it for granted that the meaning of the name will automatically grant us a new, privileged understanding of Judas' betrayal. Unfortunately, this is simply wishful thinking. Whatever the provenance of the surname Iscariot (and some scholars, such as Bart Ehrman and Anthony Cane, half-despair of finding it), it is surely unlikely that, unless it was a nickname given to him afterwards, it had much bearing on Judas' act of betrayal.<sup>13</sup> The brevity of the material on Judas coupled with his disproportionate symbolic importance leads many scholars to go far beyond the boundaries of the historical method they themselves are trying to apply to him.

The additional material on Judas in the gospels provides equally slender pickings. As Hagner suggests, Matthew's specification of the exact sum which Judas received seems almost certain to be Matthew's own addition to Mark's account, preparing the groundwork for the Zechariah 11:13 reference (incorrectly attributed to Jeremiah) in Matthew 27:9-10.<sup>14</sup> Nor can Matthew's account of Judas' suicide be reconciled with Luke's more gruesome account of his end in Acts 1:18-19. Luke's version reflects that evangelist's preference for the theme of punishment overtaking the unrighteous (see, for instance, the fate of Herod Agrippa in Acts 12:23).<sup>15</sup> The gospel tradition does not speak with any kind of united or reliable voice on the eventual fate of Judas and the earliest text, the Gospel of Mark, shows no interest in or knowledge of the question.

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<sup>13</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot: A New Look at Betrayer and Betrayed* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), p. 146; Anthony Cane, "Contested Meanings of the Name 'Judas Iscariot'", *The Expository Times*, 112 (2) (2000), pp. 44-45.

<sup>14</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1995), pp. 759-61. And as Cane has also pointed out, thirty shekels is not very much money (Anthony Cane, *The Place of Judas Iscariot in Christology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 30).

<sup>15</sup> The even more scatological Fragment 3 of Papias hardly merits serious consideration as a historical source: 'Judas walked about in this world a sad example of impiety; for his body having swollen to such an extent that he could not pass where a chariot could pass easily, he was crushed by the chariot, so that his bowels gushed out.' Both this and Luke continue the Jewish tradition of awarding painful, grotesque deaths to the impious, such as Antiochus Epiphanies. Judas' failing is not simply moral (the betrayal of a friend), but blasphemous, in that he has abused something sacred. See Christopher B. Zeichmann, "Papias as Rhetorician: Ekphrasis in the Bishop's Account of Judas' Death", *NTS* 56, pp. 427-429.

Some have embraced the additional material on Judas that the Gospel of John offers us, particularly the revelation of Judas' role as treasurer and the brief but tantalizing mention of Judas' father, 'Simon Iscariot'.<sup>16</sup> There have been more general attempts to reclaim or at least upgrade John's historicity.<sup>17</sup> It has been suggested that Judas really was the treasurer of the Twelve and that his characterisation in John's Gospel and the Synoptics as an avaricious man who betrayed Jesus for money were after-the-fact attempts by a baffled community to account for his inexplicable betrayal.<sup>18</sup> However, Judas' role as the treasurer is introduced in John 12:1-8, an adaptation of the Bethany story in Mark 14:3-9. In Mark's version of the story, the objectors to the waste represented by the woman's purchase of costly ointment are anonymous (although Judas' decision to betray Jesus follows immediately afterwards). In Matthew's adaptation, they are the disciples, but in John, it is Judas in particular and the explanation is given that, as the treasurer of the group, he wanted the money for himself. It seems clear that John has adapted the story to cast Judas in a worse light. As such, we can put little faith in the historical fact with which it presents us: that Judas was the group's treasurer. John has made him the group's treasurer in order to give him a (discreditable) motivation for taking the role of the objector in the story of the anointing at Bethany.

One of the most striking questions which the gospels' account of Judas raises is exactly what form his betrayal took. According to the Synoptic accounts, Judas was required to identify

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<sup>16</sup> See Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, p. 74, for a creative use of the Simon Iscariot reference. Haugg based his account on the assumption that John was an eye-witness (Haugg, *Judas*, pp. 69-72).

<sup>17</sup> The most prominent example is John A.T. Robinson's *The Priority of John* (London: Meyer-Stone Books, 1985). Paula Fredriksen has also argued for a preference to be given to the Johannine *chronology* over the Synoptic one, although not for the Johannine Jesus over the Synoptic Jesus (Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews*, (New York, NY: Vintage, 2000)), as does Smalley (Stephen S. Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), pp. 23-4.). The essays in the Paul Anderson-edited *John, Jesus, and History: Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), discuss this issue from various perspectives.

<sup>18</sup> J.N. Sanders and B.A. Mastin, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to John* (London: A&C Black, 1968), p. 284.

Jesus to those sent to arrest him (Matthew 26:48; Mark 14:44; by implication though not explicitly Luke 22:47). But this makes little sense within the narrative, in which Jesus is a hugely famous figure in both Galilee and Jerusalem. As Jesus himself comments at the time of his arrest, 'Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching' (Mark 14:49). Of course, it is very likely that the gospels exaggerate Jesus' fame but he was in any event a public figure and Judas' one contribution to the arrest being to identify him seems unlikely.

The Gospel of John offers an alternative and more plausible description of Judas' betrayal. According to John, Judas was helpful to the authorities in leading their soldiers to a meeting place that he knew Jesus and his disciples used (John 18:2). This may in fact make sense of the Synoptic accounts also, which stress that the priests wished to arrest Jesus away from the crowds (Matthew 26:5; Mark 14:1; Luke 22:6). John may only be making explicit what the Synoptic authors already had in mind.

In this version of events, Judas was useful as a traitor not simply because he knew what Jesus looked like but because he had insider information on Jesus' habits and routines. It does not seem unlikely that he would also have supplied the Temple priesthood with more information on Jesus by reporting on radical and blasphemous elements to Jesus' teachings. This was the view taken by Albert Schweitzer and it is persuasive if speculative.<sup>19</sup> Schweitzer argued that the nature of the information Judas revealed involved Jesus' messianic claims but it seems more likely that it involved threats to the Temple or a prediction of its imminent destruction.<sup>20</sup>

E.P. Sanders has argued that Jesus' so-called 'cleansing' of the Temple in Mark 11:15-17 was

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<sup>19</sup> Schweitzer, *Quest*, pp. 393-6.

<sup>20</sup> Drawing on Gerd Theissen's theories regarding the anonymity of certain Markan characters, Richard Bauckham has also suggested that Mark's account of Jesus' anointing in Mark 14:3-9 is actually an account of a messianic anointing and thus a declaration of war on the religious establishment in Jerusalem. The fact that Judas takes action against Jesus immediately afterwards (Mark 14:10) is made suggestive by this theory. See Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, p. 191.

in fact an act of symbolic destruction.<sup>21</sup> It is often suggested that Jesus' symbolic assault on the Temple is what cost him his life.<sup>22</sup> In this case, Judas might have reported damning sayings of Jesus such as the prophecy of Mark 13:2.<sup>23</sup> However, no account has Judas appearing as a witness at Jesus' trial. But this may plausibly reflect early Christian strategy in deliberately presenting Jesus as the completely blameless victim of a kangaroo court.

The gospels mention only money (coupled or replaced with Satanic possession in the case of Luke and John) as Judas' motive for the betrayal. Klassen suggests a legitimate concern for the sanctity of the Temple, which is possible if we accept the idea that part of Judas' betrayal involved passing on Jesus' threats to the Temple to the high priest.<sup>24</sup> Sanders speculates that Judas may have become disillusioned with the failure of Jesus' mission to produce political results.<sup>25</sup> The reality is that we do not know what Judas' motives were (if indeed he was *not* motivated by avarice) and, given the scarcity and bias of the material, it is impossible for us to say. It is certainly possible to imagine that Judas may have had mixed motives, in the same way that a modern-day police informant might be simultaneously motivated by fear of prison, by desire for payment, and in some cases by a genuine wish to prevent further crimes from being carried out.

Judas is not mentioned in any of the other canonical books of the New Testament, although Paul provides two points of debatable evidence in 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 11:23,

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<sup>21</sup> E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, (London: SCM, 1985), p. 75.

<sup>22</sup> See, for instance, Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 1998), p. 571.

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of the debate on the authenticity of Mark 13:2, see Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1971), p. 267, and Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), p. 259. Schweizer believed that it did indeed go back to Jesus; Theissen that it was composed after the Temple's destruction in 70 CE.

<sup>24</sup> Klassen, *Judas*, p. 67. Klassen's theories will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

<sup>25</sup> Sanders, *Jesus*, p. 230. This idea goes back, in at least some form, to Reimarus and is a common feature of modern-day interpretations of Judas, such as that of Nikos Kazantzakis' novel *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

discussing the institution of the Eucharist, refers to Jesus' actions 'on the night he was betrayed' (ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ἣ παρεδίδοτο).<sup>26</sup> However, the word παραδίδομι is used elsewhere by Paul of Jesus' being 'handed over' in a theological sense for forgiveness of sins (Romans 4:25).<sup>27</sup> It in no way requires Paul to be thinking of Judas. Some commentators have also drawn attention to Paul's list of witnesses to the risen Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:3-11.<sup>28</sup> In verse 5, Paul claims that the risen Jesus appeared first to Cephas (Peter), then to the Twelve (καὶ ὅτι ὤφθη Κηφᾶ, εἶτα τοῖς δώδεκα). This is peculiar, since as discussed above, Judas is always portrayed as one of the Twelve. However, it seems likely that the term 'Twelve' was used in the general sense of the group, not indicating an exact number. Was Peter himself not also one of the Twelve, for instance?

Extra-canonical sources do not provide much more in terms of historical evidence. Some estimate the authenticity of many of the sayings of the Gospel of Thomas very highly, but none of them mention Judas Iscariot.<sup>29</sup> J.D. Crossan has argued for a stratum of very earlier material, the so-called Cross Gospel, underlying the Gospel of Peter.<sup>30</sup> Once again, the Gospel of Peter contains no reference to Judas but in its closing verses, it refers to the 'twelve disciples of the Lord' (οἱ δώδεκα μαθηται τοῦ κυριοῦ) mourning. Maccoby has used this to argue that Judas must therefore have been among the loyal disciples immediately after Jesus' death.<sup>31</sup> However, to accept this one has to first accept Crossan's theory, then assume that this particular part is

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<sup>26</sup> See Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: the Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (New Haven, CT: YUP, 1988), p. 115.

<sup>27</sup> It is also used in Mark 1:14 to describe *John's* arrest, with no apparent connotations of betrayal.

<sup>28</sup> Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ*, p. 102.

<sup>29</sup> However, see Craig A. Evans, *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* (Nottingham: IVP, 2007), pp. 52-77, for a differing opinion on the early dating of Thomas.

<sup>30</sup> J.D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Harper, 1991), pp. 385-94 and *The Cross that Spoke: the Origins of the Passion Narrative* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988).

<sup>31</sup> Maccoby, *Judas*, p. 88.

part of his hypothetical Cross Gospel.<sup>32</sup> The argument seems tenuous, particularly if one accepts that οἱ δώδεκα was just a term for the group in general, not an exact count of the number of people within it at any particular time.

Although the Gospel of Judas was published, by *National Geographic* in 2006, with a great deal of fanfare about reclaiming the historical role of Judas Iscariot, it is not of great historical interest.<sup>33</sup> As April D. DeConick argues, it is almost certainly the work of second century Sethian Gnostics.<sup>34</sup> The interest of its author is not in rehabilitating Judas but rather in satirizing the apostles, using the demonic figure of Judas as a point of comparison.

In summary, solid historical material regarding Judas is slight, to say the least. This has not discouraged adventurous scholars from writing speculative biographies of Judas Iscariot but it is hard not to agree with J.P. Meier's comment on their attempts: 'The quest for the historical Judas, like the quest for the historical Jesus, often ends up giving us a novel.'<sup>35</sup>

Judas' attraction comes from a number of points. The first is the very brevity of the material on him itself. Unlike Peter, Judas does not come with a personality, a history, a family, or even a profession. Judas embodies his most infamous action. He is a cipher, a symbol for betrayal, just as his name is synonymous with treachery today. As such, he is irresistible to artists, theologians, and even historians who wish to explore the notion of treachery itself.

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Foster has criticised Crossan's original theory, and also the expanded claims made by Paul Mirecki ("Peter, Gospel of", *ABD* 5 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 278-81), in "The Gospel of Peter", *The Expository Times* (2007) 118 (7), pp. 323-25 and in *The Gospel of Peter: Introduction, Critical Edition and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2010). Foster argues that the Cross Gospel theory makes little sense since its use of just one penitent thief must be based on Luke's penitent and impenitent thieves.

<sup>33</sup> See David Frankfurter, "An Historian's View of the "Gospel of Judas"", *Near Eastern Archaeology* 70 (3) (2007), pp. 174-177.

<sup>34</sup> DeConick, *Thirteenth Apostle*, p. 133. Joan Acocella's treatment of the subject in "Betrayal", *New Yorker*, (2009), 85 (23), pp. 68-73, is refreshingly level-headed.

<sup>35</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, p. 179.

The second is Judas as a metaphor for Christianity's relationship with Judaism. His name itself is linked with the term Judaism –both are taken from the patriarch Judah. Judas has been taken as representing Judaism's rejection of Christianity. His greed in the gospels has been partially responsible for the Christian anti-Semitic caricature of the avaricious, grasping, and potentially murderous Jew.<sup>36</sup> In the post-Holocaust era, it is possible that the reason that Judas cannot be left alone is the centuries of troubled history for which he stands.

The third aspect of the figure of Judas that interests readers today, already briefly discussed in the introduction, are the questions of predestination and salvation that his action brings up. If Jesus' death was necessary, what of the role of the man who betrayed him to the Romans? Was he an unknowing agent of God's plan? The difficulties of this line of thought are touched on in Mark 14:21: 'For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!'. Depending on how one reads it, John 13:26-7 could be read as Jesus directly arranging Judas' possession by Satan and then ordering the betrayal, leaving him no choice in the matter. Likewise, the Gospel of Judas presents Judas as an apparently unwilling pawn in a cosmic game, doomed to fulfil his destiny by betraying Jesus and becoming a demon. This way of thinking about evil is not alien to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Exodus 7:3 has God hardening Pharaoh's heart against Israel in order to fulfil the divine plan; likewise 2 Thessalonians 11 speaks of God deluding those who hate the truth, so that they will believe the false true. Most famously, in Isaiah 6:10 the prophet is instructed to dull the mind, stop the ears and shut the eyes of the people; a passage quoted by Jesus in Mark 4:12.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> E.M. Rose has written an excellent, incisive book on the medieval origins of the blood libel – *The Murder of William of Norwich* (New York, NY: OUP, 2015).

<sup>37</sup> These examples, particularly Mark 4:12, all bring up extremely complex and dense issues of their own, but it is sufficient for the moment to note that the concept of acts of evil (directly or indirectly ordained by God) ultimately furthering the divine plan is very much present in early Christianity and a recurring theme in Acts, in particular (for instance, the unjust charges against Paul ultimately bringing him to the centre of the Roman

The reason that these three points are significant is because the evangelists who wrote the gospels and shaped our understanding of Judas would have had similar concerns. The tradition of Judas' betrayal was very evidently no less poignant and baffling to them, not to mention the fact that, to pagan and Jewish critics, it must have seemed like a thoroughly risible element of the Passion story. The gospels' account of Judas was their attempt to make sense of an act that was as mysterious to them as it is to us today. In this sense, their work was literary and not historical. Just as in our own time, our attempts to define and describe traitors and acts of treachery are shaped by a variety of different figures: historical, fictional, and mythical, from Judas himself to Shakespeare's Iago to Vidkun Quisling, so the evangelists would have their own field of reference. How was treachery by a disciple understood in the ancient world? What figures and character types did the evangelists draw upon? And what recent events did they take for granted on the part of their audience? These are the questions that will be treated in the following chapters.

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empire and the book's triumphant conclusion in Acts 28:30-1, much as how the treachery of Joseph's brothers in Genesis 37 ultimately saves the bloodline of Jacob, as Joseph points out in Genesis 45:5).

## 2. The Historical Peter

The early church had a much greater interest in Peter. Besides his appearances in the Gospels and Acts (which are much more substantial than those of Judas), he is also mentioned twice by Paul, in Galatians and 1 Corinthians, although the letters attributed to Peter himself are not generally believed to be authentic.<sup>38</sup> He also appears in a range of non-canonical texts and is the putative narrator of at least two, the Gospel of Peter and the Revelation of Peter. Due to the testimony of Papias, Peter was also once believed to be the direct source for the material of Mark's Gospel, but this is no longer very widely accepted.<sup>39</sup>

'Peter' itself was a nickname; Peter's given name according to the gospels was Simon, the Greek form of the Hebrew Simeon, a very popular name among Jews in the Roman period.<sup>40</sup>

As we know from Paul's references to him in 1 Corinthians 9:5 or Galatians 2:1-14, Peter himself went by the Aramaic Cephas (from *kepha*, or rock –the sigma was added in Greek writing to give it a Greek ending, much as Judah turns to Judas in Greek) in his own lifetime.<sup>41</sup>

Paul only once refers to him as Πέτρος, in Galatians 2:7-8.<sup>42</sup> The evangelists call him Πέτρος

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<sup>38</sup> See the 'compelling counterarguments' to Petrine authorship listed in John H. Elliott, *1 Peter* (New Haven, CT: YUP, 2000), pp. 118-23. See Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2006), pp. 123-30, for a discussion of the authorship of 2 Peter. Matthew Novenson takes 1 (and 2) Peter's non-Petrine authorship for granted in his essay "Why Are There Some Petrine Epistles Rather Than None?" in Bond and Hurtado (eds.), *Peter*, although Sean Adams' essay in the same collection, "The Tradition of Peter's Literacy: Acts, 1 Peter, and Petrine Literature" remains agnostic on this point. Both essays argue that in any case 1 Peter was the basis for thinking of Peter as literate and thus for writing subsequent texts, such as 2 Peter and the Revelation of Peter, in his name.

<sup>39</sup> For an idiosyncratic defence of the traditional viewpoint, see David Alan Black, "Mark 16:9-20 as Markan Supplement" in David Alan Black (ed.), *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: 4 Views* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2008). Bernier also defends this idea in *Quest*.

<sup>40</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Missoula, MT: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 105-12.

<sup>41</sup> Oscar Cullman, *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr* (London: SCM, 1962), p. 20. Margaret Williams suggests, in "From Shimon to Petros – Petrine Nomenclature in the Light of Contemporary Onomastic Practices" in Bond and Hurtado (eds.), *Peter*, pp. 44-45, that Peter may have preferred to use the Greek version of his name while in the west, perhaps to avoid anti-Jewish prejudice.

<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, Paul makes this unique use of the Greek form of Peter's name at a point in which he is arguing that he and not Peter is the natural 'apostle to the Gentiles'! Margaret Williams once suggested to me in conversation that Paul is therefore using Πέτρος ironically.

in an attempt to preserve the sense of the nickname in Greek, although John refers to the Aramaic version in 1:42. As numerous commentators have pointed out, as portrayed in the gospels and even in Paul's account of his behaviour in Antioch, Peter is anything but rock-like in terms of strength and stability, making the nickname peculiar.<sup>43</sup> The Gospels of Mark, Luke and John portray Jesus as giving Peter his nickname on or soon after their first meeting.<sup>44</sup> However, the Gospel of Matthew has Jesus specifically refer to Peter by his nickname during his blessing of him at Caesarea, leading some to believe that the nickname was (or was seen as) specifically linked to Peter's destiny to be the 'rock' on which the church was founded.<sup>45</sup>

Unlike Judas, we are given some information on Peter's family, origins and career. All of the four gospels agree that he was a fisherman by trade, based in Galilee.<sup>46</sup> The Synoptics say he was from Capernaum, John's Gospel says Bethsaida. His brother, Andrew, is mentioned in the Synoptic accounts (Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16), although Luke's account of the call of Peter leaves him out (Luke 5:1-11) and he even plays a small but important role in John's Gospel (John 1:40-41).<sup>47</sup> Just one tradition, Jesus' blessing of Peter in Matthew 16:17, gives us the name of Peter's father, Jonah (or possibly John), when Jesus refers to him as Σίμων Βαριωνᾶ. But Gundry has argued that this Βαριωνᾶ refers not to Peter's literal father but the prophet Jonah, in reference to the 'sign of Jonah' which Jesus promised at the start of the chapter

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<sup>43</sup> See F.J. Foakes-Jackson, *Peter: Prince of Apostles* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927), p. 31.

<sup>44</sup> Bockmuehl argues that Peter was already called by the Greek Πέτρος before he met Jesus and that Jesus' innovation was to give him the Aramaic equivalent (Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, p. 28). Bockmuehl also devotes a chapter of his earlier book, *The Remembered Peter*, pp. 135-57, to the question of Peter's name.

<sup>45</sup> Brown, Donfried, and Reumann (eds.), *Peter*, p. 76.

<sup>46</sup> See the discussion of Capernaum's fishing industry in Sean Freyne, *Jesus: A Jewish Galilean* (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 48-53.

<sup>47</sup> Sentimental and highly speculative biographies of Andrew have been written, based mainly on apocryphal sources, such as Peter Ross' *Saint Andrew: The Disciple, the Missionary, the Patron Saint* (New York, NY: Scottish-American, 1886). Ursula Hall includes a more level-headed look at the evidence in *The Cross of St Andrew* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006), pp. 3-17.

(16:4).<sup>48</sup> This is the sign of death and resurrection which Jesus will first undergo and which, according to Gundry's theory, will be repeated by those, like Peter, who follow him. Mark 1:30 and its Synoptic parallels suggest that Peter was married, since he had a mother-in-law, and this is indirectly supported by Paul's reference to Peter and other apostles travelling with 'a believing wife' (ἀδελφήν γυναῖκα, more accurately a 'sister wife') in 1 Corinthians 9:5.

Finally, the Gospel of John differs strikingly from the Synoptics in its account of the call of Peter. The minimal versions in Matthew and Mark have Jesus simply calling Peter, Andrew, James and John from their trade on the Sea of Galilee. Luke's version is an elaboration on the same premise. However, in the Gospel of John, Peter and Andrew are already disciples of John the Baptist. John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God (ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ) to two of his disciples, one of whom is Andrew (John 1:35-42). Andrew and his unnamed fellow disciple follow Jesus back to the place where he is staying and become convinced that he is the Messiah. Andrew returns to tell Simon Peter who is brought to Jesus.

In many ways, John's account of Jesus' gathering of his followers is more historically credible than the Synoptics. It seems very likely that Jesus was originally a follower of John the Baptist. The importance of his link to John is brought home by the formula for appointing a new apostle in Acts 1:22; the new member of the Twelve has to have been present 'beginning from the baptism of John', as well as a number of traditions, in Q and elsewhere, connecting John and Jesus (Mark 11:27-33, Matthew 9:14, Matthew 11:2-16, Luke 5:33, Luke 7:18-28). If Jesus was a follower of John who decided to form his own movement (whether after the Baptist's arrest, as the Synoptics have it, or before it, as John records), then it seems very likely that his

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<sup>48</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: a Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 332. Bockmuehl dismisses both this theory and also the possibility that Βαρτιωνα is a Greek transcription of the Aramaic word for 'soldier'. See *Remembered Peter*, p. 144.

movement's first recruits would be fellow followers of John. The Synoptic version, with Jesus appearing to ordinary fishermen by the sea and simply ordering them to follow him, is dramatic and effective but hardly believable. Therefore, it seems plausible that Peter was originally a follower of John the Baptist and that it was in this movement that he first encountered Jesus.<sup>49</sup> However, it must also be acknowledged that the role of Peter in John 1:35-42 also serves John's theological ends, in portraying John the Baptist as primarily a witness to Jesus rather than a leader in his own right, and also demonstrating another model of discipleship, with one hearing and responding, then going to recruit others.

All of the gospels portray Peter as a leader and spokesman for the Twelve, although the Synoptics attribute similar importance to James and John and the Gospel of John places him second in Jesus' affections to the beloved disciple. Paul, in his letters, refers to him as one of the 'pillars' (στυλοὶ) of the church (e.g. Galatians 2:9). It is not clear how much authority Jesus bestowed on Peter during his own lifetime, and how much Peter gained after Jesus' death, unless we accept Peter's blessing in Matthew 16:13-20, to which none of the other gospels attest, as authentic.<sup>50</sup>

There is a great deal of debate on these verses. Gundry has argued that they are widely misunderstood. Jesus does not declare Peter himself the foundation of his church, but rather Peter's confession of Jesus as the messiah.<sup>51</sup> Maccoby has argued that Jesus, seeing himself as

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<sup>49</sup> See Charles H.H. Scobie, *John the Baptist* (London: SCM, 1964), p. 146. The Jesus Seminar agreed with this interpretation in W. Barnes Tatum's *John the Baptist and Jesus* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1994), p. 152, as did Joan Taylor, in *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 299, arguing that Jesus saw his movement as a continuation of John's ministry. Robert Webb's *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1998) sees a more definite and personal break between John and Jesus and their respective movements. In this, he builds on Carl H. Kraeling's psychologically speculative *John the Baptist* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951).

<sup>50</sup> See Cullman, *Peter*, pp. 161-217.

<sup>51</sup> Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 334. This is a typically Protestant reading in its interest in undermining the concept of apostolic succession.

a kingly messiah, here appoints Peter as his prime minister or vizier rather than the head of his church.<sup>52</sup> Since his role as messiah is related to his descent from David, James inherits the title after Jesus' death. However, Raymond Brown has argued that the blessing at Caesarea Philippi was originally part of a tradition about the risen Jesus, commissioning Peter.<sup>53</sup> Cullman defended the authenticity of Matthew 16:13-20 but argued that it belonged to the Passion.<sup>54</sup> Jesus was designating Peter as heir to leadership of the movement after his death. Bockmuehl has also argued that this event took place during Jesus' lifetime.<sup>55</sup>

Notably, Paul lists Peter first among the witnesses to the risen Jesus in 1 Corinthians 15:5. Regardless of what authority he held during Jesus' lifetime, it seems highly likely that at least some of Peter's claim to authority among Christians afterwards came from the fact that he was the first or at least one of the very first to claim to have seen the risen Jesus, and this is the position that this thesis will take.<sup>56</sup>

Was the story of Peter's denial historical? It seems probable that all or most of Jesus' disciples scattered after he was arrested. The story of Peter's three denials almost certainly did not happen in the ritualized manner in which the various Passion narratives tell it but it seems to speak to a clear sense of panic and shared shame felt among the entire community. If we accept Brown's theory mentioned above, it was only after fleeing back to Galilee and taking up his old profession as a fisherman that a visionary experience convinced Peter to gather Jesus'

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<sup>52</sup> Hyam Maccoby, *Jesus the Pharisee* (London: SCM, 2003), p. 24.

<sup>53</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1970), p. 1092. The argument is part of a larger one involving Matthew 14:22-33 and the epilogue of John.

<sup>54</sup> Cullman, *Peter*, p. 217.

<sup>55</sup> Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, pp. 73-7.

<sup>56</sup> In a sensitive analysis of the story of Peter's meeting with the risen Jesus in John 21, Schillebeeckx compares it to Paul's conversion moment. Paul explicitly bases his authority as 'apostle to the Gentiles' on this moment (Galatians 1:13-17). See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1979), p. 389.

followers back together.<sup>57</sup> J.D. Crossan has argued that Peter's confession of his sins in Luke 5:8 is a transplanted version of a story of this post-Easter encounter, and the sin in question is his denial.<sup>58</sup>

Luke's account of Peter in Acts has him taking a leading role in the early church, although he is gradually overshadowed in the narrative itself by Paul. Most notably, Luke has Peter declaring all foods clean to the early church in Acts 11:1-18 but the continuing debate over this point (for instance Acts 15:29) suggests that this is wishful thinking on Luke's part. As Oropeza has observed, Luke has a marked tendency to idealize the history of the early church and brush over its less attractive features.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, Luke is generally positive towards Peter and tends to downplay his faults more than Mark and Matthew.<sup>60</sup> Another intriguing aspect of Peter's portrayal in Acts is the question of his relationship with James, who seems to have authority over him.<sup>61</sup> Some scholars, such as S.G.F. Brandon and Michael Grant, think that James' sudden prominence in the early church (despite his muted and even hostile portrayal in all four gospels) indicates that a power-struggle of some sort took place between him and Peter, in which Peter came out the loser.<sup>62</sup> If that were the case, the struggle for control of the movement after Jesus' death would have been between his family and the inner circle of his friends (perhaps the 'triumvirate' of Peter and the sons of Zebedee), making it curiously

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<sup>57</sup> Accepting this version of the Resurrection story as the earliest would mean jettisoning Mark's empty tomb narrative. This seems plausible since Mark's abrupt ending seems to point Peter towards Galilee; Mark's audience may have known of the fateful encounter awaiting Peter there. This issue will be returned to in Chapter 3.

<sup>58</sup> J.D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1991), p. 410.

<sup>59</sup> Oropeza, *Footsteps*, p. 132.

<sup>60</sup> See Brown, Donfried, and Reumann, *Peter*, pp. 110-4.

<sup>61</sup> Bockmuehl refers to the intriguing possibility, first proposed by Ethelbert Stauffer, that James was a 'caliph'-like figure, inheriting Jesus' role as leader of the movement's home in Jerusalem while Peter was a missionary preacher and organizer (Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, p. 28). This is somewhat akin to Maccoby's theory, mentioned above, that Peter went on to serve James as a steward or vizier as he had served Jesus before him.

<sup>62</sup> S.G.F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (London: SPCK, 1951), p. 52; Michael Grant, *Saint Peter* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1994), p. 130.

reminiscent of the conflict between Abu Bakr and Ali after Muhammed's death in Islamic tradition.<sup>63</sup>

Paul refers to Peter several times in 1 Corinthians, but usually in passing (1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:22, 9:5 and 15:5). From these references, it is clear that Peter is an acknowledged apostle and leader of the church, though by no means the sole authority. As C.K. Barrett says, it is 'probable but not certain' that Peter visited Corinth and he considers it likely that Peter was representative of a Judaizing Christian group, and seen by his adherents as the true leader of the church.<sup>64</sup>

The letter that gives us the most substantial historical information on Peter is Galatians. This contains Paul's account of his two trips to Jerusalem to meet with Peter and the other 'acknowledged pillars' or 'those considered to be pillars' (οἱ δοκοῦντες στῦλοι; Galatians 2:9) of the church (Galatians 1:18-2:10). The context here is important. Paul is at pains to emphasise his independence from the Jerusalem leaders, which is why he uses the qualifier δοκοῦντες, similarly using τοῖς δοκοῦσιν in Galatians 2:2. However, he does describe Peter as apostle to the circumcised just as he himself is apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul then gives an account of his confrontation with Peter in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14). Paul claims that when Peter first arrived in Antioch, he ate with the Gentiles. However, after certain people arrived from James, he separated himself from them and prompted a wider general separation. Paul bitterly remarks that even his long-time ally and mission partner Barnabas joined Peter's Jewish Christian faction. One of the most striking aspects of this episode is how consistent it seems to be with Peter's character, as portrayed in the gospels. Beginning well, he

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<sup>63</sup> The frequent use of the term 'caliph' in the scholarship to describe James' role is suggestive in this regard.

<sup>64</sup> C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: A&C Black, 1968), p. 44.

allows his own timidity to overcome his good intentions.<sup>65</sup> Paul specifically indicts Peter's fear of 'those of the circumcision' (φοβούμενος τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς). The gospels alone give us a far more vivid impression of Peter's personality than that of Judas, and this historical reminiscence by Paul reinforces it.<sup>66</sup> This approach to biography, that is basing it on the impressions that the subject made on others rather than on methodical attempts to determine the facts of their life as such, has been applied to Jesus himself by scholars such as J.D.G. Dunn and Dale Allison and to Peter by Markus Bockmuehl and seems to represent a useful way forward for historical criticism.<sup>67</sup>

Other proposals have been made regarding the motivation for Peter's actions in Antioch. Martin Hengel has defended Peter's behaviour. In his view, by separating himself to eat exclusively with the Jewish Christians, Peter was actually practising what Paul recommends in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13. He was following food laws that he no longer saw as necessary in order to express solidarity with the Jerusalem envoys, who may have felt isolated in Antioch, and to bolster their faith.

It is difficult to know what to make of Peter's longstanding traditional association with the bishopric of Rome and his martyrdom there, which only became widely attested to by the second half of the second century and came to be treated as fact by the start of the third century.<sup>68</sup> No earlier texts make any explicit reference to Peter's martyrdom in Rome, although

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<sup>65</sup> Gibson's *Peter* is a book-length rebuttal of this idea, which argues that on the contrary, Peter's growth in courage is evident in the Antioch incident and that his actions were those of a statesman. This is similar to positions advanced by Martin Hengel detailed below. As I have argued earlier, their arguments seem motivated at least in part by the urge to 'complete' Peter's narrative arc in a logical and satisfying way.

<sup>66</sup> See George S. Duncan, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1934), p. 59.

<sup>67</sup> See J.D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003) or Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*.

<sup>68</sup> Smith, *Petrine Controversies*, p. 35.

John 21:18-19 refers to his death as a martyr.<sup>69</sup> It is entirely possible that he ended up in Rome, since a relatively early Christian community there is recorded by sources such as Paul's Letter to the Romans, Tacitus, and Suetonius, and equally possible that he was killed there, perhaps during Nero's massacre of Christians after the fire. The question is again discussed in detail by Cullman.<sup>70</sup> Cullman believed that the archaeological evidence was inconclusive but that the literary evidence, such as the letter of Dionysus of Corinth and 1 Clement 5:4, ultimately supports the tradition of Peter's martyrdom in Rome.<sup>71</sup> Based on the early and frequent references to Peter's martyrdom, this thesis will take it as highly likely that Peter did die a martyr's death, whether in Rome or elsewhere, and that the evangelists' audiences were aware of this.

Even putting aside the question of their dating, second century Christian texts such as the Preaching of Peter, the Gospel of Peter, the Acts of Peter, the Epistle of Peter to Philip and the Revelation of Peter offer us no new historical information on Peter himself.<sup>72</sup> However, texts from this era do offer an intriguing and valuable glimpse into the discussions and controversies among early Christians with regard to Peter, both by pro-Peter groups competing with each other to be considered his heir, and anti-Peter thinkers such as Marcion (as cited by Tertullian

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<sup>69</sup> Timothy Barnes has suggested that the cryptic but menacing words of John 21:18, 'But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will fasten a belt around you (καὶ ἄλλος σε ζώσει, which Barnes translates as 'someone else will gird you' or 'clothe you') and take you where you do not wish to go' correspond precisely to Tacitus' account of Nero's public executions of Christians in the *Annals*, 15:44: 'Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.' As a result, Barnes confidently places Peter's death in Rome, 64-5 CE, at the time of Nero's persecution (but since he believes that Peter was burned alive rather than crucified, Barnes believes that inquiring into the location of Peter's remains is futile). See Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), pp. 5-9.

<sup>70</sup> Cullman, *Peter*, pp. 71-157.

<sup>71</sup> Cullman, *Peter*, p. 157. Margherita Guarducci, in *The Tomb of Saint Peter* (London: George G. Harrap, 1960), argues that there is strong evidence for the traditional location of Peter's tomb in Rome.

<sup>72</sup> A helpful and thorough overview is given of these texts by Paul Foster in "Peter in Non-Canonical Traditions" in Bond and Hurtado, *Peter in Early Christianity*, pp. 222-62. Fred Lapham has also written a book-length study of the same texts: *Peter: The Myth, the Man and the Writings: A Study of Early Petrine Text and Tradition* (Sheffield: SAP, 2003).

in *Against Marcion* 4.3) aggressively claiming Peter's inferiority to Paul. Peter continued to cast a great shadow across Christianity but unlike (by and large) Paul or even James, the actual tenets of his teaching and doctrine are far from clear. Even in Paul's account of his conflict with Peter in Galatians, it is not immediately obvious what Peter himself stood for in this debate. The sense of his personality may be vivid and strong but his thought and theological orientation is much less so.

To summarize what we know of Peter, he was based in Galilee and a member of Jesus' inner circle of disciples, who were most likely known as the Twelve (whether or not that was their exact number at all times). After Jesus' death, he took a leading role in the Christian movement, reflected by the references to him in letters such as Galatians and 1 Corinthians, and this was at least in part due to the understanding among Christians that he had been the first witness to the risen Jesus. However, he seems to have been subordinate to James, possibly due to the perception among the first Christians that as his brother James had inherited Jesus' role. He clashed with Paul in Antioch in the middle of the first century over issues of food law. He was most likely executed in his old age, very possibly in Rome.

Popular imagination runs somewhat less wild when it comes to Peter than Judas, perhaps because there is more information available on him. He is not such a blank slate, on which we can impose our own interests, ideas and obsessions. Even the motivation for his failure is disappointingly clear-cut. Cowardice is universally understood, which may in itself serve the evangelists' hortatory purposes.<sup>73</sup> Although greed is equally comprehensible, since Judas is such a cipher the gospels leave open the possibility of interpreting Judas' motivation in other

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<sup>73</sup> Austin Farrer believed that Judas was also motivated by cowardice – fear of the Romans. See Austin Farrer, *A Study in Mark* (Westminster: Dacre, 1951), pp. 195-6.

ways. On the other hand, all four gospels so clearly and unambiguously establish Peter's personality and tendency to fail and misunderstand Jesus that there is no mystery whatsoever surrounding his actions.

### **3. Parallels to Peter and Judas**

Chapter 2 has already established that the best genre classification for the gospels is that of the ancient biography. In particular, the closest parallels are between the gospels and the biographies of holy men and philosophers. As such, it will examine parallel characters to Peter and Judas in various such texts, in an effort to establish both the commonalities and the important differences between Peter and Judas and the disciples in these texts. This will hopefully give us some insight into the interaction between history and literary convention in the evangelists' portrayal of these characters.

#### **3.1. Disciples in Plato's Socratic Dialogues**

The first set of texts we will look at regarding discipleship archetypes is Plato's Socratic dialogues. Plato wrote these semi-fictional dialogues, which portray his teacher Socrates in conversation with other leading Athenian intellectuals, over the entire course of his life. However, in the later dialogues, Socrates takes much less of a prominent role in leading the debate – ultimately disappearing altogether in Plato's final dialogue, the *Laws*. This may reflect Plato's tacit admission that the philosophy reflected in these dialogues was moving far beyond anything Socrates had actually taught in his own lifetime.

There are two clear problems with using these texts as a basis for examining literary motifs of discipleship in the ancient world. The first is that the dialogues do not belong to the genre of biography.<sup>74</sup> Although it was members of the Academy who pioneered the biographical genre, in none of his dialogues does Plato set out to write Socrates' life, from birth to death. One must be careful then, in applying any literary tropes in these dialogues to a different genre.

However, although the dialogues are certainly not biography, the difference may not be as great as one might suppose. Many of the dialogues are situated at concrete moments in history or in Socrates' life (such as the *Symposium*, set in the year of the tragedian Agathon's first victory at the dramatic festival, or the *Apology*, set just before Socrates' execution). Some ancient biographies, such as Lucian's *Life of Demonax*, were more collections of sayings than coherent narratives (parts of the gospels also fit this description, as does the non-canonical Gospel of Thomas). In other words, there are enough similarities between the genre of the gospels and the Socratic dialogues for the two to be compared.

The second problem is that, at least theoretically, Socrates does not have disciples as such at all.<sup>75</sup> The principle of the dialectic mode is that there is neither teacher nor student but two equals engaging in interactive reasoning, with the mutual goal of finding truth. Socrates frequently disavows knowing anything at all, explicitly denies being a teacher in the *Apology* 19d-20c, and often describes his *partner* as the knowledgeable one (although Socrates' praise is almost always heavily laced with irony).<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> In 1447b of the *Poetics*, Aristotle appears to consider Socratic dialogues (Σωκρατικοί λόγοι) a separate genre, comparing them to the comic everyday sketches of Sophron and Xenarchus.

<sup>75</sup> Gloth and Kellogg note that Xenophon avoids using the terms διδάσκαλος and μαθητής when writing about Socrates and his circle. Catharina Maria Gloth and Maria Francisca Kellogg, *Index in Xenophontis Memorabilia* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1900), p. 82.

<sup>76</sup> See, for instance, *Euthyphro* 5a. In the Socratic dialogues involving sophists, Socrates seems to lay the mocking irony on more thickly with arrogant or oblivious debate partners, such as Hippias in *Hippias Minor* or Thrasymachus in the *Republic*. For those whom the dialogue suggests he has a certain respect (such as Gorgias and Protagoras in the dialogues of those names), Socrates refrains from his most biting ironies.

However, Socrates self-evidently *did* have disciples, as evidenced by the fact that Plato is writing these dialogues in the first place. Besides this, the dialogues frequently show Socrates surrounded by respectful young admirers, such as Hippocrates in *Protagoras* or the sons of Ariston in the *Republic*, who may not be officially disciples but who fulfil the same literary purpose, in that they prompt Socrates to explain himself in greater detail. Finally, Socrates' claim that he knows nothing and is simply his interlocutor's equal partner in the search for truth is disingenuous and is even challenged by some *within* the dialogues.<sup>77</sup> In many of the dialogues, particularly the later ones, Socrates has a very definite destination in mind to which he is steering his partner. In some, such as Books 2-10 of the *Republic*, he is even willing to drop the dialectic device of total ignorance and fully accept the role of teacher and guide to his debate partners.<sup>78</sup>

The concepts of mimetic pedagogy and mimetic irony are central to understanding the characterisation of disciples in the Socratic dialogues, and by extension all didactic texts in the ancient world. The prevailing assumption, as stated by Socrates in his famous condemnation of the poets in Book 10 of the *Republic*, was that audiences would identify strongly with the characters portrayed in a narrative.<sup>79</sup> This was good for didactic purposes when the characters were exemplars of virtue, with whom the writer wished his audience to imitate. The evangelists, for instance, would certainly have wished their hearers to identify with and imitate Jesus (see 1 Corinthians 11:1), while of course Plato wished to hold Socrates up as the exemplar.<sup>80</sup> But

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<sup>77</sup> For instance, *Republic* 337e.

<sup>78</sup> Ruby Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 200. See also *Laws* 746c, the only surviving Platonic dialogue in which Socrates does not appear at all, in which this form of discussion is recommended over the Socratic dialectic.

<sup>79</sup> *Republic* 595b.

<sup>80</sup> Christ being divine or in any case (depending on the gospel) a unique figure empowered by God, there is of course a limit to the possibility of a mortal imitating him. This is where the disciples play an essential role in the narrative in showing a human reaction to a divine example.

other characters have to be portrayed in the narrative – antagonists such as Thrasymachus, an aggressive bully featured in *The Republic*, as well as characters who for one reason or another simply fall short of full intellectual understanding or moral perfection. According to Plato's theory of mimetic pedagogy, hearers were just as liable to identify with these characters if not warned to keep their distance by certain devices, which Mitchell Miller describes as 'mimetic irony'.<sup>81</sup>

For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to understand that mimetic irony discourages *total* identification with the characters it marks out, but not necessarily *all* such identification. There may well be a pedagogic purpose to enlisting the audience's sympathies for a flawed character to a limited extent or for a limited time. As we shall see, this is particularly true of disciple figures in ancient works of literature, who can act as bridges between the reader and the seemingly unattainable perfection of their master.

In her development of Miller's insights, Blondell lists three relevant means of attaining mimetic irony.<sup>82</sup> The first is the use of satirical humour, whether in physical descriptions of the character, comic accounts of their behaviour and deportment, or the irony with which Socrates parries their questions and challenges. The rhapsode Ion, for instance, in the Socratic dialogue of that name, is comic and even oddly endearing in his childlike vanity while the stolid, conventional sophist Hippias, in *Hippias Minor*, is a wicked satire on the limitations of traditional rhetorical training – he is unable to do anything but splutter as the more verbally dexterous Socrates proves that Achilles is as great a liar as Odysseus, that the liar is the same

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<sup>81</sup> Miller first developed the concept of mimetic irony in *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman* (The Hague: Parmenides, 1980), pp. xv-xvi, and expanded on it in "Platonic mimesis" in *Contextualizing Classics: Ideology, Performance, Dialogue: Essays in Honour of John J. Peradotta*, T.M. Falkner, N. Felson, and D. Konstan (eds.) (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), pp. 253-66.

<sup>82</sup> Blondell, *Character*, pp. 80-113.

as a truthful man and, with a final flourish, that it is better to do evil intentionally than unintentionally. It must be pointed out that Plato sometimes uses these characters' negative qualities to disarm the sometimes very real strength of their arguments. For instance, Thrasymachus in Book 1 of the *Republic* is portrayed as an aggressive boor. This undermines his argument even when his points are salient, such as his complaints over the relentless, suffocating nature of Socrates' dialectic questioning method or his objections to Socrates' snide irony.<sup>83</sup> John uses a similar technique in John 12:4, when he places the objection over the costly anointment of Jesus into the mouth of Judas, then reveals that Judas is a thief. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, Judas' objection (made by onlookers in Mark and disciples in Matthew) is valid but John's change neutralizes all of its force by changing the source of the criticism and making Judas' motives hypocritical greed.

It is not just Socrates' debate opponents who receive the satirical treatment. Plato is always concerned to show that Socrates is not just a great philosopher but the *greatest*, the one true master of dialectic. This means that nobody can share centre-stage with him and that even his admirers have to be shown to be far more limited and gauche by comparison. We see this in the embarrassingly puppyish, unexamined devotion his admirer Apollodorus displays for Socrates in the *Symposium* or Hippocrates' very Petrine impulsiveness in the opening of *Protagoras* when he charges into Socrates' home early in the morning to wake him up to share his exciting news.<sup>84</sup> As we shall see in the following chapters, literal-minded Peter is also frequently the subject of such humour in the gospels, seen both in his behaviour and in Jesus' frequently sardonic replies to his questions. Judas, being much less prominent, is not shown as

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<sup>83</sup> *Republic* 337e.

<sup>84</sup> *Protagoras* 310b. See Seth Bernadete, *On Plato's Symposium* (Munich: Carl Friedrich von Siemens Stiftung, 1993), pp. 33-35.

a figure of fun in the same way, but Jesus still appears to respond to his betrayal with a certain irony in Matthew 26:50 and John 13:27-30.

The physical limitations and needs of Socrates's students also present a contrast with the master. In particular, disapproving attention is drawn to the heavy drinking of Socrates' student Alcibiades, later a highly controversial Athenian politician, in the *Symposium*, as well as his surprise that Socrates has never attempted to seduce him. Socrates, in contrast, is portrayed as superhumanly hardy. He is capable of drinking copious amounts without ever getting drunk, and seems to be entirely detached from such human weaknesses as the need for sleep, sex, and romantic love.<sup>85</sup>

The only one of his students whom Socrates seems to consider an equal and perhaps a potential heir is Theaetetus, a model of extraordinary potential tragically cut short, who features in the dialogue of that name and in its sequels, the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. The only comparable figure in the gospels is the beloved disciple in the Gospel of John. The special role played by Theaetetus is connected with the setting of the dialogue: the reminiscences of Euclides on the occasion of Theaetetus' premature and tragic death in the Corinthian war.<sup>86</sup> Likewise, Chapter 6 of this thesis will argue that historical context plays an important role in the beloved disciple's portrayal in John.

Plato's often dismissive attitude towards Socrates' disciples runs into difficulties when he wishes to show Socrates' excellence in his capacity as a teacher. A teacher who cannot raise any worthy disciples cannot be a great teacher. Socrates' execution for corrupting the youth of

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<sup>85</sup> Christopher Rowe, "Socrates in Plato's Dialogues" in Sara Ahbel-Rappe and Rachana Kamtekar (eds.), *A Companion to Socrates* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 159.

<sup>86</sup> *Theaetetus* 142b.

Athens only adds to this problem, as is his well-known association with Alcibiades and future members of the Thirty, the anti-democratic oligarchy who briefly took over Athens in a coup, such as Charmides and Critias.<sup>87</sup> We see some of these concerns raised in *Theaetetus* where Socrates, uncharacteristically defensive, stands by his teaching techniques and claims that his only failures are those such as Aristides who abandoned him before their course of learning was completed.<sup>88</sup> The evangelists have to deal with similar concerns when dealing with Jesus in his capacity as a teacher. Like Plato, they have to consider how the obtuseness of disciples such as Peter reflects on their master. They also have to deal with the fact that Judas, one of Jesus' handpicked disciples, betrayed his master in a manner far more dramatic and decisive than anything done by Aristides.<sup>89</sup> The question how they juggle these issues is key to the entire thesis, and will be explored in detail in the following chapters.

The second method for achieving mimetic irony is to have characters with negative traits confront the consequences of their behaviour in the narrative and either experience a shameful end or realise their error and be converted.<sup>90</sup> The second option is obviously very useful for pedagogic purposes since the audience, identifying with the character in question, goes through the same emotional experiences as he or she does and theoretically arrives at the same conclusion.<sup>91</sup> Thrasymachus, for instance, goes from his rudeness and hostility in Book of 2 of

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<sup>87</sup> C.C.W. Taylor, *Socrates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 9. See Aeschines' *Against Timarchus* 173:

ὕμεῖς, ὧ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, Σωκράτην μὲν τὸν σοφιστὴν ἀπεκτείνετε, ὅτι Κριτίαν ἐφάνη πεπαιδευκῶς, ἓνα τῶν τριάκοντα τῶν τὸν δῆμον καταλυσάντων ('Did you, men of Athens, kill the sophist Socrates because he was shown to have become the teacher of Critias, one of the Thirty who destroyed the democracy...?').

<sup>88</sup> *Theaetetus* 150e.

<sup>89</sup> Celsus' attack on Jesus as a teacher focuses on these concerns while Origen's reply highlights the parallels between Jesus and Plato himself in Origen, *Against Celsus*, 2:18.

<sup>90</sup> Blondell, *Character*, p. 92.

<sup>91</sup> Kelly R. Iverson's essay, "The Present Tense of Performance: Immediacy and Transformative Power in Luke's Gospel" in Iverson (ed.), *Text to Performance*, pp. 131-157, makes for interesting reading in this context. Iverson's argument is that Luke's Passion is designed to build up the anger and indignation of the audience at Jesus' treatment, before safely dissolving it with Jesus' prayer for forgiveness in Luke 23:34.

the *Republic* to showing Socrates the proper courtesy in Book 5.<sup>92</sup> Again, there are clear parallels with the treatment of both Judas and Peter in the gospels. Judas dies different but equally shameful deaths in Matthew 27:3-10 and Acts 1:18-20.<sup>93</sup> Peter, meanwhile, in all four gospels breaks down and weeps after denying Jesus and is either implicitly or explicitly forgiven and reinstated by the risen Jesus.

Finally, the third form of mimetic irony is what Blondell calls historical irony.<sup>94</sup> This is the use of well-known historical figures whose names would have carried a freight of associations both positive and negative for the hearers in Plato's audience, with both explicit and implicit references being made to this historical background. The hearers are thus elevated above the characters in the drama, having access to information that the latter do not, and able to judge them from that perspective. For instance, Alcibiades, in the *Symposium*, would have been notorious to his audience as the primary proponent of Athens' disastrous Sicilian adventure of 415 BCE, an ill-fated expedition generally agreed to have lost Athens the Peloponnesian War.<sup>95</sup> In this historical context, Alcibiades' comic lack of moderation and inability to truly understand Socrates in the *Symposium* take on a poignant, even tragic resonance.<sup>96</sup> As I have already suggested, I believe that this dynamic is also at work in the gospels. All references to Peter, even when he is portrayed in an apparently hostile light, must be placed in the context of his later career as a pillar of the church. Likewise, in almost every one of his appearances in all

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<sup>92</sup> *Republic* 450a.

<sup>93</sup> Not all readers would consider Judas' suicide in Matthew shameful. This point will be discussed in the chapter on Matthew.

<sup>94</sup> Blondell, *Character*, p. 93.

<sup>95</sup> Simon Hornblower, "Greece: The Historical of the Classical Period" in John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, Oswyn Murray (eds.), *The Oxford History of the Classical World* (Oxford: OUP, 1986), p. 145.

<sup>96</sup> Bernadete takes this reading further, arguing that audiences would not only have thought of Alcibiades' involvement in the Sicilian campaign and subsequent exile, but also his later return to Athens and Athenian politics, and his failed attempt at that time to rule with moderation. By Bernadete's reading, this shows that Alcibiades does ultimately try to imitate Socrates but at the same time misunderstands him, by trying to cultivate Socrates' external moderation rather than his internal desire for truth. Bernadete, *Symposium*, pp. 89-95. Bernadete's argument is intriguing but convoluted, pushing to its limits the concept of historical irony.

four gospels, Judas is explicitly identified as ‘the one who handed Jesus over’, warning the audience away from any identification with him, despite his status as one of the Twelve.

### 3.2. Apollonius of Tyana and Damis

The practise of writing records of the lives of notable philosophers goes back to early works such as Aristotle’s account of Pythagoras, Xenophon’s memoir of Socrates, and Aristoxenus’ lives of both.<sup>97</sup> However, it was only in the Roman period that such philosophical biographies became commonplace.<sup>98</sup> In the case of a contemporary thinker, it is generally one of the master’s own disciples who write the biography, as in the case of Porphyry writing the life of Plotinus, or Marinus writing the life of Proclus. Obviously, this is not the case if the account is a hostile one, as with Lucian’s lives of Peregrinus and Alexander the Prophet – mocking and acerbic exposures of men whom Lucian considers to be intellectual and spiritual frauds. If the account is of a philosopher from an earlier time period, the writer will draw on or at least claim to draw on materials recorded by the subject’s disciples. This is the case with Flavius Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, written in the third century CE for the Empress Julia, whose court took especial pleasure in wonder-worker stories with an Oriental flavour.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Of course, Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* is not written as biography as such but uses the literary device of presenting itself as a legal defence of Socrates. See Momigliano, *Biography*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>98</sup> Mark Edwards suggests that this may reflect the changed situation of the Greek world. Admired and esteemed for its contributions to culture, but politically irrelevant, ambitious Greeks would have seen literature as a better way to secure their legacy than politics or monument-building. See Edwards, Introduction, *Neoplatonic Saints: The Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by their Students* (Liverpool: LUP, 2000), p. xx. For a discussion of the ways in which the evangelists employed literary conventions for teacher/student relationships, see Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), pp. 101-108.

<sup>99</sup> Hans-Josef Klauck (trans. Brian McNeil), *The Religious Context of Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), p. 169. Apollonius is often seen as a late pagan answer to Christ and Randel Helms entertainingly compares the two in the opening of *Gospel Fictions*. See Helms, *Gospel Fictions* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), pp. 9-10. The possibility should be borne in mind that any similarities between Damis (and Apollonius’ other followers) and Jesus’ disciples may be entirely intentional, since the text was written after and perhaps in answer to the gospels. However, I will endeavour to demonstrate, by comparison with other texts, that the connections between the two sets of characters is more likely to be a generic similarity

Apollonius was a late first-century Pythagorean mystic and wandering sage, denounced by his critics as a fraud and a magician and hailed by his admirers (among them Philostratus himself) as a true philosopher. Patricia Cox describes Philostratus' work as a prime example of a biography of a divine philosopher – a 'son of god' rather than a philosopher who is simply godlike. Among the traits which she mentions as belonging to this category are the stories regarding Apollonius' divine birth, the relatively generic and universal nature of his mystical and ethical teachings, and the lack of clear and unambiguous philosophical heritage and alignment.<sup>100</sup> Philostratus cites his primary source as the writings of Damis, Apollonius' disciple and travelling companion, although there is considerable debate as to the authenticity of this source. Some scholars believe Philostratus to have access to genuine memoirs by Damis; some believe the Damis source to be a completely imaginary text made up by Philostratus himself; and some suggest that Philostratus' source was itself a pseudepigraphic second or third century text.<sup>101</sup> We will begin by looking at the part this figure plays in Philostratus' biography.<sup>102</sup>

Philostratus' relationship with his source is intriguing, and bears comparison to Papias' comments on Mark. On the one hand, Philostratus obviously has no interest in denigrating

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than direct and one-to-one. Philostratus demonstrates little interest in Christianity, although it is possible that by this time Christian motifs had entered popular storytelling (see Klauck, *Religious Context*, p. 181). For further discussion of the parallels between Jesus and Apollonius, see Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), pp. 245-250.

<sup>100</sup> Patricia Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man* (Berkeley, CA: UCP, 1983), p. 40.

<sup>101</sup> Jaap-Jan Flinterman, *Power, Paidea and Pythagoreanism: Greek Identity, Conceptions of the Relationship between Philosophers and Monarchs and Political Ideas in Philostratus' Life of Apollonius* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1995), pp. 79-85. Flinterman prefers the final possibility, since while the historicity of the Damis source is doubtful, it also seems to contain material that does not fit Philostratus' preferred version of Apollonius. It seems unlikely, therefore, that he would have fabricated it himself. Klauck disagrees, seeing the evidence as lying much more heavily in favour of the memoirs being Philostratus' own invention – Klauck, *Religious Context*, p. 170.

<sup>102</sup> Quotations come from Philostratus (trans. F.C. Conybeare), *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (Cambridge, MA: Loeb, 1912). For a previous comparison between Peter and Damis, see Wiarda, *Peter*, pp. 195-98.

Damis as a source, by questioning his veracity or his abilities as a witness. On the other hand, he cannot present Damis' account as an entirely self-sufficient and complete account of Apollonius' life, since that brings into question the need for Philostratus' own biography.<sup>103</sup> Philostratus' technique is to characterize Damis as an honest and essentially intelligent man ('not unwise' or οὐκ ἄσοφος to quote Philostratus' rather lukewarm endorsement in 1.3), but also a Syrian who wrote in barbaric and incoherent Greek (1.19).<sup>104</sup> This serves a double purpose, in that it also neatly sums up Damis' characterisation throughout the *Life*, as an eager, literal-minded yokel.<sup>105</sup> One might also detect a certain backhanded reinforcement of support for Damis' testimony. His very literal-mindedness suggests that he would be incapable of fabricating the more fantastic sections of the narrative.<sup>106</sup> For instance, Philostratus emphasises

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<sup>103</sup> Similarly, in the Preface to *The Jewish War*, Josephus concedes that numerous previous accounts of the Jewish War have been written, clearly, showing its importance, but declares that all of these earlier attempts have been flawed and contain false information. The opening of Luke, Luke 1:1, is less aggressive but also implies that Luke's own account is the best-ordered and most accurate of the accounts of Jesus' history.

<sup>104</sup> There are obvious parallels with Papias' comments on Mark (Eusebius, *Church History* 3:39:15: 'Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord's discourses, so that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he remembered them. For he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely.' Papias is himself described by Eusebius as 'of very limited understanding' (σφόδρα μικρὸς τῶν νοῶν, *Church History* III:39:13), partly to account for his distasteful millenarian theology. Quotes from Eusebius are taken from Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (eds.) (trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 1* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1890).

<sup>105</sup> See Jonathan Z. Smith, "Good News is No News: Aretalogy and Gospel" in Jacob Neusner (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults* (E.J. Brill: Leiden, 1975), p. 26.

<sup>106</sup> Consider the characterisation of Peter and John in Acts 4:13, that they were 'uneducated and ordinary men' (ἄνθρωποι ἀγράμματοί εἰσιν καὶ ἰδιῶται), making the articulateness of Peter's speech before the elders that much more impressive (echoed in Eusebius' fourth century apologetic work, *The Proof of the Gospel* 3.5, in which the illiteracy of Peter and the others just demonstrate the divine power that must have moved them). See Michael Grant, *Saint Peter* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1994), p. 56. One might also note the way that the prophet Muhammad was held to be illiterate and incapable of composing the melodious poetry of the Qu'ran, thus demonstrating its divine origins. In fact, fishing in first century Galilee was not precisely the humble trade that both the gospels and modern imagination suggest. Sean Freyne suggests that Galilean fishermen, as a class, were affluent and influential members of their society. See Freyne, *Jesus*, pp. 50-1 and also Wilhelm H. Wuellner, *The Meaning of "Fishers of Men"* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1967), pp. 16-20. For further discussion of the ways in which literal-mindedness and even dullness could be seen as an advantage in the recorder of a tradition, see Gerhardsson, *Memory*, pp. 93-112, and the way in which rhapsodes who have scrupulously memorised the exact words of Homer are mocked as fools in Xenophon's *Symposium*, 3.6-13. One could also read Plato's *Ion*, presenting the rhapsode Ion as foolish and gullible, as in the same tradition.

Damis as his source for the story of Apollonius' encounter with the lamia in Corinth in 4.25, a diversion in the narrative into proto-Gothic territory.

Damis' characterisation is by no means always negative. Having joined Apollonius in Nineveh, he agrees to follow him on his quest for knowledge into the unknown East in 1.9. Philostratus does not draw our attention to Damis' courage but in the previous section he has described the signal failure of all of Apollonius' previous disciples to have the bravery to join him.<sup>107</sup> Damis passes the first and most significant test of discipleship, which is willingness to be a disciple, the same test that Peter passes in Mark 1:16-20. Later on in the narrative, in 4.36-38, Damis once again demonstrates his courage by being among the eight disciples willing to follow Apollonius into the dangers of Nero's Rome.

Throughout their travels together, Damis' role is generally to be a kind of Watson to Apollonius' Sherlock Holmes. He gives literal or 'common sense' answers to Apollonius' leading questions, allowing Apollonius to correct his disciple's ideas by expounding on the subject. For instance, in 2.11, the two see a boy riding an elephant. Prompted by Apollonius' questions, Damis admires the boy's remarkable ability to control the elephant. Apollonius points out that the significant factor is not the rider at all, but the lifetime of training that the elephant has received. Just as Philostratus has suggested, Damis is not exactly characterized as stupid in these exchanges. Rather, his role is to be the literal-minded, unimaginative straight man setting Apollonius up to produce more searching and insightful ideas, much as Plato uses figures such as Hippias in his Socratic dialogues.

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<sup>107</sup> Admittedly, Damis is a Syrian who has already been as far as Babylon, so the journey is less of a leap into the unknown for him, but Apollonius already intends to go far beyond Babylonia. See Mary R. Thompson, *The Role of Disbelief in Mark: A New Approach to the Second Gospel* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1989), p. 22, and Martin Hengel (trans. James C.G. Greig), *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), p. 26.

Interestingly, Philostratus is clearly sensitive to the possibility that these exchanges open the possibility of Apollonius being seen by the reader as a self-satisfied pedant, having fun at the expense of the earnest, bewildered Damis. In 2.22, he explains that Apollonius showed sensitivity in his refutations and had no desire to humiliate his student. At one point, Damis' thankless role as the gatekeeper for Apollonius' wisdom even becomes part of the text. In 3.15, Philostratus quotes Apollonius' description of the Indian Brahmins: a series of cryptic riddles.<sup>108</sup> Thankfully, Philostratus notes, Damis' more down-to-earth description allows us to make sense of Apollonius' enigmatic language.

This is also the point at which the tables are temporarily turned on Apollonius himself. He is permitted to approach the head Brahman Iarchus and now he finds himself in the position of the earnest and literal-minded disciple. He speaks enthusiastically of Achilles and the *Iliad*, the unassailable standard of Greek culture in the ancient world, and is reproved for his admiration for a brutal warmonger (3.19-20). In a discussion of past lives, Apollonius is castigated for thinking that failure to do evil is the same thing as doing good (3.25). Both of these points are held up by Iarchus as examples of Apollonius' failure to properly question the logic of his own culture and milieu -- precisely the same approach that Apollonius has been urging on Damis. Indeed, Apollonius will later use this tactic on Menippus (who often takes the same place as Damis in conversations with the master), by rebuking him for his conventional preference for epic poetry over the simplicity of Aesop's fables (5.14-17).<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Although I refer to them as Brahmins, it is in fact unclear whether they are *sadhuis* or Buddhist monks, and the distinction would likely not have interested Philostratus.

<sup>109</sup> See Flinterman, *Power*, p. 103, for more on the philosophical practice of putting trenchant criticism of Greek culture into the mouths of non-Greek interlocutors.

Perhaps to Apollonius' relief, he is relieved from his duties as disciple to Iarchus by the arrival of a boorish Indian king (3:26). Now he is once again able to assume the role of teacher, under Iarchus' benign supervision, by talking the king out of his ignorant prejudice against Greeks. The normal order of things is completely restored when Damis, who has been waiting in the village below the Brahmans' settlement, is invited to join the company (3.34).

This episode is particularly illuminating for a number of reasons. The first is that it shows us that being a disciple in an ancient literary text is a role that different characters may play at different times. A disciple needs certain characteristics. Literal-mindedness and a tendency to rely on the 'common sense' of their culture are essential, since it allows the teacher to demonstrate deeper symbolic meanings underneath the literal or to question the prevailing logic of their own culture. Literal-mindedness is also helpful if the disciple is being cited as a source, since it tacitly supports the veracity of their account. Linked to this, a disciple often needs to display a Sancho Panzo-like earthiness and concern for the things of the flesh, perhaps even cowardice. This allows the teacher to demonstrate their ascetic qualities and courage.

Secondly, a student who grows as a person and develops their own ideas is, in the view of the ancient world as exemplified by Origen, betraying their master:

And since Celsus makes an ostentatious exhibition of philosophy, I would ask of him if, then, it was a charge against Plato, that Aristotle, after being his pupil for twenty years, went away and assailed his doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and styled the ideas of Plato the merest trifling? And if I were still in doubt, I would continue thus: Was Plato no longer mighty in dialectics, nor able to defend his views, after Aristotle had taken his departure; and, on that account, are the opinions of Plato false? Or may

it not be, that while Plato is true, as the pupils of his philosophy would maintain, Aristotle was guilty of wickedness and ingratitude towards his teacher? Nay, Chrysippus also, in many places of his writings, appears to assail Cleanthes, introducing novel opinions opposed to his views, although the latter had been his teacher when he was a young man, and began the study of philosophy. Aristotle, indeed, is said to have been Plato's pupil for twenty years, and no inconsiderable period was spent by Chrysippus in the school of Cleanthes; while Judas did not remain so much as three years with Jesus. (Origen, *Against Celsus*, Book 2:12)<sup>110</sup>

Origen is defending Jesus from the charge of being a bad teacher. Celsus is implying that he must have been, since Judas betrayed him. What the tone of Origen's defence suggests is that the literary ideal for the student is not, as it is today, to become an independent thinker but to accurately preserve the teachings of their master (as Damis wryly observes in 1:19, his task is to preserve even the crumbs that fall from Apollonius' table). Betrayal, for a disciple, can consist in this very independence of thought. This is connected to the ancient world's pronounced reverence for tradition and suspicion of innovation. A common criticism of Christianity was its newness as a religion.<sup>111</sup> For the same reason, Christian apologetic (including much of the gospels) often took the form of appeals to prophecy from the Hebrew Scriptures. The continuity with tradition that this tactic demonstrated was arguably as important as its dramatic demonstration of the divine will at work in the life and death of Jesus. Both Origen and Celsus suggest that Judas' betrayal can primarily be read in terms of a disciple rebelling against his master rather than the betrayal of a friend. Both types of betrayal are

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<sup>110</sup> Origen (trans. Frederick Crombie), *Against Celsus* in Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (eds.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 4 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885).

<sup>111</sup> For instance, the *Epistles* of Julian the Apostate, 55, or the way that Tacitus describes it as a faddish and disgraceful new cult in the *Annals* 15:44.

equally shocking to the sensibilities of the ancient world, but the dynamics of the two different types are very different.

Finally, discipleship is a fluid thing. Apollonius the teacher can become Apollonius the disciple. His confident wisdom and certainty can be turned into Damis' bewildered floundering in an instant. The moment of Apollonius' humiliation can be compared to Socrates' speech in Plato's *Symposium*. With characteristic self-deprecating wit, Socrates relates the story of his encounter with Diotima, who related to him the theory of the Forms in the same dialectic manner that Socrates himself employs throughout the Platonic dialogues, while Socrates for once plays the role of the confused and outmatched opponent.<sup>112</sup> Likewise, Luke's blundering Peter can become the confident teacher and miracle-worker of Acts. It is not necessarily that Peter's character has described an arc from student to teacher, as we would understand it today. This kind of progression was not necessary in the ancient world.

Damis continues to act as Apollonius' interlocutor, joined in Book 4 by Menippus, whom Apollonius saves from a female vampire in Corinth.<sup>113</sup> A typical example comes in the introduction to Apollonius' account of his meeting with the ghost of Achilles in 4.15. Apollonius' entourage aboard ship are discussing matters of seafaring and the history of the Mediterranean but Damis keeps impatiently interrupting the conversation. It is revealed that he is anxious to know the details of Apollonius' interview with Achilles. This is a very characteristic use of Damis. He comes across as impulsive, perhaps even boorish and inconsiderate but also refreshingly direct and motivated by understandable desires. Apollonius

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<sup>112</sup> The use of Diotima may be a device used by Plato to distinguish his own ideas from those of Socrates, just as Socrates' place as the primary thinker in the dialogues is increasingly taken by others. He has disappeared altogether by the time of Plato's final dialogue, the *Laws*.

<sup>113</sup> Philostratus draws attention to Menippus' weakness for women, which draws him into the vampire's trap. An implicit contrast is drawn with Apollonius' asceticism. See Cox on the importance of asceticism to the philosopher (Cox, *Biography*, pp. 25-26.)

has just met the ghost of the greatest hero in Greek history, and Damis very naturally wants to know what they discussed. In addition, Damis' question gives Philostratus a way to relate the story without inadvertently characterising his subject as a braggart. Apollonius makes it clear that he is telling the story upon request and not because he wishes to boast about his meeting with Achilles.<sup>114</sup>

Although Damis is earlier distinguished by his courage, he shows fear for his master in Book 7 when Apollonius openly opposes Domitian (7.11-14). Apollonius persuades Damis to abandon his Pythagorean style of dress, so he will not be arrested when Apollonius is put on trial.<sup>115</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith compares this incident to Peter's denial, saying that 'Like Peter, the last scene we have of Damis is a betrayal (7.15) –and like Peter, we have only the tradition that later reflection led to his final understanding.'<sup>116</sup> Although this section has been highlighting numerous interesting parallels between Damis and Peter, this particular claim seems a strained interpretation. In the first place, Damis' action is hardly a betrayal. He does it in accordance with Apollonius' instructions. Secondly, it is *not* the last scene featuring Damis. He is in prison with Apollonius throughout Book 7, and Apollonius rejoins him after his miraculous escape in Book 8.

Damis succumbs to despair when he and Apollonius are imprisoned by Domitian, and requires Apollonius to buoy his spirits up (7.22-26). Book 8 concludes Damis' alleged account by describing how Apollonius sent him with a letter to Nerva, the new emperor (8.28), in actuality, a ruse to get Damis out of the way because Apollonius knew that he was dying and wished to do so alone.

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<sup>114</sup> See Flinterman, *Power*, p. 82.

<sup>115</sup> Compare with Matthew 26:73, in which Peter's accent gives him away as a Galilean like Jesus.

<sup>116</sup> Smith, "Aretalogy" in Neusner, *Cults*, p. 27.

### 3.3 Plotinus and Amelius

The last of our parallel texts is Porphyry's *On the Life of Plotinus and the Arrangement of his Works*. Plotinus was a third-century Neoplatonist philosopher whose biography was written by Porphyry, one of his students.<sup>117</sup> Porphyry had joined Plotinus' circle relatively late, having previously studied under Plotinus' rival Longinus. It was not he but Amelius Gentilianus who seems to have been considered Plotinus' foremost pupil and natural successor. Edwards suggests that Porphyry thus had a natural and obvious motive for painting Amelius and other leading disciples within Plotinus' circle as fools who continually misunderstood the master.<sup>118</sup> By contrast, he presents himself as a paragon of understanding and intellect, showered with praise by Plotinus. There are clear parallels with the relationship between Peter and the beloved disciple in the Gospel of John.<sup>119</sup> But although this is, to a certain extent, clearly what is going on with Plotinus' portrayal of Amelius, it is also more complex than a single-minded and condemnatory image of Amelius as a buffoon, as Edwards seems to assume. I would argue, firstly, that Porphyry is making free use of the disciple archetype in his portrayal of Amelius, and that this should always be borne in mind.<sup>120</sup> Secondly, and furthermore, applying the

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<sup>117</sup> Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé points out that unlike all four gospels, Porphyry never uses the term μαθητής of any of Plotinus' students, preferring instead ἀκροατὰς, 'hearer' or ζηλωτής. ἀκροατὰς is used just four times in the New Testament (Romans 2:13; James 1:22, 1:23 and 1:25) and it is in all four instances negatively contrasted with ποιητής –it is better to be a doer of the word or the law than simply a hearer. Used as a noun, ζηλωτής appears four times –twice (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13) as the nickname of the disciple Simon; twice positively (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 3:13) in the context of encouragement. Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, "L'École de Plotin", in Luc Brisson (ed.), *Porphyre: La Vie de Plotin, I: Travaux Préliminaires et Index Grec Complet* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1982), pp. 236-38. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle all rejected the term μαθητής, as being inconsistent with their ideology of inherent knowledge, but it was widely used within the philosophical circles that succeeded them. See Richard N. Longenecker, Introduction, in Richard N. Longenecker (ed.), *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1996).

<sup>118</sup> Edwards, Introduction, *Neoplatonic Saints*, p. xxvi.

<sup>119</sup> These will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on John. As an odd side-note on this comparison, it may be mentioned that Amelius himself once quoted the opening of John's Gospel with apparent approval (Eus *P.E.* xi.19.1). See John M. Rist, "St John and Amelius", *Journal of Theological Studies* 20 (1) (1969), pp. 230-31.

<sup>120</sup> Amelius was, of course, known to Porphyry personally, but this does *not* mean that Porphyry would not use stereotypical features in his portrayal of Amelius. See the discussion of Tacitus and Agricola on pp. 54-55.

disciple archetype to a character, as we have discussed it in relation to Damis and others including Peter, is not necessarily an indictment. The archetypal disciple has positive qualities as well as negative, as Amelius does in Porphyry's work, but most of all, the archetype is used primarily as a literary device to advance the characterisation of the *master*, not the student himself.

Nothing illustrates this complexity better than the very opening of Porphyry's biography, his account of the portrait incident:

Plotinus, the philosopher our contemporary, seemed ashamed of being in the body. So deeply rooted was this feeling that he could never be induced to tell of his ancestry, his parentage, or his birthplace.

He showed, too, an unconquerable reluctance to sit to a painter or a sculptor, and when Amelius persisted in urging him to allow of a portrait being made he asked him, 'Is it not enough to carry about this image in which nature has enclosed us? Do you really think I must also consent to leave, as a desired spectacle to posterity, an image of the image?'

In view of this determined refusal Amelius brought his friend Carterius, the best artist of the day, to the Conferences, which were open to every comer, and saw to it that by long observation of the philosopher he caught his most striking personal traits. From the impressions thus stored in mind the artist drew a first sketch; Amelius made various suggestions towards bringing out the resemblance, and in this way, without the

knowledge of Plotinus, the genius of Carterius gave us a lifelike portrait. (*On the Life of Plotinus*, 1).<sup>121</sup>

This episode is worth discussing in detail, not least because Porphyry chose to open his biography of Plotinus with it. Edwards describes Amelius' actions as 'foolish and idolatrous' but a closer reading complicates this.<sup>122</sup> In the first place, while it is true that Amelius is ignoring Plotinus' wishes, he is at least motivated by devotion to his master – a praiseworthy quality in a disciple, and one shared by Damis and Peter. Amelius' fault, if it is a fault as such, is that he does not understand the higher plane on which Plotinus operates, and clings to earthly things such as his image. But this use of Amelius showcases his respect for Plotinus *as well as* his misunderstanding of him, and gives Porphyry a way of getting Plotinus to expound further on his philosophy. In other words, it is a very typical use of a disciple figure in Graeco-Roman biography.

In the second place, it is far from clear that Porphyry does in fact disapprove of the finished portrait, even though he shows that it was made without Plotinus' consent or knowledge. As Cox shows, the terms that Porphyry uses (Carterius works with fantasies, φαντασίας, rather than concrete images, and the final product is described as ἰνδάλματος τὸ εἶκασμα) suggest that the portrait itself is not simply a representation of the physical man but rather a symbolic portrait that accurately captures his spirit.<sup>123</sup> Amelius' stubborn refusal to honour his master's wishes has ultimately given the world something precious.

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<sup>121</sup> Plotinus and Porphyry (trans. Stephen MacKenna), *The Essence of Plotinus: Extracts from the Six Enneads and Porphyry's Life of Plotinus* (New York, NY: OUP, 1934).

<sup>122</sup> Edwards, Introduction, *Neoplatonic Saints*, p. xxvi.

<sup>123</sup> Cox, *Biography*, p. 108-09. Cox goes on to compare it to philosophical biographies like the one in which the story is contained. They are an attempt to create an accurate and sympathetic impression of the teacher in question, not to simply recount the factual details of his life.

The portrayal of Amelius continues, throughout the biography, in much the same vein. Amelius, in Porphyry's introduction to him in 3-4, is described as surpassing all others in diligence, taking extensive notes on all of Plotinus' seminars, but as lacking the courage to publish them.<sup>124</sup> Porphyry emphasises his own closeness to Plotinus later on, and draws attention to the fact that Plotinus gave him the task of revising his writings. Porphyry later reveals that it was his encouragement that led Amelius to write more extensively (18), and mentions that Amelius dedicated his refutation of the charge of plagiarism against Plotinus to him (17).<sup>125</sup>

In 10, it is mentioned that Amelius had taken to travelling around the temples on festival days, and unsuccessfully tried to persuade the vegetarian Plotinus to come with him. Edwards suggests that Amelius' apparent piety here is actually just a ruse to allow him to eat meat.<sup>126</sup> If this is the case, Amelius is falling into the familiar stereotype of the earthy, comfort-loving disciple shown up by his more ascetic and spiritual master.<sup>127</sup>

The implied superiority of Porphyry to Amelius is made clearer when Porphyry quotes his old teacher, Longinus, at length in 19-20. First of all, Longinus attributes his earlier disagreement with Plotinus to a misunderstanding of his teachings, based on the transcriptions that Amelius made. Porphyry's letters to Longinus have cleared this misunderstanding up. Porphyry goes on to quote Longinus comparing the two of them:

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<sup>124</sup> Edwards compares Amelius' habit of taking notes to the portrait episode. See Edwards, *Neoplatonic Saints*, p. 8. Amelius lacks confidence in himself rather than his master –he could be compared to Peter at the moment of denial.

<sup>125</sup> All this despite the fact that in the same passage, Porphyry attributes his conversion to Plotinus' teachings to Amelius' writings.

<sup>126</sup> Edwards, *Neoplatonic Saints*, p. 21.

<sup>127</sup> Richard Goulet reads this as not representing a literal attachment to the meat of the sacrifices on the part of Amelius, but a failure to appreciate the spiritual nature of pure philosophy, as opposed to cult ritual, amounting to the same characterisation. See Richard Goulet, "L'oracle D'Apollon dans le vie de Plotin" in Brisson (ed.), *La Vie de Plotin*, pp. 408-09.

Plotinus and Gentilianus Amelius alone display the true spirit of authorship; they treat of a great number of questions and they bring a method of their own to the treatment.

Plotinus, it would seem, set the principles of Pythagoras and of Plato in a clearer light than anyone before him; on the same subjects, Numenius, Cronius, Moderatus, and Thrasyllus fall far short of him in precision and fullness. Amelius set himself to walk in Plotinus' steps and adopted most of Plotinus' opinions; his method, however, was diffuse and, unlike his friend, he indulges in an extravagance of explanation.

Porphyry goes on to add, in reference to Longinus' estimate:

Notice, by the way, that while Amelius is described as following in Plotinus' footsteps, it is indicated that his temperamental prolixity led him to delight in an extravagance of explanation foreign to his master: in the reference to myself, though I was then only at the beginning of my association with Plotinus -- 'Basileus of Tyre [Porphyry], my friend as theirs, who has written a good deal, has taken Plotinus as his model'--Longinus recognizes that I entirely avoided Amelius' unphilosophical prolixity and made Plotinus' manner my standard.

With his description of Amelius' style as ἀφιλόσοφον, Porphyry could not have made the comparison between himself and his rival more pointed, and it is clear that he wishes to present himself as Plotinus' star pupil and is at some pains to account for this in reference to issues such as Amelius' seniority and perceived closeness to their master.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> See Goulet-Cazé, "L'École de Plotin", in Brisson (ed.), *La Vie de Plotin*, p. 249.

Porphyry is by no means universally negative in his portrayal of Amelius. He is shown as a loyal, eager, and devoted student of Plotinus and of providing valuable raw material in the form of his extensive notes. But according to Porphyry, it *is* only raw material, and he goes out of his way on several occasions to stress that Amelius' transcripts were defective (19); that Plotinus' unedited thoughts were confusing and difficult to parse on the page (8); and that only Porphyry was entrusted with the sacred task of making sense of them all (18). In other words, Amelius plays the same role as Damis does in Philostratus, even though the former was a friend and fellow student of the author, while the latter was a possibly fictional construct who in any case lived a century before Philostatus. But both Damis and Amelius are portrayed as earthy and 'unphilosophical', attached to the things of the flesh and to conventional ways of thinking. They are sources of material, but a superior interpreter is needed to make sense of that which they provide.

## Conclusion

The discussion of the historical material on both Judas and Peter has been relatively brief and by necessity has only touched upon some of the most heated debates (among them the question of Judas' surname and the nature of Paul's dispute with Peter in Antioch). However, for the purposes of this thesis, the significant point is how scant the material itself is, particularly on Judas.

It seems clear that while the early church bore a vivid recollection of the *fact* of Judas' betrayal, little else about him was preserved in the tradition. After all, it seems unlikely that, in the panic and confusion of the days following Jesus' arrest, any of the disciples would be in a position to learn very much about Judas' motivation for his action or the nature of his deal with the Temple authorities. As I mentioned in the section on Judas, it seems most likely to me that Judas informed on Jesus, particularly regarding the threats he made against the Temple, and perhaps that he testified at his trial. Judas vanished from history afterwards, and I find neither Matthew's account of his suicide nor Luke's of his accidental death to be likely to be historical.

As such, in dealing with Judas, the evangelists are not dealing with a great deal of historical information, nor is it likely that they assume much prior knowledge regarding Judas on the part of their audiences, other than the fact (repeated at almost every one of his appearances) that he handed Jesus over. Judas, instead, becomes a symbol for them, a symbol of the type of liar, informer, and charlatan who preyed upon members of their movement. It is with this understanding of Judas that we will be exploring the gospels.

Peter, on the other hand, seems to have been an undeniably prominent and important leader of the church. Paul, who has little reason to play up Peter's authority in either Galatians or 1 Corinthians, presents him as an acknowledged pillar of the church, the first witness of the risen Christ, and takes it for granted that his behaviour can be a model for apostles in general. Given that references to Peter's martyrdom appear as early as the writing of the epilogue of John's Gospel, it also seems very likely that he was indeed executed for his faith, and that this would have been well-known to Christian audiences.

The question is, is this relevant to the Peter we see in the gospel. Should he be read as the inhabitant of a self-contained narrative world, with only the information we are given about him in the narrative being relevant? This is the narrative critical approach. Or should we consider the extra-textual, historical Peter in our analysis, and look on the literary Peter as a commentary on the historical Peter? Which historical and literary expectations did the evangelists expect their audiences to retain, and which did they expect them to discard?

In the second part of this inquiry, I found that disciples in biography (and texts comparable in genre) have a number of uses as literary devices:

- 1) As real or imaginary sources for the biography. Damis is explicitly this for Philostratus' work, and Amelius provides the raw material from Plotinus' lectures which Porphyry edits. Peter is never given as the source of the Synoptics internally, but Papias gives Peter as Mark's source (and describes Mark's process in similar terms, either dismissively or defensively, to the way that both Damis' and Amelius' work as record-keepers is described). Ancient schools of thought did not, on the whole, present themselves as innovative and developing fields.

Instead, they prided themselves on accurately preserving the words of their founder (hence the importance of the concept of apostolic succession in the second century, as against the idea that the various Gnostic sects preserved secret teachings unknown to the apostolic church). Betrayal by a disciple in this context is distorting, misquoting, or turning against the master's teachings.

2) As foils to their master. Amelius and Damis are literal-minded people who never demonstrate any great insight but ask a great number of questions. This allows the teacher in question to expound on his theories at greater length, and also makes him appear more intelligent by contrast. In the same way, although to a less pronounced degree, the disciples tend to embody earthy, Sancho Panza-like qualities such as concern for their life (Damis), a tendency to both eat and talk too much (Amelius), or to drink too much (Alcibiades) or to be over-eager (Hippocrates). This highlights their teachers' spiritual qualities and noble courage. There are clear parallels with Peter's portrayal in all four gospels.<sup>129</sup>

3) As foils to others. Late on in his *Life*, Porphyry quotes Longinus in order to place himself and Amelius side-by-side and demonstrate his superiority as a philosopher and (implicitly) his greater worthiness to be considered heir to Plotinus. This mirrors the treatment of Peter and the Beloved Disciple in John's Gospel, from John 13:23 onwards.

4) To demonstrate their teacher's success and charisma. Based on our readings, the ancient philosopher can be distinguished by the devotion of his disciples (*not* by the quality of their

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<sup>129</sup> In a recent book, John R. Markley has argued that Peter's imperceptiveness and tendency to misunderstand in the Synoptic tradition is connected to the Jewish apocalyptic genre, in which the seer's confusion and failure to comprehend are used to heighten the sense of the divine mysteries he is receiving. Markley's argument can co-exist with the one presented here, since the evangelists must have drawn on both Greek and Jewish sources and the basic goal of the narrative strategy in both cases is the same: to emphasise the wisdom of the teachings being imparted. In particular, Markley's point that this form of depiction of the seer (or disciple) is *neutral*, and can in fact be used of greatly admired figures, is well-made and highly relevant to this thesis. See John R. Markley, *Peter – Apocalyptic Seer: The Influence of the Apocalypse Genre on Matthew's Portrayal of Peter* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).

intellects, it appears!).<sup>130</sup> Although other, less prominent disciples may abandon their master under pressure, Damis and Amelius are unshakably devoted to their masters, even if they do frequently misunderstand them or are confused by their teachings, while many of Socrates' followers remain loyal to him even in those dialogues set in the last days before his execution. This complicates our reading of Peter and Judas, since although Jesus inspires devoted loyalty in Peter, he ultimately denies him –and Judas performs a calculated betrayal. Particularly in the case of Judas, this may well be one of those instances in which literary convention comes into friction with undeniable historical tradition –and the evangelists can only do what they can to contain the damage to Jesus' standing as a teacher.

Bearing all of this in mind, this thesis will now turn to the Gospel of Mark.

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<sup>130</sup> On the shame of teachers abandoned by their disciples, see Bruce J. Malina, *Windows on the World of Jesus: Time Travel to Ancient Judea* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), p. 17.

## Chapter 3: Peter and Judas in Mark's Gospel

### Introduction

This chapter will attempt to determine the role played in Mark's Gospel by Peter and Judas. It seeks to trace the way that Mark interacts with and selects from the traditions which he has received regarding both disciples, and the way that the prior conceptions of these two and the prior discourse on them within the community are shaping his portrayal of them, as well as the way that their portrayal may reflect the contemporary debates and concern of Mark's day.<sup>1</sup>

My argument with regard to Peter has some bearing on Mark's notoriously abrupt and cryptic ending, and goes some way towards explaining it (although it is by no means trying to be some kind of 'unified field theory' of Mark's Gospel). Frank Kermode, Donald Juel, and Mary Thompson have all criticised those who attempt to force their own meaning on Mark through 'cunning and violence'.<sup>2</sup> I am sympathetic to this point of view. Mark's Gospel is a work of profound negative capability, in Keats' sense of the word, meaning its author is 'capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason'.<sup>3</sup> I have no wish to reduce its impact.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I use the pronoun 'he' to refer to Mark. This is in keeping with the convention of referring to the evangelist by the names assigned by later tradition (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Just as using these names does not mean I accept these traditional identity, using male pronouns does not mean I dismiss out of hand the possibility of female authorship in each case. It seems *more likely* that all the evangelists were male, given the marginal role of most female characters in the gospels, but it is worth keeping an open mind.

<sup>2</sup> Kermode's *Genesis*, Donald H. Juel, *A Master of Surprise: Mark Interpreted* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), and Mary R. Thompson, *The Role of Disbelief in Mark: A New Approach to the Second Gospel* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> John Keats, *The Complete Poetical Works and Letters of John Keats* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988), p. 277.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Fowler discusses the tendency among Biblical scholars to over-analyze instead of engaging with ambiguity in a witty and incisive discussion of the Henry James story "The Figure in the Carpet", in *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), pp. 147-54.

On the other hand, I also feel it is necessary to take seriously the original context, oral medium, and community setting of Mark's Gospel. In literary analysis such as that of Kermode and Juel, it is even now too frequently taken for granted that it is and always has been a text of the kind with which a modern reader is familiar.<sup>5</sup> Juel devotes an entire chapter of his persuasive and stimulating book to the dynamics of Mark's ending, without ever discussing its original form of delivery in any detail.<sup>6</sup> 'It was before your eyes that Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified', Paul says in Galatians 3:1, giving a striking testimony to the power and impact of the oral gospel. It is my contention that the community performance of the gospel, with the implications that have been outlined in the previous chapter, would have been a very different experience than the experience of the individual reading it, in particular with regard to the ending.

The first section will briefly outline the current state of discussion on Mark's date and location and indicate the preferences and assumptions of this thesis.

The second section will deal with Peter in Mark's Gospel, beginning with an overview of scholarly opinions on Mark's attitude to Peter and the nature of his sources regarding Peter. It will be followed with an analysis of Peter in the text of Mark, concluding with a discussion of the roles which the figure of Peter seems to play in the narrative and how this portrayal may be responding to events within Mark's community.

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<sup>5</sup> See Boomershine's "Peter's Denial" for a brief discussion of the significant difference that the medium makes.

<sup>6</sup> Juel, *Master*, pp. 107-21. The more recent edition of Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie's *Mark as Story* does include a section on orality and performance (pp. 146-55).

The third section will perform the same task for Judas, beginning with an overview of the literature on Mark's Judas and the major theories on the subject. It will then analyze Judas' role in Mark's Gospel, likewise concluding with a discussion of how and why the character is portrayed in the way that he is.

## 1. Setting and Context

Markan priority is generally considered as being as close to a certainty as anything within Biblical studies, as first definitively proposed in English by B.H. Streeter in 1924 (although the idea itself was already current in nineteenth century Germany, with versions of the idea having been proposed by Christian Gottlob Wilke, Christian Hermann Weisse, and Heinrich Julius Holtzmann).<sup>7</sup> The most notable recent attempt to revive the Griesbach hypothesis, which places Mark after Matthew, was led by William Farmer in 1964.<sup>8</sup> In a detailed review of the question, Christopher Tuckett considered the arguments of Farmer and others in favour of reviving the Griesbach hypothesis but ultimately failed to find the arguments in favour of the hypothesis persuasive.<sup>9</sup> As such, this thesis takes Markan priority for granted.

The date of Mark is disputed, although a general consensus has emerged that Mark most likely wrote during, immediately before or immediately after the Jewish War of 66-73 CE. This is primarily due to Mark 13:14-22, with its predictions of woe and conflict for Judea. It can be most plausibly read as a description of the war (or perhaps the imminent war), particularly the ‘abomination of desolation’ (τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως) of 13:14, an allusion to Daniel 9:27 and sometimes interpreted as the blasphemous presence of a Roman standard placed within the ruined Temple.<sup>10</sup> Not all scholars agree with this particular suggestion. Beasley-Murray, who wrote extensively on Mark 13, felt that much of the material in it could be traced back to Jesus himself.<sup>11</sup> More recently, N.T. Wright has concurred.<sup>12</sup> And Gerd Theissen has suggested that

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<sup>7</sup> See B.H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1953).

<sup>8</sup> William R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1964).

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Tuckett, *The Revival of the Griesbach Hypothesis* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983).

<sup>10</sup> Adding weight to the ‘Roman standard’ interpretation is the fact the verb used of the βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως is ἵστημι, ‘to cause to stand’. This implies that the abomination is not a living creature (perhaps describing Titus or some figure of eschatological evil such as 2 Thessalonian’s Lawless One) but something inanimate.

<sup>11</sup> Beasley-Murray, G.R., *A Commentary on Mark 13* (London: Macmillan, 1957), pp. 1-19.

<sup>12</sup> N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: Fortress, 1996), pp. 346-48.

the so-called Little Apocalypse of Mark 13 actually refers to and was written during the Caligula crisis of 40 CE, although it was revised after the Jewish War to add Jesus' prediction of the Temple's destruction in 13:2, with the abomination being the statue of himself that Caligula wished to erect in the Temple.<sup>13</sup> But again, general consensus favours the Jewish War as the context for Mark 13 and we may infer that the Gospel in its final form was also composed during this period, which is a date that this thesis accepts.<sup>14</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, setting the date of Mark's composition in this period is significant because, if we accept the tradition of Peter's martyrdom during Nero's persecutions of the mid-60s, Peter's death would have been a very recent event. Mark might even have known him, as the tradition of Papias quoted by Eusebius suggests.<sup>15</sup>

The setting of Mark has been traditionally linked to Rome, given the reference to Peter's 'son', Mark, in 'Babylon' in 1 Peter 5:13, and the evidence from Irenaeus.<sup>16</sup> Among others, Martin Hengel, Benoit Standaert, and Brian J. Incigneri have defended this traditional location for Mark, Hengel and Standaert with references to the Latinisms in the text of the Gospel, arguing that they are most plausibly explained by a Roman setting.<sup>17</sup> Hengel suggests that Mark even alludes to Peter's crucifixion under Nero in Mark 8:31-34, by juxtaposing Jesus' rebuke of Peter with his order for potential followers to take up their cross and follow him.<sup>18</sup> Others, such as Joel Marcus, have not been convinced by this evidence. Marcus argues that the evidence of

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<sup>13</sup> Gerd Theissen, *Gospels in Context*, pp. 125-165.

<sup>14</sup> Collins (Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), p. 14) argues that Mark must have been written in the middle of the war, after the rise of the messianic claimants alluded to in Mark 13:6, but before the destruction of the Temple (Collins argues that a post-facto prophecy of its destruction would have been more accurate in its details).

<sup>15</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*. 6.14.5-7.

<sup>16</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III:1. There is also a traditional link between Mark and Alexandria, since Mark was held by the Coptic Church to have founded the church there.

<sup>17</sup> Brian J. Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans: The Setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2003), Benoit Standaert, *L'Évangile selon Marc: Composition et genre littéraire* (Nijmegen: Stichting Studentenpers, 1978), Martin Hengel (trans. John Bowden), *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ* (London: SCM, 2000), p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> Hengel, *Gospels*, p. 79.

the Latinisms is not strong and also that there are problems with seeing the Neronian persecutions as Mark's inspiration for sections on persecution such as Mark 13.<sup>19</sup> In particular, Marcus argues, if Mark were describing the persecutions under Nero, one might expect a figure of demonic evil, representing Nero himself as the face of the persecution, at the centre of Jesus' prediction of the coming woes.<sup>20</sup> Marcus suggests that it is more plausible to think of Mark's references to persecution as being drawn from his community's localized experiences of anti-Christian violence.

A minority of scholars, notably Wili Marxsen and Werner Kelber, have located Mark in Galilee.<sup>21</sup> This makes sense of Mark's focus on Galilee and in particular of his emphasis on the need for the disciples to return to Galilee in Mark 16:7. However, Howard C. Kee has disputed this claim, citing the vagueness and inaccuracy of Mark's knowledge of Galilean geography.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, some scholars such as Marcus, Schenke, and Kee have proposed Syria as a location for Mark.<sup>23</sup> Marcus argues that a Syrian setting would explain Mark's access to many Jesus traditions and the details of his knowledge of the Jewish War, while still accounting for his vagueness on Palestinian geography.<sup>24</sup> This would also account for other peculiarities within the text, such as the Gentile woman of Mark 7:26 being described specifically as Συροφονίκισσα or Syro-Phoenician –the kind of distinction that might have mattered more to Syrians themselves than to outsiders. Marcus even goes so far as to suggest that when Jesus

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<sup>19</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, pp. 30-33.

<sup>20</sup> There is the βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως of Mark 13:14 but as already discussed, this is more likely to refer to an object than an individual.

<sup>21</sup> Willi Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1969), pp. 102-10, Werner Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark: A New Place and a New Time* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1974), pp. 129-47. Both theories will be discussed, in relation to Mark's attitude to Peter, below.

<sup>22</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, pp. 33-37, Ludger Schenke, *Das Markusevangelium: Literarische Eigenart – Text und Kommentierung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005), p. 41, Howard C. Kee, *Community of the New Age* (London: SCM, 1977), pp. 100-05. Adela Collins also favours an eastern setting (Collins, *Mark*, pp.10).

<sup>23</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, pp. 33-37, Kee, *Community*, pp. 100-05.

<sup>24</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 36.

predicts his Judean followers fleeing to the mountains, Mark specifically has his own community's location in the Syrian hills in mind.

This thesis remains agnostic on the question of Mark's location. I find arguments for both Rome and Syria persuasive (much more so than Galilee), but ultimately doubt that the Gospel holds sufficient internal evidence for its location to be determined one way or another. The question is relevant to the purposes of this thesis since, as mentioned above, depending on location as well as date, there is a possibility that Mark and his community were personally familiar with Peter, to be borne in mind when considering his portrayal throughout the gospel.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See Francis Watson's comments on these traditions, in the context of Augustine's writings, in *Gospel Writing: A Canonical Perspective* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2013), pp. 16-21, and Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 23.

## **2. Peter**

### **2.1. Overview: Mark's Attitude towards Peter**

What is Mark's attitude towards Peter? Can we grasp an understanding of feelings of the community behind him with regard to Peter? Is he understood as a universally respected 'pillar of the church', a towering figure only made more impressive by a frank recounting of his early struggles and mistakes? Is his attitude more akin to that displayed by Paul: formal respect for Peter's position in the church hierarchy balanced by a clear-eyed awareness of the apostle's personal flaws? Or can Mark be understood as entirely dismissive towards Peter and attempting to undermine his putative authority in every way?

Mark's Gospel is the earliest gospel and the foundation of that of Matthew and Luke (and possibly that of John). As such, his own attitude to Peter, that of his sources and that of his implied audience are of critical importance. It is easier to chart the attitudes of the other gospels towards Peter by noting the way their portrayal of him differs from that of Mark (for instance, the way that John places him alongside and contrasts him with the beloved disciple). As discussed in the previous chapter, in understanding the historical context, that is the pre-existing knowledge of and expectations for Peter possessed by Mark's audience, the apparent tone of Peter's portrayal may change dramatically.

Broadly speaking, scholarship has been divided into two schools of thought on Mark's attitude towards Peter. Both positions will be outlined in the following discussion. Some consider him and his community to be outright hostile towards Peter. Mark's portrayal of Peter is an attack on the apostle, an attempt to undermine his authority. In this case, the context is the unspoken

alternative to Peter which Mark is presenting, presumably exemplified by Jesus' behaviour in the gospel and by Mark's own group in the present. The second group asserts that Mark's community is sympathetic towards Peter, even admire him and see him as a role model. His portrayal in the gospel as cowardly, rash, and thick-headed has the pastoral aim of encouraging faltering believers. In this case, the relevant context is the audience's awareness of Peter's rehabilitation, which does not take place in the text itself.<sup>26</sup> There is, of course, also the possibility that Mark combines traditions from sources that take both attitudes but this thesis assumes that Mark was in sufficient control of his text that his own personal attitude towards Peter will be predominant throughout it.<sup>27</sup>

### **Mark as Hostile Towards Peter**

Alfred Loisy's blunt statement summarises the attitude of many scholars towards Mark's portrayal of Peter: 'Memories of Peter? The idea is out of the question. In Mark's Gospel Peter is not a source of information but an object of almost constant abuse.'<sup>28</sup>

Peter, and by extension the other disciples, is portrayed as a graceless, bumbling buffoon, a student who repeatedly fails to understand his master, and who boasts of his loyalty but fails disastrously when it is put to the test. Randel Helms calls Mark's focus on the disciples' inadequacy 'almost obsessive'.<sup>29</sup> According to this point of view there is no possible way that Mark can have admired Peter or considered himself and his community heirs to Peter in any way.

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<sup>26</sup> Although Eduard Schweizer sees Peter's tears after the denial as a highly condensed redemption narrative. See Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1971), p. 332.

<sup>27</sup> See Thompson's defence of the fundamental coherence of Mark as a narrative. Thompson, *Disbelief*, pp. 9-12.

<sup>28</sup> Loisy, *Origins*, p. 362.

<sup>29</sup> Helms, *Gospel Fictions*, p. 109.

As discussed in the Introduction, the classic answer to this question was formulated by F.C. Baur and the Tübingen School, who posited a radical split between Gentile (Pauline) Christianity and Jewish (Petrine) Christianity in the early days of the church, based on Paul's description of the conflict between himself and Peter in Galatians. Baur suggested that the New Testament itself was a patchwork of contrasting Pauline and Petrine texts, with some eirenic texts (such as the Epistle to the Hebrews) written a generation after the real conflict and aimed at bridging the divide between the two factions.<sup>30</sup>

Baur saw Mark as a Pauline text, aimed at discrediting Peter.<sup>31</sup> Baur believed that Mark had based his account on that of Matthew, the earliest gospel, but inserted material painting a much harsher picture of Peter because of Mark's own Paulinist views.<sup>32</sup>

Writing almost seventy years later, S.G.F. Brandon conceded that the 'extravagant theories' of the Tübingen School went too far, but felt that the portrayal of Peter and the other disciples (along with Jesus' family and the Jewish religious leaders) did reflect a real divide between Jewish and Gentile Christians.<sup>33</sup> In Brandon's view, Mark consciously belonged to the Pauline school of theology, and even made a knowing reference to the split between Paul and Peter with Mark 10:31: 'But many are first who will be last, and the last will be first' (πολλοὶ δὲ ἔσονται πρῶτοι ἔσχατοι καὶ ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι).<sup>34</sup> In Brandon's view, the conflict between Peter and Paul ended with defeat for Paul during his lifetime. For Brandon, the all-important

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<sup>30</sup> F.C. Baur (trans. Allan Menzies), *The Church History of the First Three Centuries* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1878), p. 26.

<sup>31</sup> See B.W. Bacon, *The Gospel of Mark* (New Haven, CT: YUP, 1925), pp. 221-61, for an account of the possible Paulinist features of Mark's Gospel. Joel Marcus has more recently discussed this in "Mark: Interpreter of Paul?", *NTS*, 46 (4) (2000), pp. 473-487.

<sup>32</sup> Baur, *Church History*, p. 26.

<sup>33</sup> S.G.F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (London: SPCK, 1951), p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> Brandon, *Fall*, p. 201. Note, however, Mark's use of the plural.

historical context of Mark's Gospel is the fall of Jerusalem, which he feels must have happened before the gospel was written.<sup>35</sup> Brandon suggests that the original Jesus movement was far more invested in Jewish nationalist aspirations than Mark would like, and that the Jewish Christians such as Peter and James continued this tendency, while the Gentile Christians followed Paul in disavowing it in favour of a universalist theology.<sup>36</sup> For these Christians, among them Mark, the fall of Jerusalem was a dramatic vindication of their beliefs. Mark, in writing his gospel, is deliberately setting out to separate Jesus from all ties to Jewish heritage and tradition. His disciples, in particular with regard to their messianic expectations, embody these traditions and are unflatteringly portrayed.<sup>37</sup>

Loisy subscribed to a similar theory, but in his view the conflict was as much generational as it was cultural. Drawing on Albert Schweitzer's theory of 'thoroughgoing eschatology', Loisy proposed that Peter, the other disciples, and Jesus' own family based themselves in Jerusalem after Jesus' crucifixion, there to await the imminent coming of the Kingdom.<sup>38</sup> They had little interest in missionary activity or outreach to the Gentiles. Paul influenced a movement to a more mystical and less eschatological understanding of the nature of Jesus' sacrifice, in a manner comparable to Origen's metaphorical understanding of the eschaton in the third century. Mark, part of this tradition, mercilessly satirises Peter for his failure to understand Jesus as Mark's generation does.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Brandon, *Fall*, p. 185.

<sup>36</sup> Brandon, *Fall*, pp. 198-9.

<sup>37</sup> Brandon, *Fall*, pp. 197-8.

<sup>38</sup> 'Thoroughgoing eschatology' has become the standard English translation of Schweitzer's phrase, *konsequente eschatologie*, even though 'consistent eschatology' would seem much more self-explanatory.

<sup>39</sup> Loisy, *Origins*, p. 363. Loisy's theory resembles Wrede's 'messianic secret' theory in some ways, which posits later developments in Christian thought projected back into Jesus' career via the mechanism of the messianic secret.

Influenced by Heikki Raisanen, Gerd Theissen has also tentatively proposed a theory that the disciples represent the original itinerant charismatic followers of Jesus, and Mark's criticism of them reflects the conflict between them and the second generation of settled Christians.<sup>40</sup>

Joseph Tyson's theory was also broadly compatible with the Tübingen School point of view.<sup>41</sup> He thought that the central issue was between a royalist, nationalist 'Son of David' understanding of Jesus' nature as a messiah, and the theology of Paul, in which Jesus' suffering and death were paramount. The disciples and Jesus' family had established themselves in Jerusalem and were attempting to carry on Jesus' project. In Tyson's view, Mark is writing against this hierarchy. In order to undermine their status as witnesses, he writes of how followers such as Peter failed to comprehend Jesus' teachings, particularly those related to his suffering and death (Mark 8:31; 9:12; 10:32-34) because of their focus on power and glory.

More recently, Robert Price has reintroduced the Peter vs. Paul theory, arguing that Peter's denial was fabricated by Mark in order to even him out with Paul, the former persecutor of the church.<sup>42</sup> This posits a very different view. In this theory, the introduction of the denial is comparable to the activities of modern-day iconoclasts, unearthing or fabricating dents in the reputation of widely respected figures such as Gandhi, Mother Teresa, or Martin Luther King. The context is of widespread respect for Peter, which the story of the denial aims to deflate. Going in the other direction, Schwegler suggested in 1846 that Peter's martyrdom was itself a myth invented by the Petrine or Ebionite faction to secure their founder's authority.<sup>43</sup> Moving

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<sup>40</sup> Gerd Theissen, *Gospel Writing*, p. 35. It should be noted that Theissen has simply proposed the idea as a possibility.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph B. Tyson, "The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark", *JBL* 80 (1961), pp. 261-68.

<sup>42</sup> Robert M. Price, *The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man* (New York, NY: Prometheus, 2003), p. 196. Price suggests that the only thing that palliates the scale of Peter's betrayal in Mark is its proximity to the even worse betrayal of Judas.

<sup>43</sup> Smith, *Petrine Controversies*, p. 30.

further away from any sense of the historical figure, some theories have argued that Peter is used in the Gospel of Mark as a figure representative of a rival Christian group or school of thought of which Mark disapproves.<sup>44</sup> But even this presumes a set of expectations for Peter on the part of the audience. The historical Peter must be seen as representing these negative values in some way, or else his use is meaningless.

Werner Kelber explains Mark's hostility towards Peter by situating the writing of Mark's Gospel in Galilee at the end of the Jewish War.<sup>45</sup> The parousia has failed to manifest, contrary to the Jerusalem church's expectations, and Mark accounts for this by declaring that Jesus' prophecies were misinterpreted and misunderstood by his disciples, chief among them Peter, who represent the Jerusalem leadership of Mark's day.

Theodore Weeden is also among those who have argued for a relentless hostility on the part of Mark towards Peter.<sup>46</sup> According to him, Peter's denial represents his final and utter rejection of Christ, with no hope of rehabilitation afterwards.<sup>47</sup> Weeden bases this on his own view of the historical context of Mark's Gospel, one in which eschatological hopes are beginning to fade. Mark has replaced them with a theology of suffering and the cross, but recent interlopers have gained popularity for their θεῖος ἀνὴρ ('god man') doctrine, which focuses on secret knowledge, Jesus' mighty deeds and triumph over his tormentors. According to Weeden's theory, Mark satirizes these people by writing them into his gospel as Peter and the other

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<sup>44</sup> Much as Matthew's detailed references to the Pharisees are often seen as being drawn from the struggles of his own community with the young rabbinic movement. As Wiarda points out, these criticisms begin to lose any sense of the historical Peter. See Wiarda, *Peter*, pp. 25-6.

<sup>45</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, pp. 129-47. See also his article "Mark 14:34-42: Gethsemane: Passion Christology and Discipleship Failure", *ZNW* 63 (1972).

<sup>46</sup> Theodore J. Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1971), pp. 23-6.

<sup>47</sup> Weeden, *Mark*, p. 39.

disciples, thirsty for miracles and impatient with Jesus' references to his own suffering and death.<sup>48</sup>

All of these theories, as diverse as they are, rest on a single foundation. This is the idea that Mark self-evidently dislikes Peter (or the ideas he feels Peter represents) and wishes to show him in the worst possible light. Weeden, indeed, suggests that only a pious interest in presenting the early church as harmonious has prevented this being more generally acknowledged in biblical scholarship.<sup>49</sup> Now, as I have argued, we cannot presume to understand Mark's attitude to Peter purely on the basis of what he writes about him in the gospel. There must also be an unspoken understanding between him and his audience about Peter and what Peter represents. Depending on the unspoken context, identical material can be understood in radically different ways. But is it even necessarily the case that Mark's portrayal of Peter is blatantly hostile? Timothy Wiarda has shown, in an impressive literary study of the gospels, that Peter's behaviour is part of a larger pattern involving many different characters of positive intentions followed by reversed expectations in Mark.<sup>50</sup> The previous chapter has also shown that Peter's behaviour recognisably fits into the literary archetype of disciple in the Graeco-Roman world, in which part of the point is not to characterise the disciple at all, whether positively or negatively, but to show the impressive qualities of the teacher (or sometimes a fellow disciple).

In particular, the work of the Tübingen School has long been recognised as too much based on the putative analogy with the divide between Protestantism and Catholicism.<sup>51</sup> Just as Albert Schweitzer's chroniclers of Jesus loved to cast their hero in their own image, Baur and his

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<sup>48</sup> Weeden, *Mark*, pp. 159-68.

<sup>49</sup> Weeden, *Mark*, p. 24.

<sup>50</sup> Wiarda, *Peter*, pp. 72-91.

<sup>51</sup> There is also the difficulty that the Griesbach hypothesis of Mark's dependence on Matthew, rather than *vice versa*, is accepted by very few scholars today. But the question of Mark's originality is not an essential part of Baur's argument regarding his sentiments towards Peter.

followers portrayed the triumphant, charismatic Protestant Paul, rejecting and casting off the chafing fetters of the Law, against timorous, conservative Catholic Peter and the forces of traditional authority. Since then, the work of scholars such as E.P. Sanders has done much to explode the understanding of Paul's relationship with the law on which this theory is based.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, Baur's theory is still undeniably 'intellectually forceful and elegant', as Bockmuehl has put it.<sup>53</sup> Baur's rigid, monotone understanding of culture and ideology may now seem outdated and even naïve; his disciples' interest in promoting a Protestant Paul may now seem transparent, but there is still a stimulating grandeur in their distillation of the entire New Testament as an epochal clash between personalities and ideologies. And the idea of early church history, and in particular Peter's treatment in the gospels, being dominated by Jewish versus Gentile Christianity is still current in some circles. Historian Michael Grant, for instance, relies heavily upon this theory in his 1994 *life of Peter*.<sup>54</sup>

Loisy, on the other hand, came from the other side of the ideological divide, as a Catholic priest (though an eccentric and eventually excommunicated one). Loisy seems a kind of godfather to the tradition of Catholic or sometime Catholic scholars such as J.D. Crossan and Jack Miles – unusual, imaginative, provocative, and often deeply political writers. His view of the New Testament's origins in general is bracingly sceptical, even caustic, and could be summarised as the record of a chain of misunderstandings of Jesus set in motion by his first followers. But it is, paradoxically, too confident in its scepticism. If Baur is projecting his awareness of the struggle between Protestantism and Catholicism into the past, Loisy is surely similarly influenced by his own experience of censorship and eventual excommunication at the hands of the church. In his account, gospels are written and rewritten, testimonials are forged and past

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<sup>52</sup> See E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984).

<sup>53</sup> Bockmuehl, *Remembered Peter*, p. 65.

<sup>54</sup> Grant, *Peter*, p. 62.

leaders smeared, all to serve the ends of factions within the church. This hypothesis suggests a much greater coherence to the church and control of its transmission of tradition than seems to have existed in the first century.<sup>55</sup> Loisy particularly overstates his case in describing Mark's Peter as the object of near-constant abuse. Peter is no such thing in Mark's Gospel, as the following analysis of his portrayal aims to demonstrate.

As already shown, Werner Kelber's argument falls down on his supposition that Mark was based in Galilee, despite the evidence regarding Mark's lack of knowledge of Galilean geography. As for Weeden, the difficulty with his thesis is the elaborate backstory which he proposes for Mark's Gospel, going far beyond the evidence we possess. In addition, the idea of the disciples being used for the purposes of satire is not satisfactory. Weeden accounts for the varying tone of the disciples' portrayal by suggesting that this is their character arc in Mark's Gospel. They begin positively inclined towards Jesus and eager to learn, they are gradually forced away from him because of their misunderstanding of his message, until his arrest in Jerusalem brings about their final and permanent separation from him. Critics often attribute this kind of smooth, carefully-planned character development to various features of Mark's Gospel but it often seems like a species of wishful thinking. Mark is a competent storyteller but good storytelling and detailed characterisation are not mutually necessary.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, propulsive and energetic storytelling such as that of Mark's Gospel is frequently ready to sacrifice characterisation in favour of action. When Judas betrays Jesus in Mark's Gospel,

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<sup>55</sup> See Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 43, on the relative anarchy of this period before the second century imposition of a single canon.

<sup>56</sup> John C. Meagher would deny that Mark is even a competent storyteller. See Meagher, *Clumsy Construction in Mark's Gospel* (New York, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1979). Although Meagher shrewdly compares the oral culture of literature in Mark's day to joke-telling in our own (and compares Mark to a stumbling storyteller who has often missed the point of the joke entirely), he neglects a vital feature of Mark's Gospel, which is the sheer power Mark's 'clumsy' Greek arrangements can evoke.

the important thing is *what* he has done, not why he has done it (the second question is one that by all appearances could not interest Mark less).<sup>57</sup>

Finally, a major difficulty with Weeden's thesis is that it seems confused. He seems to paint the hypothetical θεῖος ἀνὴρ opponents as proto-Gnostics of the kind that Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians, with the Gnostic interest in secret knowledge and mysteries. Mark's Gospel portrays Peter, and the other disciples, as earthy, literal-minded, and too concerned with the things of the flesh. This is the exact opposite of the Gnostic stereotype. Perhaps it could be argued that Mark is satirising their failure to live up to their own ideals, but this is tenuous. A satirical depiction has to bear some resemblance to its target if it is to be at all coherent.

### **Mark as Sympathetic Towards Peter**

The opposite point of view on Mark's use of Peter is to assume that both Mark and his audience hold Peter in very high estimation as a 'pillar of the church'.<sup>58</sup> Peter's authority, at least in this context, is unassailable. The negative depictions of him are not meant to undermine that authority but to encourage Mark's audience, perhaps under pressure from the authorities. Even Peter stumbled at first, Mark tells them. If the audience are aware of a tradition of Peter's martyrdom, the whole mental picture becomes satisfyingly complete. Peter's humiliating cowardice during the Passion will later be wiped away by his heroism in facing death for his master's sake. The audience are well aware of this and it is part of the unspoken context. As

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<sup>57</sup> 'The important thing is not what they want to do, nor how they feel, but their deeds as such, evaluated and defined from the viewpoint of their meaning for the hero and for the course of the action', as Propp put it of supporting characters in the Russian folktale. Vladimir Propp (trans. Laurence Scott), *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin, TX: UTP, 2011), p. 81.

<sup>58</sup> Representing this point of view, see, for instance, Cecil Emden's "St. Mark's Debt to St. Peter", *CQR* 154 (1953).

Cranfield puts it, ‘Mark’s frankness, which earlier would have seemed malicious, would after Peter’s martyrdom be welcomed as underlining the encouragement it gave to weaker disciples.’<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the idea of Peter’s martyrdom being ‘needed’ to correct or balance his depiction in Mark’s Gospel is such a natural one that it appears in non-canonical texts such as the Acts of Peter and that reference to it is made in John’s Gospel (John 21:19). But the question must still be asked: why is it unspoken? If Mark’s intention is to encourage his audience by presenting them with a role-model with whom they are intended to identify, why does he abandon that role-model in tears in Caiaphas’ courtyard, a reunion promised but never shown?

Those who place weight on the link that Papias suggests between Peter and Mark favour this positive interpretation of Peter. A Peter even partially responsible for the contents of Mark’s Gospel becomes a very attractive figure –both honest and modest to the point of self-laceration, a kind of first century Augustine.<sup>60</sup> Cranfield was of this view, seeing Mark as an associate of Peter’s writing after his martyrdom.<sup>61</sup> As Philip Carrington put it: ‘Peter, the man who fell by the wayside, had since become the great apostle and master of the tradition. He had recently died as a martyr in Rome, and departed to his appointed place of glory, as Clement expressed it. The story was not repeated in the pages of Mark, but it was in everybody’s mind.’<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Cambridge: CUP, 1939), p. 8.

<sup>60</sup> This point of view occurs as early as the fourth century, in Eusebius’ *The Proof of the Gospel* 3.5 (although it takes Peter’s witness for granted): ‘Surely, then, men who refused (to record) what seemed to them to spread their good fame, and handed down in writing slanders against themselves to unforgetting ages, and accusations of sins, which no one in after years would ever have known of unless he had heard it from their own voice, by thus placarding themselves, may justly be considered to have been void of all egoism and false speaking, and to have given plain and clear proof of their truth-loving disposition.’ It will be remembered that the self-effacement, not to say self-loathing, that this would require is exactly the reason why Loisy was so dismissive of the idea that Peter was the source of Mark’s Gospel. One might compare this conception of Peter with Paul’s description of his past life as a persecutor of the church in Galatians 1:13. Paul’s tone is strikingly free from self-reproach.

<sup>61</sup> Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 6. On the other hand, Brandon (*Fall*, p. 196), argues that ‘even if the personal desire of such men to humiliate themselves by commemorating their failures is allowed for, it is improbable that their followers would have been desirous of perpetuating the memory of such bygone lapses.’ Here we enter the difficulties of what is and is not ‘improbable’ for people, particularly people of a very different literary and social culture, to do.

<sup>62</sup> Philip Carrington, *According to Mark: A Running Commentary on the Oldest Gospel* (Cambridge: CUP, 1960), p. 319.

More recently, Thomas Boomershine has argued that Peter must have been the original source for the story about the denial, without making any claims for his connection with Mark: ‘I doubt that this story would have become a cornerstone of the tradition unless Peter told it and permitted it to be told about him.’<sup>63</sup> Boomershine compares Peter to Paul, relating the story of his former persecution of the church.<sup>64</sup> Responding to Kelber’s theory of Mark’s anti-Petrine stance, Boomershine argues that, if one takes into account the original oral context of Mark’s Gospel, the stories about Peter’s failure do not seem to invite us to judge and condemn him, but rather to sympathize with him, as an ordinary, flawed person thrust into a difficult and demanding role. Peter as the source for Mark’s Gospel is also the position of Martin Hengel.<sup>65</sup> But Marcus points out a flaw in this theory, which is that it is evident from 1 Corinthians 1:12 and Galatians 11:13 (if not also Acts), that Peter during his lifetime was at the centre of many heated intra-church commentaries.<sup>66</sup> Is it likely that he would have so readily weakened his own position and given his opponents ammunition by publicizing negative stories about himself?

A frequent interpretation of the failures of Mark’s disciples is that they suffered from the general darkness and ignorance of the pre-Easter world. Robert Tannehill, however, dismisses this idea. He has used the techniques of narrative criticism to argue that Mark intends his audience to initially identify with the disciples, then be repelled by their failings, but as a means

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<sup>63</sup> Thomas Boomershine, “Peter’s Denial as Polemic or Confession: The Implications of Media Criticism for Biblical Hermeneutics”, *Semeia* 39 (1987), p. 60. Can there be any significance to Boomershine’s argument that Clement of Alexandria states that Peter, hearing of the composition of Mark’s Gospel “neither strongly forbid it, nor urged it on” (Eusebius, *Church History* 6.14.5-7)? Does Clement’s tradition here reflect early speculation on the part of Christians as to how Peter would have felt about his portrayal in Mark’s Gospel?

<sup>64</sup> Boomershine, “Denial”, p. 60. The analogy may be particularly apt. As will be seen later, Peter may have experienced a vision of the risen Jesus in Galilee that served as his own ‘road to Damascus’ moment.

<sup>65</sup> Hengel *Gospels*, pp. 81-2.

<sup>66</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 24.

of calling his readership to awareness of their own faults, rather than to criticize theological opponents.<sup>67</sup>

B.J. Oropeza likewise rejects the arguments of Weeden and Kelber, and believes that Peter is a figure with whom Mark's audience must be able to identify, although they must also ultimately reject that identification in order to try and surpass him as a disciple.<sup>68</sup> Oropeza argues that Mark's Gospel was written in Rome, during or shortly after Nero's persecutions of Christians in the mid-60s. Mark was addressing the Christians of his community –not just those who had stood firm under pressure but also those who had lapsed. He wants to demonstrate that it is possible to re-enter the church after lapsing under persecution, by giving Peter as an example. Judas is the counter-example, the traitor who not only seeks to save his own life but to profit from the persecution in the process.<sup>69</sup> The main difference between the two, however, is that Peter repents and Judas does not. Oropeza does not comment on any prior knowledge Mark's audience might have had of Peter. In his view, Mark's hearers would have understood that Peter was most likely restored to Jesus because of the 'glimmer of hope' held out in Mark 16:7.<sup>70</sup>

Although writing a work of social criticism, Oropeza follows the standard procedure of narrative criticism in deliberately ignoring the prior expectations and knowledge that Mark's audience might have had regarding the characters in the narrative, the prior discourse or historical context that this chapter hopes to determine. This is unfortunate because Mark 16:7

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<sup>67</sup> Robert C. Tannehil, "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role", *JR* 57 (1977), pp. 386-405. This is also the view taken by Stephen Smith in *A Lion with Wings: A Narrative-Critical Approach to Mark* (Sheffield: SAP, 1996), p. 58.

<sup>68</sup> Oropeza, *Footsteps*, p. 38.

<sup>69</sup> Oropeza, *Footsteps*, p. 38.

<sup>70</sup> 'But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' (ἀλλὰ ὑπάγετε εἰπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ ὅτι Προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν: ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν).

may be a verse of particular significance in determining the audience's context regarding Peter, which may perhaps be decisive in answering the question of just how we are to understand Peter's portrayal in Mark's Gospel.

Larry Hurtado has also argued for an over-all positive assessment of Peter within Mark's Gospel, making the very important argument that Peter's failure is only a temporary setback in what Mark's community would have understood as an ongoing story –we will return to this point later.<sup>71</sup>

I am more sympathetic to the idea that Mark and his community were positively inclined towards Peter, although I also feel that this is of less significance than some commentators assume. I reject the idea that Peter was the direct source for any of Mark's material.<sup>72</sup> Papias' testimony aside, there is very little evidence for this view and I am not convinced by the specious argument that only Peter could provide such scathing material about himself. This is very much the kind of sweeping generalisation that was common in much early twentieth century Biblical criticism.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Mark's Gospel is a biography which aims to exalt its subject, Jesus. In this genre, supporting characters (such as followers and disciples) exist to magnify and enhance the subject's good qualities.<sup>73</sup> In particular, their failures make the hero's successes shine all the brighter. This, in my view, is Peter's primary role in Mark's Gospel, with the

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<sup>71</sup> Larry Hurtado, "Following Jesus in the Gospel of Mark – and Beyond" in Longenecker, *Patterns*.

<sup>72</sup> Although Helen Bond recommends an open-minded but agnostic view on this question in "Was Peter Behind Mark's Gospel?" in Bond and Hurtado, *Peter*, pp. 46-61, and does provide some compelling points in favour. Adela Yarbro Collins, in *Mark*, pp. 2-6, places more weight on the evidence for some form of connection between Mark and *Paul* than Mark and Peter.

<sup>73</sup> Thompson, *Disbelief*, p. 23.

addition that he was also being used to comment on events and personalities within Mark's own setting. This chapter and the following chapter will make the case for this point of view.

## 2.2. Peter in Mark's Gospel

### The Call and the First Day (Mark 1:16-35)

In discussing Peter in Mark, it is impossible to avoid talking about the disciples in general. Peter in particular is not characterised as an individual as such.<sup>74</sup> He is the spokesman and representative of the disciples; he seems to stand for what is best and what is worst about them, and Mark's characterisation makes little or no distinction between Peter and the others. It will be noted that almost all of the arguments for a negative characterisation of Peter hinged on the idea that Mark was attacking the disciples in general, as representatives of the Jerusalem church.

Jesus' first meeting with Peter takes place at 1:16-18, where he calls Peter (then Simon) and his brother Andrew to join him. They immediately (καὶ εὐθὺς) drop their nets and follow Jesus. This can be taken as an initially positive characterisation of Peter and his brother, since they respond so quickly to the message. However, a few things should be borne in mind. Firstly, εὐθὺς is a typical Markan word and is very often used to link a sentence to the previous sentence. So many things happen 'immediately' in Mark's Gospel that the word should not be taken as indicating anything exceptional. He uses it forty-one times in total, including nine times in the first chapter, in which the encounter with Peter takes place.<sup>75</sup> Secondly, the initiative is all on Jesus' part in this encounter. Peter and Andrew do not say anything, and the

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<sup>74</sup> See Brown, Donfried and Reumann, *Peter*, p. 105. Timothy Wiarda argues against this idea in "Peter as Peter in the Gospel of Mark", *New Testament Studies*, Vol. 45(1) (1999), pp. 19-37, arguing that Peter is often distinguished from the other disciples in notable ways.

<sup>75</sup> Matthew, by contrast, uses it only five times despite his wholesale adaptation of Mark's text. Luke uses it just twice (Luke 6:49 and Acts 10:16) and John three times.

focus of the story is on Jesus' power to call who he wills, no matter what they are doing.<sup>76</sup> In the next paragraph, Jesus calls James and John, the other primary Markan disciples, and they leave their father in the boat to follow him.

Therefore, we can say little about Peter's characterisation in his first appearance. It is true that he responds to Jesus' message and that being willing to do so is a positive quality in Mark's Gospel. But he should not be read as being exceptionally willing to do so, or rather the fact that he is should be ascribed to Jesus' power and authority and not his own faith.<sup>77</sup> We are not given any motivation for Peter's action, in keeping with Mark's minimal use of motives in general. He is introduced as a pair with his brother Andrew, who drifts in and out of Jesus' inner circle throughout Mark's Gospel, and another pair of brothers and disciples, James and John, are introduced in the very next paragraph. Peter is therefore first introduced as part of a group and the representative of a type, something that informs his characterisation for the rest of the narrative. The story is intended to echo the terse drama of Elijah's call of Elisha in 1 Kings 19:19.<sup>78</sup> Jesus' demands are an intensification of Elijah's, however, since Peter and the others must immediately abandon their parents and livelihoods. Hengel argues that the original story in 1 Kings actually involved Elisha being *denied* permission to bid his parents farewell.<sup>79</sup> But, in any case, Mark would have been familiar with Elisha's call narrative as we have it now. Peter's initial characterisation is positive. His willingness to abandon his livelihood matches James and John's willingness to abandon their father in order to follow Jesus. Peter performs

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<sup>76</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), p. 90.

<sup>77</sup> Collins compares the response of Peter and the others to Jesus to Alcibiades' description of his own overwhelmed reaction to Socrates in the *Symposium* 216c - 223d (Collins, *Mark*, pp.158-59).

<sup>78</sup> Schweizer, *Mark*, p. 49. It is also common for prophets and others chosen by God to initially reject the call. See Moses' doubts over his calling in Exodus 4:10, the story of Gideon's call in Judges 6:11-18, Jeremiah's protest in Jeremiah 1:6 and, of course, the entire Book of Jonah.

<sup>79</sup> Martin Hengel, *Charismatic*, pp. 16-18.

the all-important act of faith in Jesus by abandoning his one source of income and sustenance at Jesus' command.<sup>80</sup>

Peter leads Jesus to his family home (Mark 1:29), which Jesus uses as a base of operations while he is in Capernaum. Peter's mother-in-law is sick with a fever and Jesus heals her (1:30-31). As Bockmuehl points out, it is highly unusual for a disciple's family to be featured in this way in the gospels.<sup>81</sup> Thompson describes the episode as 'curiously muted', hardly even recognisable as a miracle story.<sup>82</sup>

Peter next plays an active role in Mark 1: 35-37, when he and 'those with him' (καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ), perhaps specifically meaning James and John, go looking for Jesus in the morning after Jesus has slipped out to pray. This does strongly seem to suggest a negative characterisation of Peter, and the disciples in general. Their implicit rebuke of Jesus when they find him is a mark against them. The verb that Mark chooses for their search is also suggestive: κατεδιώξεν. This is typically the verb used for persecution. It is also a verb used to suggest the pursuit of enemies in battle (as in LXX Ps. 17.38). It could be ascribed to Mark's limited vocabulary but then in the next line he has Peter use the more neutral ζητοῦσίν to describe the disciples' search, arguing that the choice of κατεδιώξεν was deliberate.<sup>83</sup> An association, however implicit, between Peter and persecution this early on is potentially suggestive.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> See Scaria Kuthirakkattel, *The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry According to Mark's Gospel (1:14-3:6): A Redaction Critical Study* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1990), p. 114, on the simplicity and power of the call narrative.

<sup>81</sup> Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, p. 24.

<sup>82</sup> Thompson, *Disbelief*, p. 39.

<sup>83</sup> Luke's version (Luke 4:42-44) changes the searchers from Peter and the apostles to the crowds and substitutes the more neutral ἐπιζητέω.

<sup>84</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 202. Marcus also points out the irony of the fact that Jesus has only just the day before made Peter and his colleagues 'fishers of men' – and he becomes the target of their first hunt!

There follows the establishment of another pattern in Peter's characterisation. Mark alternates, seemingly without a significant distinction, between having Peter speak on behalf of all the disciples and ascribing speech to all of the disciples. Here, although Peter has led the group there, the exclamation 'Everyone is looking for you!' is ascribed to them all (λέγουσιν).

### **The Gathering of the Twelve (Mark 3:13-19)**

The gathering of the Twelve (Mark is unique among the evangelists in almost always referring to 'the Twelve', δώδεκα, and not to 'the twelve disciples' or 'the twelve apostles') in Mark 3:13 has Peter given his nickname, Πέτρος. From this point on, with remarkable consistency, Mark refers to Peter by this name (although Jesus refers to him as Simon one more time, in Mark 14:37). The Βοανηργές nickname for James and John is, by contrast, never used again in Mark.

The possible historical significance of Peter's nickname was discussed in Chapter 1 (p. 28). We do know that it, and its Aramaic equivalent, was indeed a name he went by and not simply Mark's invention, since this is how Paul refers to him in Galatians and 1 Corinthians (Paul uses both Πέτρος (Gal 2:8) and Κηφᾶς (Gal 2:11) to refer to Peter).

Mary-Anne Tolbert has claimed that Peter's nickname is given as a specific reference to the 'rocky ground' (πετρῶδες) of the Parable of the Sower of Mark 4:1-20.<sup>85</sup> The description of the seed sprouting up quickly, only to wither away under the heat of the sun, might indeed seem like an apt allegorical description of Peter's career as a follower of Jesus in Mark's Gospel.

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<sup>85</sup> Tolbert, *Sowing*, p. 145.

The image of unyielding rock was then taken in a completely different way by Matthew, who turned it into a positive, heroic feature of Peter's character (Matthew 16:18). However, there are problems with Tolbert's theory. One is that, as we have just seen, Peter's nickname predates Mark's Gospel. However, this would not necessarily prevent Mark from making this kind of punning use of it. The second is that later on, during an instance of grave failure on Peter's part (14:37), Jesus uses Σίμων rather than Πέτρος. This does not necessarily mean, as Saari has argued, that just using his old name counts as a form of rebuke in itself.<sup>86</sup> But if one accepts that the nickname Peter, in Mark, is meant to be a reference to Peter's failure, it does seem strange that its use is specifically avoided at such a moment. Finally, Tolbert assumes Mark's creative freedom in ordering and arranging the pre-Passion events of Jesus' ministry, as does this thesis. The Πέτρος /πετρῶδες pun would surely be more effective, particularly if we bear the oral nature of the Gospel's performance in mind, if the Parable of the Sower came *first*.<sup>87</sup>

Peter is next mentioned in 5:37, along with the brothers James and John, as the only people whom Jesus permits to come with him when he goes to raise the twelve year old daughter of the leader of the synagogue. This is the 'Triumvirate' of disciples (joined by Peter's brother Andrew for the Little Apocalypse) who are frequently mentioned as the recipients of secret knowledge or the witnesses of special revelation such as the Transfiguration or the Little Apocalypse. Brandon suggests that this may be because these are the only disciples about whom any significant knowledge survived by Mark's time.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Saari, *Judas Iscariot*, p. 51.

<sup>87</sup> The strong possibility that Mark's audience was aware of a tradition of Peter dying as a martyr also makes Peter being identified with the rocky ground much less plausible.

<sup>88</sup> Brandon, *Fall*, p. 48.

### The Confession at Caesarea (Mark 8:27-33)

Perhaps the most significant moment involving Peter in Mark's pre-Passion narrative is the confession at Caesarea (Mark 8:27-30). This has long been celebrated as Peter's personal epiphany, and it is sometimes pictured as a quiet, introspective and private moment between them. However, this is not how Mark portrays it.

Jesus asks his disciples as a whole who the people say he is; they reply as a whole (perhaps we should imagine them shouting out the people's different ideas, pantomime-style). He then asks them who they think he is. His use of the plural second-person form, λέγετε, confirms that he is not asking Peter specifically, nor does anything indicate that the setting has changed. When Mark has Peter responding, we should not take this as an individual insight on his part: he is acting, as Mark has established he does, as spokesman for the entire group. Jesus then commands the entire group not to tell anyone the answer they have just given; Peter is not, in Mark's Gospel, singled out for any individual accolade. Moreover, Juel suggests that Jesus' following rebuke is directly linked to Peter's announcement.<sup>89</sup> While Peter was correct in identifying Jesus as the Messiah, it may be a demonic insight rather than divine inspiration, since he refuses to accept that the Messiah must suffer and die. More positively, Peter is like the blind man of Mark 8:22-26, the immediately preceding section.<sup>90</sup> He sees, but as yet only partially.<sup>91</sup>

Nor is he portrayed as the sole offender in the very next scene, when Jesus predicts his death and resurrection and Peter rebukes him (Mark 8: 31-38). Jesus rebukes Peter as 'Satan' but he

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<sup>89</sup> Juel, *Master*, pp. 73-75.

<sup>90</sup> Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16* (New Haven, CT: YUP, 2009), p. 609.

<sup>91</sup> Compare with Jeannine K Brown's treatment of the disciples as a whole in Matthew, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), p. 149.

does so after turning to look at all of his disciples (ὁ δὲ ἐπιστραφεὶς καὶ ἰδὼν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ). The point of the clumsy phrase is surely to underline that Jesus considers all of his disciples to share in Peter's disgrace equally.<sup>92</sup> Saari suggests that Peter's 'rebuke' is actually an attempt to exorcise Jesus, whom he thinks must be possessed by an evil spirit to say such things.<sup>93</sup> Collins, on the other hand, envisions this scene as a brief power-struggle between Peter and Jesus, after Peter arrogates to himself the right to rebuke Jesus, as though Jesus were his disciple and not vice versa.<sup>94</sup>

### **The Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-13)**

The episode of the Transfiguration in Mark 9:2-13 features Peter, James, and John. It is far from clear what Peter means by offering to build shelters for Jesus, Elijah and Moses, although it is tempting to see Mark's line οὐ γὰρ ἤδει τί ἀποκριθῆ, ἔκφοβοι γὰρ ἐγένοντο as explaining it as meaningless, nervous babble. Bockmuehl argues that the line reflects well on Peter, in expressing his belief that Jesus is equal to Moses and Elijah.<sup>95</sup> Cox suggests that Peter wishes to maintain the presence of Elijah and Moses on Earth after the Transfiguration is over.<sup>96</sup> As with other episodes in Mark's Gospel, this reinforces the idea of Peter, James and John as Jesus' inner circle of disciples. Although it is Peter stumbling over his words, they are all frightened (ἐκφοβοί) and do not understand the situation, but fear can be a positive reaction to the experience of the divine in the Hebrew scriptures (see, for instance, the terror of Moses

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<sup>92</sup> Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, p. 25.

<sup>93</sup> Saari, *Judas*, p. 44. Note the then-possible reference to Mark 3:29, which curses those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, in the context of those scribes claiming Jesus is possessed.

<sup>94</sup> Collins, *Mark*, p. 407. Cranfield also takes this view, referring to Peter's manner in attempting to correct Jesus as 'patronising' (Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 279).

<sup>95</sup> Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, p. 134.

<sup>96</sup> G.E.P. Cox, *St Matthew* (London: SCM, 1952), p. 114.

himself in Exodus 3:6). Peter is once again the representative of larger problems within the group. In the Transfiguration, however, it is not that the disciples' reaction represents a failure, unless we take the exclamation of the voice from the cloud, ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ, as a rebuke.<sup>97</sup> There is no persuasive reason to do so. Rather, the disciples' fear and confusion is a literary technique, a means of emphasising the strangeness and grandeur of the Transfiguration, following a recurring theme in Mark.

### **The Rich Young Man (Mark 10:28-31)**

In Mark 10:28, after the ending of the episode of the rich young man, Peter points out that the disciples have left everything to follow Jesus. This seems unlikely to have been an original part of the story of the man of 10:17.<sup>98</sup> Although there are clearly thematic similarities (both episodes are concerned with the believers' need to abandon possessions), Peter's statement does not naturally follow on from what Jesus has just said, unless he is stressing that he and the other disciples have done exactly what the man of 10:17 could not do. While this is possible, this would turn the line into a simple assertion of superiority over non-disciples. This fits with some elements of the characterisation of Peter and the disciples as a whole.<sup>99</sup> It fits with James and John's desire for a place at Jesus' left and right hand in 10:35-40, with John's attempt to stop an exorcist from using Jesus' name in 9:38-41, and with Peter's claim that 'Even though all become deserters, I will not' (Εἰ καὶ πάντες σκανδαλισθήσονται, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγώ) in Mark 14:29.

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<sup>97</sup> Macdonald's view, for instance. See Macdonald, *Homeric Epics*, p. 96.

<sup>98</sup> D.E. Nineham, *The Gospel of St Mark* (London: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 273.

<sup>99</sup> It will be remembered that the position of this thesis is that Peter in Mark is *not* meaningfully distinguished from the other disciples in any way, so a characterisation that applies to him should be applied to all of the Twelve, with the possible exception of Judas.

However, Peter and the disciples are even more characterized by their earthbound mode of thinking, their often natural and realistic worries for the future, such as their fear of drowning in Mark 4:38 and their concerns over feeding Jesus' followers in 6:30-42 and 8:1-10. As we have seen in Chapter 2, this is characteristic of disciple figures in literature from antiquity. The most natural interpretation of Peter's concern is that he is drawing Jesus' attention to the sacrifices he and his fellows have made because he is fearful for the future, and wonders what reward awaits them.<sup>100</sup> Jesus' response is that by forsaking his birth family, he has made his way into the vast family of believers (and that he will gain eternal life). However, Jesus also adds the hardly reassuring, indeed almost sardonic, note that all of this comes 'with persecutions' (μετὰ διωγμῶν). The flat and awkward nature of this addition, has led many commentators to believe that this is a later addition to the text.<sup>101</sup> But in this final form, Peter is being warned that persecutions lie ahead and the reader is already given reason to question his resolve.

### **The Apocalyptic Discourse (Mark 13:1-37)**

Peter's next relevant appearance is in Mark 13:3, in which he, James, John, and Andrew ask Jesus to explain his prophecy of the Temple's destruction in 13:2.<sup>102</sup> This acts as a prompt for

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<sup>100</sup> See Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, p. 119.

<sup>101</sup> Nineham, *Mark*, p. 276. See also Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (2 vols.) (Freiburg: Herder, 1976), p. 2.145.

<sup>102</sup> A question still remains as to whether Mark 13:2 should be read as an introduction to the Little Apocalypse material, or a conclusion to the material that it precedes, the long section of debates and controversies set in the Temple between Mark 11:27 and 12:44. It is natural to see Mark 13:2 as an introduction to the Little Apocalypse, because it begins the chapter which contains the Little Apocalypse, but obviously chapter and verse arrangement were not made by Mark himself. Mark 13:2, with its prophecy of the Temple's utter destruction made as Jesus leaves the Temple, never to return, also forms an attractive and natural conclusion to Jesus' long day of heated controversy and rejection inside the Temple courts. See Boring, *Mark*, p. 353.

Jesus to recite the verses of the so-called Little Apocalypse (13:3-37), a speech of unprecedented length from Mark's otherwise laconic and cryptic Jesus.<sup>103</sup> The use of Peter and the others, however, is quite typical in that they afford Jesus an opportunity to expand on and clarify a single ambiguous saying, although it is worth noting that Jesus never answers the question itself.<sup>104</sup> They also once again act as guarantors of a tradition. Verses 9-13 of the Little Apocalypse clearly seem to indicate a period of Christian persecution in or in the immediate past of Mark's audience.<sup>105</sup> 13:12, καὶ παραδώσει ἀδελφὸς ἀδελφὸν εἰς θάνατον καὶ πατὴρ τέκνον, καὶ ἐπαναστήσονται τέκνα ἐπὶ γονεῖς καὶ θανατώσουσιν αὐτούς, is particularly interesting from the point of view of this thesis, and will be returned to later on in this chapter, in the section on Judas.

The prompt for the prophecy of Mark 13:2 is in itself a highly characteristic use of the disciples. Matthew and Luke, who also include accounts of this incident, make the exclamation more dignified in their own ways. Matthew, in Matthew. 24:1, has the disciples simply 'pointing out' the buildings of the Temple, perhaps in protest at his lament over Jerusalem in the immediately preceding verses (οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἐπιδείξαι αὐτῷ τὰς οἰκοδομὰς τοῦ ἱεροῦ).<sup>106</sup> Luke's interlocutors (not specified as disciples) are described as praising the beautiful stones and gifts to God adorning the Temple (ὅτι λίθοις καλοῖς καὶ ἀναθήμασιν κεκόσμηται). But Mark's disciples, ever the country boys, ask Jesus to admire the 'big rocks' of the Temple (ἴδε ποταποὶ λίθοι καὶ ποταπαὶ οἰκοδομαί).<sup>107</sup> Of course, Mark's own vocabulary is limited, but this wide-eyed, oafish expression of awe, wildly inappropriate for their teacher's mood, is a perfect

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<sup>103</sup> Note that it has been argued that the prophecy of the Temple's destruction and the Little Apocalypse were originally separate traditions. See Collins, *Mark*, pp. 598-9.

<sup>104</sup> Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 738.

<sup>105</sup> Boring, *Mark*, p. 364.

<sup>106</sup> G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Commentary*, p. 21.

<sup>107</sup> Collins, *Mark*, pp. 600-01. The translation of 'big rocks' is not literal, since the disciples simply exclaim at the stones themselves, but their size is implicit.

example of Mark's sardonic attitude towards the disciples. Mark's characterisation is pointed but the disciples' portrayal is still far from malevolent.

In summary, before the Passion, Peter is used to represent the best and the worst of the disciples' character. His individual personality is muted; when he responds well to Jesus, when he complains (as in 10:28), when he refuses to hear Jesus' prophecies of doom, he is doing so as a disciple and as an explicit or implicit representative of the other disciples. He is certainly not singled out as an exceptional failure. Most of the criticisms of the 'negative' camp imply a better example of a way to follow Jesus. This is provided in passing in Mark's Gospel but never in a completely unambiguous way.<sup>108</sup> In addition, the apparent repeated use of Peter and the other disciples (particularly James, John, and sometimes Andrew) as guarantors of the tradition argue that Mark's literary relationship must, at least, have been more complicated than pure detraction.

### **The Passion (Mark 14:29-16:8)**

The first mention of Peter in Mark's Passion comes after the Last Supper, in Mark 14:29. Jesus quotes Zecariah 13:7 in 14:27: Πατάξω τὸν ποιμένα, καὶ τὰ πρόβατα διασκορπισθήσονται, predicting that all of the disciples will 'become deserters' (σκανδαλισθήσεσθε) and telling them that after he has risen, he will go on to Galilee, a line which Bultmann identified as an interruption in the continuity of the passage.<sup>109</sup> Peter indignantly denies Jesus' assertion, claiming that he will stay true to the last. Jesus prophesies that Peter will deny Jesus three times

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<sup>108</sup> On the idea of the 'little people' as foils to the disciples, who surpass them in understanding in some ways, see Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, pp. 130-35.

<sup>109</sup> Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, p. 286.

before the cock crows twice that night. Peter denies that he will do so, as do all the others.<sup>110</sup> This contradicts Auerbach's suggestion that Peter showed a greater depth of faith and courage than the other disciples, and consequently suffered a greater failure, which permanently shaped his character.<sup>111</sup> Auerbach's thesis rests on the assumption that Mark is developing Peter as a distinct individual character, whereas it is my position that he simply an exemplar of the Twelve in general.

This is a justly celebrated moment of natural, believable characterisation (although it strictly speaking characterizes all of the Twelve, not just Peter). Peter is entirely confident about his ability to weather persecution and torture, with no actual experience of either. He seems to become almost angry with Jesus for doubting his strength (ὁ δὲ ἐκπερισσῶς ἐλάλει). One might contrast it with Paul's weary, almost matter-of-fact list of his sufferings in 2 Corinthians 23:29. This is not to argue that Mark himself is implicitly contrasting Peter with Paul, it is rather that Mark seems to have a shrewd insight into the difference between the tone of Christians who consider themselves prepared for persecution, and that of Christians who have actually undergone persecution. As discussed, Mark's community most likely had experience with persecution (perhaps the Neronian persecution from 64-68 CE). It is highly unlikely that Mark, as Price suggests, fabricated the story of Peter's denial.<sup>112</sup> But it seems more likely that the details he may have added to the story of the denial (including, perhaps, the particularly lifelike touch of Peter's blustering vehemence) reflected the experience of his own community.

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<sup>110</sup> On this last point, it should be noted that the characterisation of Peter is therefore still of a part with that of all the disciples. Peter is singled out for a particularly humiliating episode displaying his lack of loyalty, but Mark makes it clear, with the note of 14:31b, that all of the disciples were equally confident in their courage before it was put to the test. Collins suggests that Mark has envisioned Judas as already having slipped away at this point, as John makes explicit, and so he is not one of those protesting at this point (Collins, *Mark*, p. 672).

<sup>111</sup> Erich Auerbach (trans. Willard R. Trask), *Mimesis* (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 1953), pp. 41-42.

<sup>112</sup> Price, *Son of Man*, p. 196

Humour is, perhaps, not often seen as playing a major role in Mark's sombre Passion narrative and it would seem even less likely to be present if Mark's account in some ways doubled as a description of his own community's recent (or even ongoing) period of persecution. However, black humour is not unknown as a way for communities in difficult times to assert their solidarity and sense of identity.<sup>113</sup> To return to the concept of Mark's Gospel as an oral, performance-driven narrative, it seems possible that Mark 14:26-31 satirises a certain type of believer known to everyone present, people who had been the loudest in proclaiming their courage and devotion prior to difficult times, only to publicly recant their beliefs or disappear from sight when troubled times began. If this idea has any merit, it is important to note that Mark's concern is less with the historical figure of Peter, and more that he is using a well-known story (Peter's denial) to discuss contemporary concerns.<sup>114</sup>

In 14:32-42 Jesus then leads his disciples to Gethsemane, where he takes just the trio of Peter, James, and John with him as he goes to pray. What follows is intensely moving. Jesus, who has been characterized as infallibly certain and confident throughout Mark's Gospel, confesses to his disciples that he is 'deeply grieved, even to death' (Περίλυπός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἕως θανάτου) and asks them to remain awake while he prays. It is possible, given the way that the scene ends, that they are supposed to remain awake in order to look out for the soldiers coming with Judas to arrest Jesus. However, given the devastating loneliness of Jesus' confession to

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<sup>113</sup> Paul himself has an occasional vein of morbid humour, as witness his devout hope in Galatians 5:12 that his circumcising opponents would go all the way and castrate themselves.

<sup>114</sup> Hopkins points out that in many of the Martyr Acts (for instance, the Martyrdom of Polycarp), one recurring element is the eager Christian volunteer who thrusts himself forward and demands execution, only to think better of it and turn apostate when his life is actually threatened (Keith Hopkins, *A World Full of Gods: Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Roman Empire* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999, p. 117). This suggests a growing desire for control on the church's part over the cult of martyrs and confessors, and also the heated debate on whether a Christian has an obligation to either deliver himself or herself up to martyrdom or whether he or she should try and avoid martyrdom for as long as possible (still a cause of controversy for Athanasius in the fourth century). See also Clement of Alexandria's edict against provoking the death penalty against oneself (Clement, *Stromata* 4.4).

them, it is at least possible that we are supposed to read Jesus' instructions as reflecting a desire to have his closest followers simply there to share his grief and anguish.

While Jesus prays for the cup to be taken from him (14:36), his three disciples fall asleep (almost certainly a reference to Jesus' warning in Mark 13:36). This detail almost parodies what has gone before. In the previous episodes of Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31), the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:35-43), the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-13), and the Little Apocalypse (Mark 13:3-37), the three (sometimes with the addition of Andrew) are privy to mighty deeds, hidden knowledge and wondrous transformations. They act as implicit guarantors of these stories in the same way that the beloved disciple does in John 21:24. However, the scene in the garden of Gethsemane contains no revelation or secret wisdom (the voice of God is silent in response to Jesus' pleas), just the sight of a man in anguish. Nor can the three possibly act as witnesses to Jesus' prayer, since Mark notes that they were some distance off (and, what is more, they were asleep!).<sup>115</sup> Mark seems completely untroubled by the obvious conclusion. Since no witnesses exist to Jesus' prayer, it must be Mark's own creative composition (or that of a tradition that has been handed down to him, equally without the vouchsafing of witnesses).<sup>116</sup>

What, then, was Mark's inspiration for Jesus' prayer? Given what I consider to be the strong likelihood that Mark and his audience had suffered persecution, I suspect that it was based on personal experience. This is suggested by the way that we seem to shift from the 'point of view'

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<sup>115</sup> See Schweizer, *Mark*, pp. 309-10. Bauckham, on the other hand, disagrees that Mark's description of events rules out the possibility of the disciples overhearing Jesus' prayer (Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, p. 200).

<sup>116</sup> Consider Thucydides' nonchalant admission in 1.22.1-2 of *The History of the Peloponnesian War* (trans. Richard Crawley) (London: J.M. Dent, 1910): 'With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said.'

of the disciples to that of Jesus; we can now identify more with him than with them. When Jesus returns for the first time to find them sleeping, his words are, arguably, strikingly compassionate under the circumstances: “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”.

If the idea that Peter’s characterisation in Mark simply stands for all twelve disciples needs any further proof, it is supplied by the fact that Jesus’ rebuke is addressed solely to Peter, even though all three disciples were sleeping. Some commentators find it significant that Jesus addresses Peter as Σίμων once again, arguing that it indicates an unprecedented degree of disappointment on Jesus’ part.<sup>117</sup> However, it seems more likely to me that it is important to Mark to refer to Peter’s old name, in order that the significance of Simon of Cyrene’s role in 15:21, as a kind of *alter ego* to Peter, be made clear. In any case, Jesus concedes that ‘the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak’ (τὸ μὲν πνεῦμα πρόθυμον ἢ δὲ σὰρξ ἀσθενής).<sup>118</sup> If Peter is indeed meant (at this particular point in the narrative) to represent or at least call to mind members of the community who shirked martyrdom during persecution, Mark is here offering them a degree of compassion and understanding, even while he makes them look exceptionally ridiculous. After all, Jesus is the one character in Mark’s Gospel who has unquestionably been given the implied author’s stamp of authority and reliability. His judgment on Peter carries considerable weight.

Jesus leaves, repeats his prayer and then returns, to find the three sleeping once again. We are told that they ‘did not know how to answer him’ (καὶ οὐκ ἤδειςαν τί ἀποκριθῶσιν αὐτῷ),

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<sup>117</sup> e.g. Saari, *Judas*, p. 51.

<sup>118</sup> Consider Cyprian of Carthage’s hypothetical quotation from a Christian who gave way under torture: ‘not my mind, but my body, yielded in the suffering.’ Cyprian, *Treatise III: On the Lapsed*: 13.

another lifelike detail and one that recalls Peter's tongue-tied stammering at the Transfiguration in Mark 9:5-6.<sup>119</sup> Returning a third time, there is a note of weary resignation to Jesus' final speech to them: 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is given over into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, the one who hands me over is at hand.'<sup>120</sup>

As Juel points out, there is the flavour of divine will in the disciples' irresistible sleepiness.<sup>121</sup> The disciples could not stay awake 'for their eyes were being weighed down' (γὰρ αὐτῶν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ καταβαρυνόμενοι). It is reminiscent of the so-called parable theory of Mark 4:10-12, of its roots in Isaiah 6:9-10, and also of God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart in Exodus 9:12 (much as the disciples' hearts are said to be hardened in Mark 6:52). The paradox of all of these quotations is that, while God personally causes the subjects' offense against him, they still remain fully culpable for their actions under God's influence, and receive punishment from God. Collins compares the disciples' need for sleep to the test Gilgamesh undergoes on his doomed quest for immortality, to go for a week without sleep.<sup>122</sup> Although semi-divine, even the hero Gilgamesh cannot do without sleep and so he fails the test, much as Peter and the others do.

Peter's final appearance in Mark's Gospel is the indelible scene of the denial itself, between 14:53-72. As with so much in Mark's Passion, it is a model of compressed, intense storytelling. As Jesus predicted, his followers scatter and flee (14:50), including the infamous young man

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<sup>119</sup> The same verb, ἀποκρίνομαι, is used in both instances.

<sup>120</sup> I have changed the NRSV's translation of παραδίδοται from 'betrayed' to 'given over' and ὁ παραδιδούς με from 'my betrayer' to 'the one who hands me over', for reasons that will be discussed below.

<sup>121</sup> Juel, *Master*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>122</sup> Collins, *Mark*, p. 682. The story of Gilgamesh's test can be found in Stephanie Dalley's *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Oxford: OUP, 1989), pp. 116-17.

in a linen cloth (14:51-52).<sup>123</sup> Peter, however, follows those who have taken Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, where he sits with the guards, warming himself by the fire (one of those material details that Mark sometimes seems to enjoy, which convinced nineteenth century critics that there must be historical value to his gospel).<sup>124</sup> As mentioned earlier, Auerbach argued that in this scene Peter genuinely shows greater courage than all the other disciples, since he remains while they flee.<sup>125</sup> It is, however, my contention that Peter's characterisation should be viewed as characterising *all* the disciples, as argued repeatedly throughout this section.

Jesus' trial (14:55-65) now takes place, and Jesus' quiet courage and conviction is implicitly contrasted with the failure of nerve that Peter is about to show before a far less powerful interrogator. The irony of the scene of Peter's denial (14:66-72) is that it is never clear that Peter is in any danger from the people questioning him, the servant girl and τοῖς παρεστῶσιν whom she addresses. We might read hostility and aggression in their repeated questions, but it is not clear that they are not simply curious.<sup>126</sup> It is unclear what, if anything, would happen if Peter did declare himself a follower of Jesus. After all of his claims that he will stay true to

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<sup>123</sup> There are numerous wild guesses about the significance of this individual and his clothing, ranging from Morton Smith's contention that it refers to practises of occult initiation (Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 134), to Macdonald's suggestion that the young man is an allusion to Elpenor, Odysseus' unfortunate young crewman in the *Odyssey* (Macdonald, *Mark*, pp. 127-30) to a self-deprecating self-portrait on Mark's part in the midst of a crowded scene, in the style of a Renaissance artist or a Hitchcock cameo. Regardless of any possible greater significance, the young man's role in the narrative is quite clear: to embody the confusion of the scene and how totally Jesus' followers abandon him, choosing the shame of nakedness over persecution. The shame of public nudity is emphasised in a similar, though reversed, context in Eusebius' account of the young Origen's attempt to martyr himself, which is thwarted by his mother hiding his clothes (Eusebius, *Church History*, 6.2.6).

<sup>124</sup> Juel, *Master*, p. 18. One should not rule out the possibility of symbolic significance to some of Mark's oddly specific details. The fire in the courtyard reminds us that the scene takes place at night, and the emphasis on Peter's concern for his own comfort may be meant to foreshadow his subsequent concern for his own safety.

<sup>125</sup> Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 41.

<sup>126</sup> John's version (John 18:15-18 and 25-27), which will be discussed below, changes the dynamic of this scene by having one of the questioners be a relative of Malchus, whose ear Peter cut off in John's version of Jesus' arrest (John 18:10). Matthew's version, on the other hand, improves or clarifies the logic of the bystanders' assertion that Peter is a Galilean, by having them draw attention to his Galilean accent (Matthew 26:73).

Jesus until the end, Peter fails this very first, very mild test of his courage.<sup>127</sup> As Thompson puts it, ‘Peter’s cowardice is stressed by the act that a mere maid accuses him’.<sup>128</sup> The significance of his curses and the oath that he swears will be discussed below. There is also irony in the fact that, at the very moment when Jesus is being mocked as a failed prophet (14:65), the prophecy he made with regard to Peter is being fulfilled.<sup>129</sup>

As Brown points out, Peter’s progression in this scene, both physically and psychologically, is particularly well-observed by Mark.<sup>130</sup> Peter is in the courtyard of the high priest’s house (ἐν τῇ ἀύλῃ), warming himself by the fire, when the servant-girl notices him and makes her observation. Peter’s first response is to claim total and vehement incomprehension (Οὐτε οἶδα οὔτε ἐπίσταμαι σὺ τί λέγεις). He then tries to make an exit into the house’s forecourt or gate (προαύλιον). The servant-girl does not pursue him, but draws him to the attention of the bystanders present, the rest of the high priest’s staff (τῶν ὑπηρετῶν of 14:54). This frustrates Peter’s attempt to leave, and so again he denies the charge of being a follower of Jesus. One of the bystanders observes that he is also a Galilean. Matthew (Matthew 26:73) explains this by referring to Peter’s Galilean accent, but Mark does not account for the bystander’s knowledge. The significance of the reference to Galilee (besides perhaps reminding listeners of the significance of Galilee for Peter, a point which Mark’s ending returns to), is to emphasise that

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<sup>127</sup> Schweizer (Schweizer, *Mark*, pp. 331-3) notes the same incongruity, but he argues that Peter’s problem is not, in fact, pure cowardice but rather that Peter’s uncertainty and confusion. Peter sees this mundane, personal exchange as an inappropriate time to confess himself as a follower of Jesus. When he made his claim, he envisioned a dramatic public hearing, and questions directly related to his faith. When the cock crows for the second time, he realizes that he should always have been honest and direct about his alignment with Jesus, no matter what the circumstances. This idea, the notion that Peter’s problem was more his lack of confidence than his lack of bravery as such, is intriguing but it falls down on a number of points. In particular, the contrast between Peter and Jesus’ ‘trial’ scenes, which Schweizer himself notes, makes no sense if we are to imagine them as being of entirely different types), and in fact, a number of clues in the text indicate that we should take Peter’s interrogation by the servant girl and bystanders as very much a symbolic trial (see the last section of this chapter).

<sup>128</sup> Thompson, *Disbelief*, p. 118.

<sup>129</sup> Thompson, *Disbelief*, p. 98.

<sup>130</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave* (2 vols.) (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1994), p. 600.

without his master, and that master's mysterious knowledge of Jerusalem (Mark 11:1-4, 14:12-16) Peter is friendless and alone in an alien city.<sup>131</sup> Peter's response is the most vehement yet. He swears an oath that he knows nothing of Jesus.

In Pliny's famous letter to Trajan concerning the Christian trials in Bithynia (*Letters* X.96), Pliny mentions that his technique with suspected or accused Christians is to require them to deny three times that they are in fact a Christian, each time steadily increasing the pressure. He also required them to recite a prayer to the gods, make an offering of wine and incense to a statue of the emperor, and finally curse the name of Christ. Brown has argued that the oath Peter swears at the climax of the denial scene should be read as a curse on Jesus' name.<sup>132</sup>

Pliny was writing at the start of the second century, a generation after Mark's most likely date. Furthermore, he suggests that he had spontaneously invented the interrogation techniques which he describes to Trajan. But he may well be trying to impress the emperor with his resourcefulness and flexibility and certainly, as an experienced and knowledgeable lawyer, he would have been well aware of the usual legal procedures in the case of Christians and other proscribed groups.<sup>133</sup> It seems likely that these were indeed known measures taken against arrested Christians in Mark's time.<sup>134</sup> If this is the case, then Mark is describing Peter going through a process which would have been familiar to many of Mark's audience.

One can understand the point of the view of the commentators, whose views were discussed above, who believed Mark to be intrinsically hostile to Peter, or whatever personalities or

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<sup>131</sup> On the regional tensions between Judaeans and Galileans, see W.D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley, CA: UCP, 1974), p. 243.

<sup>132</sup> Brown, *Death*, p. 605.

<sup>133</sup> See Friend, *Church*, p. 44, and Jerry Camery-Hoggat, *Irony in Mark's Gospel: Text and Subtext* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), p. 172.

<sup>134</sup> See Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, p. 1018-19.

schools of thought Peter represented to him.<sup>135</sup> Peter's denial does, after all, seem to complete a devastating portrait of the man as slow-witted, self-seeking, and to crown it all, a coward. However, this is reckoning without Mark's reference to Peter throwing himself down and weeping (καὶ ἐπιβαλὼν ἑκκλαιεν) in Mark 14:72 and without the note of ambiguous hope given by the young man's parting words in Mark 16:7, mentioning Peter by name, despite the fact that he would be included among the disciples also mentioned.<sup>136</sup> Peter stands revealed as a coward and even something of a clown in the denial scene, and it is clear that he represents the wrong way to react to persecution and interrogation, while Jesus represents the right way. It should also be noted that it is another Simon, Simon of Cyrene in Mark 15:21, who bears Jesus' cross at the end, perhaps in references to the demands of discipleship in Mark 8:34.<sup>137</sup> But Mark does not seem to regard this as the end of Peter's story, whether he is aware of any traditions of Peter's martyrdom or not. And he seems to be counting on his audience understanding this as well.<sup>138</sup> It is also worth noting that, if Mark's audience was indeed familiar with the legal arsenal that Pliny would use in Bithynia, with the torture and the threats of execution, Peter's actions would have seemed less spineless than they might to a twenty first century reader. Somebody who had been through the interrogations that Pliny describes, who had experienced the mounting temptation to deny their beliefs with each new repetition of the question, would at least have a different perspective on Peter's decision to deny Jesus. Perhaps they might feel

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<sup>135</sup> See, for instance, Kim E. Dewey's "Peter's Curse and Cursed Peter (Mark 14:53-54, 66-72)" in Werner Kelber (ed.), *The Passion in Mark* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1974), which argues that Peter has permanently cursed himself with the curse he gave during his denial.

<sup>136</sup> See Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, p. 125. Laurel Fulkerston's *No Regrets: Remorse in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: OUP, 2013) argues that the outward performance of remorse was more important than questions of inward sincerity, in keeping with the previously noted tendency of the ancient world to value action above motivation. See also Moloney, *Mark*, p. 309 and Bastiaan van Iersel, *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary* (Sheffield: SAP, 1998), p. 501.

<sup>137</sup> Smith, *Controversies*, p. 41. See also Helms, *Gospel Fictions*, p. 122. This was also the conclusion of the Jesus Seminar, in Robert W. Funk's *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), p. 158. In later Christian tradition, Peter is sometimes contrasted, this time favourably, with another Simon, the arch-heresiarch Simon Magus. See Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, p. 57.

<sup>138</sup> See Agustí Borrell, *The Good News of Peter's Denial: A Narrative and Rhetorical Reading of Mark 14:54.66-72* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998), pp. 43-44.

bitter, having been defiant themselves and suffered the consequences. But perhaps also at the least they might understand how he felt.

It is generally agreed that the so-called Intermediate and Longer Endings (Mark 16:9-20) are not original to Mark's text.<sup>139</sup> Some maintain that Mark did originally write a longer ending, which has since been lost.<sup>140</sup> However, many who think that Mark did end his gospel with the abrupt and cryptic verse of 16:8 argue that a very specific literary effect is created.<sup>141</sup> However, it is surely possible that the ending of Mark's Gospel actually relies on context to which we no longer have access and that, in particular, the message to Peter to return to Galilee in 16:7 is such an allusion.

As already mentioned, Willi Marxsen's argument is that Mark's Gospel was written by a Galilean-based group during the Jewish War, urging believers in Jerusalem to flee to Galilee to await the Parousia.<sup>142</sup> Although this would account for the young man's instructions at the tomb, there are many flaws in the theory, notably Marxsen's reliance on Eusebius' dubious testimony. Dennis Macdonald proposes that the reference to Galilee and the ending of Mark's Gospel is an attempt to account for Jesus' failure to warn his disciples of the coming fall of Jerusalem. According to Macdonald's ingenious theory, he did warn them but his blundering disciples failed to heed him, and the women failed to pass on the message, and so they all paid

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<sup>139</sup> William R. Farmer, in *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark* (Cambridge: CUP, 1974), defended the LE, as did Maurice Robinson's "The Long Ending of Mark as Canonical Verity" in David Alan Black, *Perspectives*. But these are outliers. The conclusion, based on the evidence of Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, the testimony of patristic scholars such as Eusebius of Caesarea and Jerome, and internal evidence such as the non-Markan vocabulary of the LE, is that the last twelve verses of Mark are a later addition to the gospel. To the best of my knowledge, the Intermediate Ending has no defenders at all.

<sup>140</sup> See N. Clayton Croy, *The Mutilation of Mark's Gospel* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003) or J.K. Elliot's "The Last Twelve Verses of Mark: Original or Not?" in Black (ed.), *Perspectives*.

<sup>141</sup> See J. Lee Magness' *Marking the End: Sense and Absence in the Gospel of Mark* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), Donald H. Juel's *A Master of Surprise*, or Kermode's *The Genesis of Secrecy*.

<sup>142</sup> Marxsen, *Mark*, pp. 102-10.

the price.<sup>143</sup> There are also substantial flaws with this theory, among them the fact that the fall of Jerusalem seems to have been anything but a traumatic, theologically difficult event for the early Christian church. Christian scribes preserved Josephus' writings at least in part because of the satisfaction they took in his gruesome account of the siege of Jerusalem, which they took to be a much-deserved divine judgment on its citizens for rejecting Jesus.<sup>144</sup>

In their groundbreaking narrative critical study of Mark, Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie have argued that the reference to Galilee in the ending of Mark points to a return to the beginning of the story, a fresh start for both Peter and the story's audience.<sup>145</sup> However, although they are certainly aware of the oral nature of the gospel's original performances, and devote a section of the book to exploring its dynamics, these authors still seem to be fundamentally engaging with the ending of Mark in the way that we, as readers and not listeners, do today. The idea of 'returning to the beginning' comes naturally to readers of a book. We can simply flip back through the pages to the start of the narrative. This simple fact, the fact that the book we read is at our disposal, has given us such complex modern-day meta-narratives as Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, Milorad Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars*, and Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch*.<sup>146</sup>

However, the audience of an oral narrative, perhaps performed over several days, does not have the same capacity. There is much less of a sense of a hermetically sealed narrative world in such an atmosphere, and less of a sense that the individual is engaging with the story. Instead,

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<sup>143</sup> Macdonald, *Mark*, pp. 163-4.

<sup>144</sup> See Mason, *Josephus*, pp. 8-19.

<sup>145</sup> Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>146</sup> And this misunderstanding of the nature of Mark's narrative has given us dizzyingly complex readings such as Austin Farrer's *A Study in Mark*. To paraphrase Fowler, ancient literary structures such as the chiasm were meant for the ear rather than the eye (Fowler, *Reader*, p. 152). See also Lucretia Yaghjian, "Ancient Reading" in Richard Rohrbaugh (ed.), *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996).

the entire community is engaged with the story. Certain notes in Mark's Gospel (Mark 13:14) suggest that the storyteller must be prepared to field questions from the audience. Allusions and references are ideally suited to this kind of storytelling environment.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:5, refers to Peter (Cephas) as the first to witness the risen Christ. This is all the more striking in that Paul has little reason to want to bolster Peter's authority, given the disagreement between them recorded in Galatians, and that Peter is surely included among the Twelve, the δώδεκα, whom Jesus appears to next. It is presumably so well-known a fact, even in relatively distant Corinth, that it would be noticed if Paul had skipped over Peter's role as the very first witness in favour of the Twelve as a whole.<sup>147</sup> But what is the connection between the very first sightings of the risen Jesus, which take place in Jerusalem according to Mark, and the young man in white's instructions to Peter to go to Galilee?

Raymond Brown has made a persuasive case for understanding the source behind John 21:1-24 as the original Resurrection narrative.<sup>148</sup> In the original version of this story, Brown argues, Peter is not with the other disciples. He has given up on the mission after Jesus' death and returned to his livelihood with other fishermen. It is Jesus' call and commission that brings his faith back and presumably leads him to reassemble the other disciples.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> The question of the dispute between Peter and Paul, and whether it was a solitary incident at Antioch or a career-long divide, is going beyond the bounds of this thesis. Markus Bockmuehl, in *The Remembered Peter*, has argued that Paul's subsequent references to Peter, after Galatians, are too respectful for the hostility between them to have become permanent. In my opinion, this is placing a little too much weight on verses such as 1 Corinthians 9:5, which acknowledge Peter as an apostle without revealing any personal warmth or admiration on Paul's part.

<sup>148</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1970), p. 1087. The idea that the original Resurrection appearance was to Peter was also the position of Martin Dibelius (trans. Bertram Lee Wolf), in *From Tradition to Gospel* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971), p. 191.

<sup>149</sup> This plays into the characterisation of Peter as a lapsed Christian returning to the church, something that will be analysed in the next section. Note that Paul also makes no mention of the empty tomb tradition.

If Brown's theory is correct, it is admittedly hard to see why the early Christian tradition abandoned this Galilean story of Peter's encounter with the risen Jesus so quickly in favour of the empty tomb tradition, which would have been less attractive due to its dependence on female witnesses.<sup>150</sup> Even the use of the Galilean story in John is an afterthought. However, it is possible that Mark itself can partially account for this. Written in a social context in which the story of Peter's encounter was so well-known and so absolutely central to the Christian movement, Mark did not actually record it. It was more effective and dramatic, for the purposes of his narrative, to simply allude to it.<sup>151</sup> The women's silence should not be taken as a permanent barrier to the message they were asked to transmit.<sup>152</sup> The other evangelists (except Luke) retained the idea of a return to Galilee and an encounter with the risen Jesus there, but began to expand on the episode of the empty tomb in Jerusalem and to conflate Mark's anonymous young man in white with Jesus himself. As the context shifted, so did the evangelists' storytelling methods, and the need grew to turn Mark's hints into something more solid and concrete. The original short ending of Mark was intolerable to Matthew and Luke (and to some copyists of Mark) because the original context, which made more sense of Mark's ending, was already beginning to fade from prominence, and the story of the empty tomb was replacing Peter's vision in importance.

Larry Hurtado's interpretation of Mark 16:8 strengthens this reading. Hurtado suggests that the fact that the women said nothing should *not* be read as a description of their failure to report to the male disciples.<sup>153</sup> Rather, Mark's meaning is that they told no-one *else* about their vision, explaining why they and the empty tomb tradition was not part of the 'official' witness list of

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<sup>150</sup> See John Dominic Crossan's essay, "Empty tomb and absent Lord (Mark 16: 1-8)" in Kelber (ed.), *Passion*, in which Crossan advances the theory that Mark himself composed the empty tomb narrative.

<sup>151</sup> See Hengel, *Gospels*, p. 82.

<sup>152</sup> Francis Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), pp. 348-52.

<sup>153</sup> Hurtado, "Following Jesus" in Longenecker, *Patterns*, p24.

the risen Jesus of Mark's day, as recounted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8, comparable to Wrede's 'messianic secret' concept.<sup>154</sup> This would work perfectly with the idea that the empty tomb tradition was a later addition, perhaps Mark's own invention.<sup>155</sup> Mark's original intent was to end his gospel on the very strong implication that Peter was headed for Galilee and his storied first encounter with the risen Jesus.

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<sup>154</sup> Suggested by Gerd Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), p. 116.

<sup>155</sup> See Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, p. 13.

### 3. Judas in Mark's Gospel

#### 3.1. Overview: Mark's Attitude towards Judas

Any context or prior expectations for Mark's audience with regard to Judas is hard to attain. Pre-Markan material (meaning the letters of Paul) is silent on the subject of the thirteenth apostle. The one possible exception to this is 1 Corinthians 11:23, which has already been briefly discussed. Describing the institution of the Eucharist, Paul refers to Jesus taking bread 'on the night when he was betrayed.' This would seem to be a clear reference to Judas, even though he is not mentioned by name. However, the word Paul uses is *παρεδίδετο*, the passive indicative of *παραδίδωμι*. As we will see, there is little evidence to suggest that this word, meaning 'to hand over', was widely used in the sense of a betrayal *before* it became associated with Judas' action in the Christian tradition. Although modern translations, including the widely-used NIV and NRSV, still opt for 'betrayed', one could equally well render the phrase as 'the night that Jesus was handed over', which preserves the ambiguity of the Greek.<sup>156</sup> It could refer to Judas' betrayal of Jesus, it could refer to Jesus' arrest or the way in which Caiaphas handed him over to Pontius Pilate, or it could refer to the theological concept of God himself handing Jesus over.<sup>157</sup> Quite possibly Paul intends to refer to all of these concepts. It is at the very least likely that he wants his audience to have the theological dimension of the act in mind.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> This is the translation that C.K. Barrett prefers. See Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: A&C Black, 1968), p. 266.

<sup>157</sup> J.P. Meier (*Marginal Jew*, p. 179), thinks that the consistent use of *παραδίδωμι* with regard to Judas' betrayal and Jesus' arrest does reflect a perception of the divine intent behind the action.

<sup>158</sup> See Brian K. Peterson, "What happened on 'the night'?: Judas, God, and the importance of liturgical ambiguity", *Pro Ecclesia* 20 (2011), pp. 363-383.

In any case, for this reason Paul's testimony can hardly be seen as solid evidence of Judas' very existence, let alone any indication of attitudes towards him among the first generation of Christians. Strikingly, Paul later refers to Jesus' post-Crucifixion appearances to 'the Twelve' (δώδεκα) in the same letter (1 Corinthians 15:5).<sup>159</sup> This is 'pedantically' changed to 'the Eleven' in the Western Text.<sup>160</sup> Hyam Maccoby in particular sees a deep significance in this reference, particularly in the light of how careful Matthew and Luke are to refer to 'the Eleven' (ἐνδεκα) after Judas' betrayal (see Matthew 28:16, Luke 24:9, Luke 24:33, and Acts 1:26, the last of which discusses Judas' replacement by Mathias).<sup>161</sup> However, one thing it is worth noting about 1 Corinthians 15:5 is that Paul does not use δώδεκα with great precision in any case. He refers to Peter (or rather Cephas), *then* the Twelve –is Cephas not one of the Twelve?<sup>162</sup> After all, the fact that there were said to be twelve disciples was hardly happenstance but rather a feature of Jesus' apparent belief that the ten lost tribes would be restored to Israel in the imminent end times.<sup>163</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, given the theological freight the number twelve was carrying, it is only natural that the group would generally be referred to as the δώδεκα, regardless of the attrition caused by deaths or defections at any given point.<sup>164</sup>

As we have already seen, some such as A.M.H. Saari take the view that Judas himself is a fictional character, the aptly-named symbolic embodiment of the Jews' rejection of Jesus.<sup>165</sup> Maccoby, on the other hand, is insistent that Judas was a genuine disciple, but that his betrayal of Jesus was an invention of the Gentile church, designed to discredit the historical Judas

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<sup>159</sup> See Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: the Origins of the New Testament Image of Jesus* (New Haven, CT: YUP, 1988), pp. 102-15.

<sup>160</sup> Barrett, *First Corinthians*, p. 335.

<sup>161</sup> Hyam Maccoby, *Judas*, p. 24.

<sup>162</sup> See E.P. Sanders' discussion of the likelihood of the Twelve having fluctuating numbers in Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Press, 1993), p. 120.

<sup>163</sup> Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), p. 141.

<sup>164</sup> See Joseph Ysebaert, *Die Amsterminologie im Neuen Testament und in der Alten Kirche: Eine Lexikographische Untersuchung* (Breda: Eureia, 1994), p. 27.

<sup>165</sup> Saari, *Judas*, p. 48.

(whom Maccoby believes to have been Jesus' brother and his eventual successor in the Jerusalem church).<sup>166</sup>

Whether Judas himself was a fictional character, or it was merely his infamous act of betrayal that was the fiction, these theories turn the conventional thinking regarding Judas' historicity on its head. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Judas and the fact of his betrayal are often taken as near-guarantees, rare patches of solid ground within the bog of historical Jesus research.<sup>167</sup> Why would any Christian fabricate the shocking, and theologically difficult, presence of a traitor within Jesus' handpicked inner circle?<sup>168</sup> If Judas did not exist, one might ask, why was it necessary for Mark (or his predecessors) to invent him? This is the so-called criterion of embarrassment.

The answers are various. Saari takes the view that Judas was the fictional creation of the Markan community, part of a concerted effort to portray the Twelve in an entirely hostile light, hence the fact that each time Judas appears, his connection to the Twelve is stressed.<sup>169</sup> Paffenroth, while he does not claim Judas or his betrayal to be fiction, argues that the betrayal is an artistic necessity and that without betrayal by a friend the story of Jesus would not attain its full tragic power.<sup>170</sup> Maccoby takes the view that Judas' betrayal was conceived as part of an attack by Pauline Gentile Christians on the Jerusalem Jewish Christians, but also puts a theory forward to the effect that Judas' betrayal is a psychological necessity for the first

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<sup>166</sup> Maccoby, *Judas*, pp. 50-1.

<sup>167</sup> See, for instance, Hans-Josef Klauck, *Judas – Ein Jünger der Herrn* (Vienna: Herder, 1987), pp. 33-38 or Wolfgang Trilling, "Zur Entstehung des Zwölfereis: Eine geschichtskritische Überlegung" in Rudolf Schnackenburg, Josef Ernst and Joachim Wanke (eds.), *Die Kirche des Anfangs: Festschrift für Heinz Schürmann zum 65. Geburtstag* (Leipzig: St. Benno, 1977), pp. 208-13.

<sup>168</sup> As we have seen, critics of Christianity such as Celsus made Jesus' failure with regard to Judas one of the key points in their attack on the new religion.

<sup>169</sup> Saari, *Deaths*, pp. 35-55.

<sup>170</sup> Kim Paffenroth, *Judas*, pp. 2-4. Paffenroth cites the 1989 Canadian film *Jesus of Montreal* as an example of a Jesus story which lacks a Judas figure and partly as a result does not have the full force of other versions of the Jesus story.

Christians, who wish to gain the benefits of sacrificing the ‘Lamb of the World’ without taking on the guilt of killing him themselves.<sup>171</sup> Maccoby cites J.G. Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* as an influence on this idea (the influence of Sigmund Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* and *Totem and Taboo* can also be detected). He refers to Judas’ role in fulfilling this need as that of ‘the Black Christ’ and compares it to the Norse myth of Baldur’s death at the hands of Loki.

Saari’s argument is underdeveloped and dependent on Burton Mack’s highly hypothetical reconstruction of Q, since the lack of reference to Judas in Q is an important part of Saari’s argument. Oddly, Saari does not seek to account for Mark’s motives in vilifying the Twelve and this is perhaps the weakest point of his argument. He does not, for instance, suggest a variation on the Tübingen School’s reasoning (as Maccoby does) in which Mark represents Pauline Gentile Christianity and the Twelve Petrine Jewish Christianity. He simply sees Mark as trying to undercut the authority of the Twelve, for unspecified reasons, and sees Mark’s portrayal of Peter and the rest of the Twelve as self-evidently negative.<sup>172</sup> As the above discussion of Peter’s portrayal shows, this is by no means unambiguously clear. According to Saari, Mark’s introduction of Judas as ‘one of the Twelve’ (εἰς τῶν δώδεκα) in Mark 14:10 and 14:43, is intended to add further negative elements to Judas’ characterisation.<sup>173</sup> The Twelve have been so thoroughly demonized by this point, Saari argues, that Judas is tainted by his association with them.

Saari’s is an odd argument in a bewildering book (a hybrid of biblical criticism, theological inquiry, and deeply personal memoir). In particular, the idea that *Judas* is the one compromised

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<sup>171</sup> Maccoby, *Judas*, pp. 8-11. The parallels with the Tübingen School’s theories should be immediately apparent.

<sup>172</sup> One thing that should be said for Saari’s minimalist approach is that at least it does not require an elaborate reconstruction of the politics of a situation about which we have little knowledge, as with Weeden’s work on Mark.

<sup>173</sup> Saari, *Deaths*, p. 46.

by being linked to the Twelve (rather than *vice versa*) seems implausible. It seems far more likely that Mark's repeated references to Judas' place among the Twelve is intended to emphasise the irony of the betrayal.

Paffenroth's assertion of the artistic necessity for Judas is subjective but in any case he is clearly applying this standard to modern literature (hence his choice of example, a 1989 film) rather than the Gospel of Mark. The notion that Judas' characterisation in Mark is part of a divide between the Pauline and Petrine sections of the church is just a variation on the now-familiar Tübingen theory and has the same problems.

Maccoby's eccentric theory is based on outdated anthropological works. He uncritically accepts Jungian ideas about the universality of myths without seriously engaging either side of the complex and fraught debate on these issues between structuralists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and formalists such as Vladimir Propp. In particular, Maccoby's description of the parallels between Baldur and Christ are hardly impressive considering that the version of Baldur's death on which he relies is taken from the Prose Edda. These were compiled by Snorri Sturluson, a Christian who was consciously adapting the Norse myths to bring them closer to Christianity.<sup>174</sup>

Finally, we need to consider Klassen's argument regarding Judas in Mark's Gospel, and the significance of the word with which Mark describes Judas' action: παραδίδομι. In Mark's list of the Twelve (Mark 3:16-19), Judas' name is given last, καὶ Ἰούδαν Ἰσκαριώθ, ὃς καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτόν, which the NRSV translates as 'and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him'

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<sup>174</sup> See Snorri Sturluson (ed. Anthony Faulkes), *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning* (London: Viking Society, 1988), p. xxvii.

(meaning Jesus).<sup>175</sup> Matthew follows Mark's use of the word at the end of his own list in Matthew 10:4, καὶ Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης ὁ καὶ παραδοὺς αὐτόν, although he changes it into a participle referring to Judas, which the NRSV reflects by translating it as 'and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him'. Luke's reference to Judas in his list of the Twelve, Luke 6:16, does not use παραδίδομι. Instead, it reads καὶ Ἰούδαν Ἰσκαριώθ, ὃς ἐγένετο προδότης, which the NRSV translates as 'and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor'. John has no list of the Twelve but the first mention of Judas, in John 6:71, a Johannine aside explaining that Jesus was referring to Judas Iscariot as the devil among the Twelve: 'ἔλεγεν δὲ τὸν Ἰούδαν Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτου: οὗτος γὰρ ἔμελλεν παραδιδόναι αὐτόν, εἷς ἐκ τῶν δώδεκα.' As the NRSV renders this, 'He was speaking of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, for he, though one of the twelve, was going to betray him.'

The first question is whether the word παραδίδομι is ever used to mean 'to betray' in this sense in any other context. Klassen firmly maintains that it is not.<sup>176</sup> As defined in Abbot-Smith<sup>177</sup>, παραδίδομι in the New Testament can be translated as follows:

- to give or hand over. For instance, the devil's offer in Luke 4:6, 'Σοὶ δώσω τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην ἅπασαν καὶ τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν, ὅτι ἐμοὶ παραδέδοται καὶ ἢ ἐὰν θέλω δίδωμι αὐτήν'. 'To you I will give all this authority and all their glory, because it has been *handed over* to me and I give it to anyone I please.' (italics mine)
- to hazard or risk. For instance, Acts 15:26, 'ἄνθρωποις παραδεδωκόσι τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ', 'men who have risked

<sup>175</sup> Boring feels that the second καὶ should be translated as 'nevertheless', emphasising the surprising fact that Judas, though one of the Twelve, handed Jesus over. See Boring, *Mark*, p. 100.

<sup>176</sup> Klassen, *Judas*, p. 47.

<sup>177</sup> G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936), p. 351.

their lives for the sake of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ’, although this still carries a sense of ‘giving over’, as the sense is that the men in question, Paul and Barnabas, would willingly give up their lives if necessary.

- to commit or commend. For instance, Peter 2:23, ‘παρεδίδου δὲ τῷ κρίνοντι δικαίως’, ‘committed [himself] to the one who judges righteously’ or Acts 14:26, ‘ὅθεν ἦσαν παραδεδομένοι τῇ χάριτι τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς τὸ ἔργον ὃ ἐπλήρωσαν’, ‘where they were commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed’.

- to deliver up to prison, punishment or trial, sometimes treacherously. For instance, Mark 1:14, ‘Μετὰ δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην’, ‘After John was arrested’, or 1 Corinthians 5:5, ‘παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός’, ‘you are to hand over this one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh’.<sup>178</sup>

- to hand down traditions. For instance, Mark 7:13, ‘ἀκυροῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ παραδόσει ὑμῶν ἣ παρεδώκατε’, ‘making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed over’.<sup>179</sup>

Moving beyond the New Testament, Liddell and Scott give a similar range of meanings for the word throughout classical Greek literature.<sup>180</sup> They note that, among other senses, παραδίδωμι

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<sup>178</sup> Neither of these examples has a sense of betrayal to it because, as Klassen points out, in the New Testament the whole sense of the word as ‘to treacherously hand over’ is dependent on its use with reference to Judas – nowhere else, in the New Testament, does it have this sense.

<sup>179</sup> It is worth noting that if there is a definite possibility of a sense of betrayal being attached to the word παραδίδωμι, which remains to be seen, Mark has neatly aligned the two opposing concepts of preserving a tradition and betraying it in his rendition of Jesus’ criticism of the Pharisees.

<sup>180</sup> Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925), *Lexicon*, p. 1308.

can be used to mean giving up a person or a city, generally to an enemy, sometimes treacherously, and cite three examples of this specific sense.

The first is from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (a life of the Persian king Cyrus), 5.1.28. This is a reference to enemies surrendering their weapons: ἀνθρωπίνη δὲ γνώμη τίς ἂν ἢ φευγόντων πολεμίων ἀποτρέποιτο ἢ ὄπλα παραδιδόντων οὐκ ἂν λαμβάνοι ἢ ἑαυτοῦς δίδόντων καὶ τὰ ἑαυτῶν οὐκ ἂν δέχοιτο. As Klassen rightly points out, one can hardly 'betray' one's weapon.<sup>181</sup> However, F.A. Gosling, in his response to Klassen, argues that 'if an army which is in flight surrenders its weapons it certainly betrays their deadly impact into the forces of a foreign power.'<sup>182</sup> This seems a suspect reading. The soldiers might be held to have betrayed their country by surrendering weapons, but they have not betrayed the weapons themselves, and ὄπλα is the object of the verb in the quotation from Xenophon.

The second example is also from the *Cyropaedia*, 5.4.51. It is an account of how Cyrus and his general Gadatus took three forts. They took one by storm and, as the Greek text reads, τὸ δὲ δύο φρουρίῳ φοβῶν μὲν Κῦρος, πείθων δὲ Γαδάτας ἔπεισε παραδοῦναι τοὺς φυλάττοντας. There is some potential ambiguity here, since while Cyrus intimidates the garrison of one fort into surrendering, Gadatas persuades the other, arguably suggesting a scenario in which Gadatas bribes some within the keep to betray it from within. A unanimous surrender cannot be considered a betrayal, but action from within clearly can. However, παραδοῦναι in this sentence refers to *both* Cyrus and Gadatus' tactics, so it arguably cannot be being used in the sense of 'handing over treacherously'.

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<sup>181</sup> Klassen, *Judas*, p. 47.

<sup>182</sup> F.A. Gosling, "O Judas! What have you done?" in *EQ* 71:2 (1999), p. 119.

The final example is from Pausanias' *Description of Greece*, essentially an ancient tourist guide to Greece, 1.2.1. It is the story, mentioned in passing, of how Heracles and Theseus took the Amazon stronghold of Themiscyra. In this version of the story, the Amazon Antiope falls in love with Theseus and willingly gives up the city to him: παραδοῦναι τε τὸ χωρίον. Klassen argues that it should be translated as 'surrender', pointing out that W.H.S. Jones' translation of it in the Loeb Classical Library edition of Pausanias renders it as 'surrender'.<sup>183</sup> But his argument is not entirely persuasive. Antiope was not the queen of the Amazons; that was her sister Hippolyta. Did she have the authority to surrender the Amazons' capital to the heroes? Or are we supposed to imagine her stealthily betraying the town to them?<sup>184</sup> Pausanias' mention of the story is too brief and off-hand to make this clear one way or the other.

It must also be acknowledged that the idea that παραδίδομι can mean to give up a city treacherously is not supported by the evidence of texts such as Aeneas Tacitus' *How to Survive under Siege*, a fourth century BCE handbook on siege tactics. Chapters 10 through 14 deal with the possibility of a city being betrayed from within by malcontents. Nowhere in this discussion does Aeneas use the term παραδίδομι. Instead, he refers (in 11.3) to προδοσία, betrayal. This is admittedly an argument from silence and there are certainly other explanations (Aeneas may not have been familiar with that sense of παραδίδομι or he may have preferred the less ambiguous προδοσία) but it does seem striking, given that if παραδίδομι had the secondary meaning that Liddell and Scott ascribe to it, this text is exactly the kind of place where one could expect to find it.

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<sup>183</sup> Klassen, *Judas*, p. 59.

<sup>184</sup> This is the opinion of Gosling. See Gosling, "Judas!", p. 119.

In conclusion, the evidence from classical Greek does seem to support Klassen's assertion, although perhaps not as unequivocally as he maintains. He turns next to the evidence of the Septuagint and the works of Josephus.

Klassen argues that while the LXX frequently uses *παραδίδωμι*, using it to translate over twenty different Hebrew verb forms, it never carries a sense of betrayal.<sup>185</sup> He argues that the Hebrew word *הִמָּרְדָּ*, a word which can mean either to throw or (exclusively in the Piel) to betray or deceive is, on the other hand, almost always translated into Greek as *παραλογίζομαι*. *παραλογίζομαι* is itself used just twice in the New Testament, in Colossians 2:4 and James 1:22. However, Klassen's argument is moot. In the examples he cites, the sense of *הִמָּרְדָּ* could *not* be translated with *παραδίδωμι*, even if it does have connotations of betrayal. The word *παραδίδωμι*, in this possible sense, is always used of someone handing over someone or something else. None of the instances of *הִמָּרְדָּ* cited by Klassen, such as Laban's double-dealing with Jacob in Genesis 29:25, the Gibeonites tricking Joshua in Joshua 9:22 or Michal covering for David to Saul in 1 Samuel 19:17, involve any such transfer. It is not a significant point that *הִמָּרְדָּ* is never translated as *παραδίδωμι* because *הִמָּרְדָּ* (in this particular sense and in the Piel) does not quite mean 'to betray'. 'To trick' or 'to deceive' is much closer to the mark.

Finally, Klassen turns to Josephus. Josephus is, indeed, an excellent place to inquire into questions on betrayal, as the man who infamously went over to the Romans during the Jewish War. Klassen states that Josephus uses the word *παραδίδωμι* 293 times, generally of the handing over of slaves, territory and property, but never in the sense of 'to betray'.<sup>186</sup> Instead, Klassen states that Josephus uses the word *προδίδωμι* to mean 'to betray'. *προδίδωμι* can

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<sup>185</sup> Klassen, *Judas*, p. 48.

<sup>186</sup> Klassen, *Judas*, p. 49.

certainly mean ‘to betray’. For instance, its use in Herodotus 6:23.4, τοὺς δὲ λοιποὺς Ζαγκλαίους κοινολογησάμενος τοῖσι Σαμίοισι καὶ ὄρκους δοὺς καὶ δεξάμενος προέδωκε. Its only use in the New Testament, in Romans 11:35, is not in this sense, oddly enough: ἢ τίς προέδωκεν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἀνταποδοθήσεται αὐτῷ; Here, its meaning is clearly ‘to first give’. Paul is commenting on the impossibility of being equal with God by rhetorically asking who has first given a gift to God before receiving one. Therefore, it is clear that προδίδωμι is like παραδίδωμι. It has a range of meanings and not all of them are negative. In addition, Gosling gives a list of uses of παραδίδωμι in Josephus that he feels have a clear sense of ‘betrayal’ to their meaning.<sup>187</sup>

Klassen’s strongest argument, when it comes to the evidence from Josephus, is Josephus’ contrasting use of the words προδίδωμι and παραδίδωμι in *Jewish Antiquities*, 6:14.344-5, in which Saul is said to not wish to betray (προδοῦναι) his people but instead to hazard (παραδοῦς) himself, his family, and his children in battle. Josephus clearly sees a vital distinction here.

Klassen’s argument is also supported by the change which Luke makes to Mark’s text. As mentioned above, Luke changes Mark’s description of Judas from καὶ Ἰούδαν Ἰσκαριώθ, ὃς καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτόν to καὶ Ἰούδαν Ἰσκαριώθ, ὃς ἐγένετο προδότης. Luke (although not Matthew) apparently feels that παραδίδωμι is unsatisfactory and changes it to ἐγένετο προδότης. This may suggest that, just as Klassen maintains, παραδίδωμι did *not* carry a connotation of betrayal, or at least that Luke did not feel it was forceful or explicit enough.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Gosling, “Judas!”, pp. 122-3.

<sup>188</sup> In contrast, see Lightfoot’s claim that Mark almost always uses παραδίδωμι with a sinister meaning. R.H. Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message of St. Mark* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1950), p. 52.

However, this also brings us to the fundamental weakness of Klassen's argument. The survey of the use of the word *παραδίδομι* has demonstrated that there is at least a reasonable doubt that the word had connotations of betrayal *before* it was used of Judas' actions, although Gosling has constructed a reasonable argument against that hypothesis.<sup>189</sup> But Klassen now has to make the case that this is significant for our understanding of Judas and in this he is less successful.

Klassen's argument is that Judas 'handed over' Jesus with Jesus' permission and cooperation, in an attempt to bring about a peaceful meeting with the priests of the Temple.<sup>190</sup> Furthermore, he suggests that the woe that Jesus declares on the one who will hand him over in Mark 14:21 is not a curse but a statement of concern. Jesus knows that Judas' action will be misunderstood (except, apparently, by Klassen) and fears for him.<sup>191</sup> The linguistic argument is incoherent. If Judas' action was so widely misunderstood at the time, why is it at all significant that Mark uses the word *παραδίδομι*? He is basing his account on Christian traditions, the same traditions that were supposedly vilifying Judas. Moreover, it has to be said that while *παραδίδομι* may not carry connotations of betrayal it is also not, in this sense, a positive word. It is used of cities and people being handed over to enemies and criminals being handed over to trial. Even if we accept that Mark has unknowingly preserved a significant piece of tradition relating to the historical Judas in his use of this word, *παραδίδομι* hardly indicates cooperation with its subject, as Klassen would have.

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<sup>189</sup> Almut-Barbara Renger discusses the theological and literary implications of this fact in "The Ambiguity of Judas: On the Mythicity of a New Testament Figure", *Literature and Theology*, 27(1) (2013), pp. 1-17. See also Wolfgang Reinbold, *Der älteste Bericht über den Tod Jesu: Literarische Analyse und historische Kritik den Passionsdarstellungen der Evangelien* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), p. 316.

<sup>190</sup> Klassen, *Judas*, pp. 66-70.

<sup>191</sup> Klassen, *Judas*, pp. 81-4.

In conclusion, it seems clear that παραδίδομι does not have an explicit sense of betrayal as such, but that this makes little real difference to Mark's characterisation of Judas. Luke makes the change to describing Judas as a προδότης but this surely reflects his superior knowledge of Greek and not a fundamental difference of opinion between himself and Mark. It should also be pointed out that John also uses παραδίδομι of Judas' action despite being, as Klassen would maintain, the most hostile of the four evangelists towards Judas.

### 3.2. Judas in Mark's Gospel

#### The Gathering of the Twelve (Mark 3:13-19)

Judas is first introduced in Mark's Gospel at the end of his list of the Twelve whom Jesus has just appointed, in Mark 3:19. It should be noted that it is Jesus who takes the initiative in appointing the Twelve, so Judas cannot be read as infiltrating the group in any way, even implicitly.<sup>192</sup> Judas' connection to the Twelve is clearly important to Mark. Every reference to him or his role from this point on (Mark 14:10, 14:20, and 14:43) emphasises that he is 'one of the Twelve' (εἷς τῶν δώδεκα). Judas comes last in the list of Mark 3:13-19, as Ἰούδαν Ἰσκαριώθ, ὃς καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτόν. It is also emphasised that Jesus chose those whom he *willed* to be members of the Twelve (προσκαλεῖται οὓς ἠθέληεν αὐτός).<sup>193</sup> Thus, his first appearance introduces what will become the three major motifs of Judas' role in Mark's Gospel: his part in Jesus' arrest; his membership of the Twelve; and the fact that his actions were an aspect of the divine plan which was foreseen and accounted for. Introducing characters by the trait by which they are best-known, whether or not it makes sense from the point of view of the plot, is a feature of texts with origins in oral narratives.<sup>194</sup>

The possible significance of Judas' surname was discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. There I concluded that it was, unfortunately, unlikely to give us much further information on either the historical Judas or Mark's conception of him. C.C. Torrey suggested that Ἰσκαριώθ is a Hellenisation of the Aramaic *Isqarya* meaning 'false one' or 'liar', a title which Judas

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<sup>192</sup> Boring, *Mark*, p101. *Contra* Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), p. 361.

<sup>193</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, p. 166. John uses much more direct methods to show Jesus' control over Judas' betrayal but this sense is also present in Mark.

<sup>194</sup> Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, p. 57.

acquired after handing Jesus over.<sup>195</sup> However, it seems far more likely that Judas (if his existence was historical reality, as this thesis assumes) would have used some kind of patronymic or nickname during his time with Jesus' movement. The name 'Iscariot', whatever its derivation, was surely intended to distinguish Judas Iscariot from all the other men with this extremely common first name in first century Palestine (as mentioned in the second chapter, Josephus alone mentions nine individuals of that name), and as such there would already have been a need for it before Jesus' arrest, much like James the son of Alphaeus or Simon the Cananaean in the same list. It is possible, of course, that Judas had some other distinguishing surname or nickname before his betrayal and that he then received his present title, but Torrey's hypothesis would need to be stronger and better-supported for this possibility to be seriously considered.

Therefore Judas' surname is unlikely to tell us very much about him. It may have had meaning for Mark and his audience, but it seems equally likely that it was just part of Judas' name, a way of distinguishing him from other men of that name in the narrative (such as Jesus' brother of Mark 6:3).<sup>196</sup>

The καὶ of 19b could be translated as 'nevertheless' (since it sometimes denotes something startling or exceptional) rather than its more common meaning as 'and' or 'also', meaning that Judas handed Jesus over even though he, Judas, was one of the Twelve.<sup>197</sup> This would fit with the most obvious and logical explanation for Mark's emphasis on Judas' status as one of the

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<sup>195</sup>C.C. Torrey, "The Name Iscariot", *HTR* 36 (1943)

<sup>196</sup> For a discussion of the possibility that Judas' surname was already incomprehensible to Mark and his audience, see Gustaf Dalman (trans. D.M. Kay), *The Words of Jesus Considered in the Light of Post-Biblical Jewish Teachings and the Aramaic Language* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), p. 52. Rather surprisingly, Joel Marcus argues that at least to Mark and his community Judas' surname would be associated with the Sicarii – an argument that has generally not favour within mainstream Biblical scholarship. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 269.

<sup>197</sup> Boring, *Mark*, p. 100.

Twelve; that he intends his audience to focus on the irony of Judas' actions against Jesus, given that he was a trusted member of Jesus' entourage.

The use of the word *παράδιδωμι* has already been discussed in detail. My conclusion is that Klassen is correct in that the word is better translated as 'to hand over' than 'to betray' but this is not necessarily significant from either a historical or a literary perspective. It should also be noted that Mark again assumes familiarity with the story on the part of his readers. Unless the phrase can be considered self-explanatory, he assumes that his audience will know what he means by describing Judas as 'the one who handed him [Jesus] over'.<sup>198</sup> On the other hand, it should also be noted that this introduction robs Judas' story of even formal tension.<sup>199</sup> We can contrast this with Peter's introduction. Peter is not, after all, introduced as 'the one who would deny him'. To do this would be to flatten all the interest and tension of Peter's role in the Passion. This sets the pattern for the contrast between Judas and Peter in Mark's Gospel. Judas is a flat, uninteresting character who commits an apparently motiveless betrayal.<sup>200</sup> Peter and to a lesser extent the other ten disciples (it will be remembered that they are characterised as one single entity) are characterised, throughout the Passion, with realistic and understandable if not particularly creditable motivations for everything which they do.<sup>201</sup>

An important and obvious objection could be raised here. I have already criticized the fallacy of the 'virgin reader' and suggested that, for instance, Mark could not possibly have expected his audience to pretend that they were unaware of who Peter was before entering his 'story-

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<sup>198</sup> Boring, *Mark*, p. 103.

<sup>199</sup> Cane, *Judas Iscariot*, p. 15.

<sup>200</sup> Klassen's imaginative reconstruction of Judas' motives are questionable as history, but also entirely irrelevant to the question of Judas' role in Mark.

<sup>201</sup> With the possible exception of the egregious way Peter falls asleep three times at Gethsemane, but my analysis of that suggested that there was a hinted element of divine (or at least authorial) will to the sleepiness of Peter, James, and John.

world'. Were they not likewise aware of the story of Peter's denial? I would say yes, in that I do not believe it to be a Markan invention. So does it make any difference whether Judas is identified as the one who handed Jesus over, but Peter is not identified as the one who denied him? I would argue that it is still a significant detail, though not all-important. Mark wishes to *remind* his audience, in 3:19, that Judas handed Jesus over. He wants that characterisation of Judas to be at the forefront of their minds (indeed, it is the only characterisation of Judas he provides), but Peter's role as denier is clearly less central to Mark's characterisation of him. It is just one among the several roles Peter plays in his gospel, roles which we outlined earlier. However, Mark's use of παραδίδομι may be significant for theological reasons. Mark places great emphasis, in 14:17-21, on the fact that Judas is unwittingly fulfilling the divine will. Mark may have deliberately chosen a word that suggests this divine providence, just as Paul may have done in 1 Corinthians 11:21.<sup>202</sup>

Tolbert also makes the claim that the presence of Judas among the Twelve is meant as a direct illustration of Jesus' later saying of Mark 3:25, that a house divided against itself cannot stand; the Twelve form the house which is divided against itself.<sup>203</sup> Once again, the verses seem placed in the wrong order for the first to have a direct bearing on the second, although a case could be made that the 'house divided' saying is illustrated by other instances of squabbling and division among Jesus' disciples, such as Mark 9:34 and 10:41. In a variation on this theory, Jerry Camery-Hoggatt suggests that it is *Israel* that is now divided against itself.<sup>204</sup>

Finally, the fact that Judas is listed last would seem to be a place of ignominy, given that the list begins with the inner circle of Peter, James, and John. However, as Susan Gubar points out,

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<sup>202</sup> For a discussion of this possibility, see Cane, *Judas*, p. 24.

<sup>203</sup> Tolbert, *Sowing*, p. 147.

<sup>204</sup> Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony*, p. 123.

Mark's Jesus twice says that the first shall be last and the last first (9:35 and 10:31), the first time with explicit reference to the priority among the Twelve.<sup>205</sup> All ranking of the Twelve is made temporary and subject to radical rearrangement, all disputes about who should be considered first among them are shown as futile and misguided, and by extension all this also applies to the question who is last and worst among them.

The conclusion regarding Judas' introduction might seem disappointing. Neither his surname, nor the word used to describe his action, nor even his placement among the Twelve tell us anything significant about him or develop his character at all. But this puzzling blank space is the nature of Mark's Judas. He is not a tortured soul, nor a demoniac, nor a greedy thief. Mark never chooses to try and explain his motives or give us any further information about him.<sup>206</sup> We will examine the possible reasons for this reticence and Mark's use of Judas in the concluding section of this chapter.

It should also be pointed out that Judas is one of those given authority to cast out demons, both here in 3:14 and again in 6:7. All of the Twelve are said, in 6:13, to have cast out many demons and healed the sick. This presumably includes Judas.<sup>207</sup> However, this is not necessarily of any great consequence for our understanding of Judas' characterisation.

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<sup>205</sup> Gubar, *Judas*, p. 58.

<sup>206</sup> See Paffenroth, *Judas*, pp. 4-11.

<sup>207</sup> Gubar, *Judas*, p. 58.

### The Passion (Mark 14:10-52)

Judas' decision to betray Jesus comes at the start of the Passion narrative (Mark 14:10-11). Its placement, immediately after the argument over the money spent on the perfume used to anoint Jesus, may have seemed suggestive to the other evangelists (particularly John, if he was familiar with Mark's Gospel or the Passion tradition Mark used as a source). Mark draws no explicit connection himself, although we may be intended to draw a comparison between the selfless attitude of the woman who bought the perfume and that of Judas. Mark uses the verb ἀπέρχομαι to describe Judas leaving Jesus' company to seek out the chief priests (Καὶ Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριώθ ὁ εἷς τῶν δώδεκα ἀπῆλθεν πρὸς τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς). This is also the verb used of Judas and the rest of the Twelve coming to Jesus, when Judas is first introduced at 3:13-19: καὶ ἀπῆλθον πρὸς αὐτόν.<sup>208</sup> The word choice may be a coincidence, but it does create a certain symmetry between Judas' call to Jesus and his departure from him.

Judas' motives are unclear. The priests promise him money, but after he has already proposed handing Jesus over to him. Are we to assume that Judas asked for money as part of the arrangement? The NIV translation weighs the reading this way with its choice of words: 'They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.' But the 'so' is an editorial decision. The Greek simply reads καὶ, a standard Markan sentence opening that implies no necessary causal link between Judas' actions and the money he has been promised.

The other evangelists delve into Judas' motivations more, whether it is love of money, demonic possession, or inherently wicked character. But Mark has no interest in Judas' motives. The

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<sup>208</sup> Boring, *Mark*, p. 385.

fact of the betrayal is what interests Mark, not what lay behind it. Judas is a representative: in this case of utter failure as a disciple and as a friend (as opposed to the redeemable failure which Peter and the other disciples may represent).

The sheer lack of motive for Mark's Judas does not sit well with readers from the age of the modern novel, with its deep interest in the psychology of the individual. Perhaps it could best be compared to the motiveless malice of a character such as Efnysien, from the Welsh epic the *Mabinogion*, who repeatedly sabotages peace-talks between his kingdom and Ireland for no apparent reason.<sup>209</sup>

It is also helpful to look once again at Pliny's account of Christian trials, in particular his description of the paranoid atmosphere in Bithynia at the height of the trials. He notes that once the trials began, denunciations became widespread and that an anonymous pamphlet accusing numerous people of being Christians circulated throughout the province. Pliny's distaste for this new development is evident and unsurprising. Throughout his letters, he makes frequent reference to the dark days of Domitian's reign, during which notorious informers such as Publicius Certus made themselves rich by denouncing wealthy Roman aristocrats to the emperor. This was a conventional sentiment among the Roman upper classes. Tacitus' *Histories* likewise often make scathing references to the practises of informers at court (in his reply, Trajan rules out using any evidence from anonymous sources as evidence against accused Christians).

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<sup>209</sup> It should be noted that Efnysien is introduced as one 'who would cause two of the most loving brothers to fight', in contrast with his peace-making brother Nysien – in the same way as Judas, he is defined from the beginning of the story solely by the part he will play in it. See Sioned Davies (trans.), *The Mabinogion* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), p. 22. No explanation, psychological or otherwise, is ever given for Efnysien's mysterious and inscrutable spite, although he does ultimately sacrifice himself out of remorse for his actions.

Pliny does not make it entirely clear what the accusers have to gain, although one could infer that it is simply pure malice from his tone. Although he does not mention any such questions, it seems likely that at least some of the Christians initially interrogated gave up the names of fellow Christians (or at least the names that they thought their interrogators wanted to hear). This is suggested by the evidence of 1 Clement 5 and 6 and Tacitus' *Annals*, 15:44. It is also possible that there was a financial incentive to the actions of some of the informers –the local government may have promised them a reward or a share in the victims' property after their execution, much as informers at Domitian's court such as Publius Certius made themselves rich.

It seems plausible to suggest, therefore, that those denouncing Christians during periods of persecution were a mixture of Christian apostates seeking to save themselves, professional informers seeking to profit from the situation, and anonymous informers motivated by personal enmities, spite, or other and more inscrutable motives.<sup>210</sup> Judas, in the Gospel of Mark, could be seen as any of these possible three types: he is a member of Jesus' inner circle who turns on him; he is promised money for carrying this out; and his own motives are never expanded upon. Mark discourages speculation on Judas, both his motives and his later fate, such as the other evangelists indulge in. His main concern seems to be his audience recognize that Judas was an evil man whose actions led, despite his intentions, to good. He will receive judgement, but that is not his victim's concern. If one accepts the parallel with the experience of persecution of Mark's own audience, he is steering victims of persecution away from fruitless speculation as to who gave their names up or why, and towards reflection on the glory of martyrdom that it allows them to carry out.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Fox discusses these issues in *Pagans and Christians*, p. 425.

<sup>211</sup> One much-discussed topic in the patristic era was whether it was permissible to deliberately incite arrest and martyrdom or whether a Christian had a duty to try and avoid such a fate, however much they personally longed for it. If this debate was already current in Mark's time, and he took the point of view that it was *not* permissible

The exceptional quality of Judas' action is the subject of Mark 14:17-21, in which Jesus prophesies Judas' assistance in his arrest and curses him. The ritual of breaking bread (at Passover, no less) was a sacred one in the Jewish world, and in the ancient Middle East generally.<sup>212</sup> The intimacy of the moment emphasises the horror of Judas' betrayal, as Jesus does by saying that 'It is one who is eating with me' (ὁ ἐσθίων μετ' ἐμοῦ).<sup>213</sup> Judas, in Mark's Gospel, is a cypher who is not characterised at all, but his act is characterised with intense loathing. Judas is singled out as the worst possible disciple. It is here that John, working from the same Passion narrative tradition, will introduce another factor by bringing in the ideal disciple, the beloved disciple, but Mark does not do so.

Rawlinson was one of the first to suggest the now generally accepted idea that Jesus' prophecy is an apologetic creation of the early church, designed to account for Jesus' failure to detect treachery in his own ranks by retroactively introducing a prophecy of Judas' betrayal from Jesus.<sup>214</sup> The inspiration for Jesus' prophecy is probably Psalm 41:9: 'Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me.'

The disciples' response to Jesus' announcement is to collectively ask *Μήτι ἐγώ*; This is the form of question that implicitly expects a negative response, perhaps already suggesting the overconfidence and lack of self-reflection on their part about to become so apparent in 14:31.

Mark 14:21 is of particular interest: ὅτι ὁ μὲν υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὑπάγει καθὼς γέγραπται περὶ αὐτοῦ, οὐαὶ δὲ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐκείνῳ δι' οὗ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται: καλὸν αὐτῷ εἶ

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to simply give yourself up, his portrayal of Judas may have another dimension to it. Judas is the informer who makes martyrdom possible.

<sup>212</sup> Marcus compares it to the intimacy of Judas' kiss later on (*Mark 8-16*, p. 954). See Clement of Alexandria, *Instructor*, 2.8.

<sup>213</sup> Boring, *Mark*, p. 389.

<sup>214</sup> A.E.J. Rawlinson, *St Mark* (London: Methuen, 1925), pp. 202-3.

οὐκ ἐγεννήθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος. Jesus' prophecy is put in the present tense, suggesting the total certainty of his predictions, and ὁ ἄνθρωπος is neatly contrasted with ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου through the use of the μὲν... δὲ format.<sup>215</sup> These lines, which some commentators interpret as a lament for rather than a judgement on Judas, convey the paradox of Judas' role in the Gospel of Mark.<sup>216</sup> He is instrumental in handing Jesus over and thus in universal salvation, and yet his action is condemned as utterly evil and it is said that it would have been better if he had never been born.<sup>217</sup> It is reminiscent of Mark 4:10-12, in which Jesus claims that he speaks in parables in order to prevent 'those on the outside' from understanding and so being saved.<sup>218</sup> Heikki Raisanen has suggested that these lines had an apologetic function, accounting for failures in evangelistic activity on the part of Mark's community, much as Jesus' prophecy regarding Judas did.<sup>219</sup> Jesus' words could also be read as a plea for Judas to repent, a plea that Peter might be imagined responding to but which Judas will not.<sup>220</sup>

As we have already seen, it is not outside the realm of possibility, in the theology (or rather theologies) of both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, for God to force disobedience to his own will on a human being, even beyond the instances of Isaiah 6:9 and Mark 10:12. Pharaoh's heart is hardened in Exodus 7, a lying spirit is sent to mislead Ahab in 1 Kings 22, and in 2 Thessalonians 2:11, God deludes many into placing their faith in ὁ ἄνομος,

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<sup>215</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, pp. 828-29.

<sup>216</sup> See Boring, *Mark*, p. 390, and Klassen, *Judas*, p. 82. Collins argues that the woe is actually Mark's adaptation of a traditional saying, preserved in Luke 17:1b-2 and Matthew 18:6-7, and that it is Mark who has made it refer to Judas (Collins, *Mark*, p. 652).

<sup>217</sup> Klassen (*Judas*, pp. 82-4) spends considerable energy arguing that Jesus' woe should be interpreted as an expression of concern for his friend Judas and the misunderstanding of his character that future generations will have, arguing that 'perhaps Jesus' perceptive powers into human nature led him to speak these words' (p. 84). I find this reading unpersuasive as a literary analysis of Mark's text, and implausible as a hypothesis about the historical Jesus and Judas, and Klassen's failure to distinguish between the two does not help his case.

<sup>218</sup> Needless to say, this goes against how parables are actually used in much of Mark's Gospel, in which they are not cryptic riddles but stories using everyday imagery and logic to illustrate a point. A full discussion of the complex issue of the so-called 'Parable Theory', its adaptation by Luke and Matthew, and its own use of Isaiah 6:10, is beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>219</sup> Heikki Raisanen, *The 'Messianic Secret' in Mark* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), p. 143.

<sup>220</sup> Oropeza, *Footsteps*, p. 37.

the Lawless One.<sup>221</sup> In this instance, I would argue that Mark, in setting out these verses, intends to do more than simply clear Jesus of the charge that he misjudged his chosen Twelve. He is making the case that great good came out of an evil action, and thus it and the agent who carried it out had a place in the divine plan.<sup>222</sup> As I will discuss in the conclusion, I believe the hortatory power of this argument to be of great significance when we bear in mind what I consider the strong probability that Mark's community had just undergone (or were still undergoing) a period of persecution.

Jesus' prophecy, of course, causes considerable problems for the narrative logic of Mark's Gospel; problems which, as mentioned before, Celsus was gleefully to point out in the second century. It should, however be noted, that Jesus' description of his betrayer as ὁ ἐμβαπτόμενος μετ' ἐμοῦ εἰς τὸ τρύβλιον applies to all of the Twelve in Mark's Gospel, thus acting as a cause for self-reflection on the part of listener as well.<sup>223</sup> It is John who takes the step of having Jesus seemingly clearly and unambiguously identify Judas at the Last Supper.

No mention is made of Judas leaving the party after the Last Supper nor, indeed, how he knew that Jesus would be at Gethsemane afterwards. We have no reason to believe he is not among the Twelve until he appears with the armed group sent to arrest Jesus.

After having found Peter, James, and John asleep for the third time in Mark 14:41-2, Jesus announces: ἀπέχει: ἤλθεν ἡ ὥρα, ἰδοὺ παραδίδοται ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰς τὰς χεῖρας τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν. ἐγείρεσθε ἄγωμεν: ἰδοὺ ὁ παραδιδούς με ἤγγικεν. ἀπέχει presents notorious

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<sup>221</sup> See Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), pp. 224-5

<sup>222</sup> This is the origin of the doctrine of predestination, which Augustine was the first to explicitly develop. However, the hortatory power of the idea, rather than its theological implications, seem of much more importance to Mark.

<sup>223</sup> Augustine Stock, *Call to Discipleship: A Literary Study of Mark's Gospel* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982), p. 195. See also Gould, *Mark*, p. 262.

difficulties for translation. It comes from ἀπέχω, which can mean variously I have; I hold off; I receive in full (as used in Philemon 15: τάχα γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο ἐχωρίσθη πρὸς ὥραν ἵνα αἰώνιον αὐτὸν ἀπέχησ) ; to be enough (in the impersonal); I am distant; or I abstain. The NRSV translates ἀπέχει as ‘Enough!’ while Raymond Brown prefers the financial sense: ‘The money is paid’, in this case referring to Judas’ deal with the chief priests.<sup>224</sup> Matthew and Mark both chose to simply leave the problematic word out of their versions (Matthew 26:45; Luke 22:46). Some MSS of Mark add ὁ τέλος as the subject of the verb, so the sentence can be read as a question: ‘Is the end indeed far off (as your behaviour seems to suggest)?’<sup>225</sup> This is Vincent Taylor’s preferred translation.<sup>226</sup>

Jesus’ use of the passive voice for παραδίδοται once again suggests the element of the divine will to his arrest and subsequent persecution by sinners. When he then announces Judas as ὁ παραδιδούς με there is a fusion between Judas’ intentions and God’s will.

Judas’ final appearance comes when he arrives with the soldiers (Mark 14:43-46). Some commentators have called attention to Judas’ use of Παββι, suggesting that it is a further negative characterisation of Judas, in not giving Jesus sufficient status, or equating him with the teachers of the law. However, there are numerous positive or neutral examples of Jesus being addressed as ‘teacher’, such as 9:17, 10:35 or 12:32. ‘Teacher’ (ραββι) and ‘lord’ (κυριος) are not interchangeable but both are terms of respect. Παββι acknowledges Jesus as a source of wisdom and is used by Jesus’ disciples sometimes but also by friendly outsiders. It is sometimes used ironically or insincerely (as in Mark 12:14) but it is certainly not a

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<sup>224</sup> Brown, *Death*, p. 222.

<sup>225</sup> Boring, *Mark*, p. 396.

<sup>226</sup> Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St Mark* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s, 1963), p. 557.

disrespectful term.<sup>227</sup> Κυριε is a form of address only someone within Jesus' movement would use towards him, but his disciples do not refer to him exclusively this way.

Far more important is the intimate gesture with which Judas identifies Jesus: a kiss. Judas adds one more sacrilege to his betrayal with this gesture of friendship, common as a greeting within and without the early Christian movement, and the verb used in Mark 14:45, καταφιλέω, indicates particularly violent affection. The kiss could be interpreted as a reference to Proverb 26:6: 'Well-meant are the wounds a friend inflicts, but profuse are the kisses of an enemy.' In which case, one could even interpret Peter as the perpetually well-meaning friend and his sleep the wound inflicted on Jesus, contrasting with Judas' treachery. It could also be interpreted as a reference to Joab's treacherous murder of Amasa in 2 Samuel 20:9-10, in which Joab, while kissing Amasa, stabs him through the belly.<sup>228</sup>

In arranging the signal for the kiss, Judas instructs his escort to arrest the man he kisses and lead him away: κρατήσατε αὐτὸν καὶ ἀπάγετε ἀσφαλῶς. Some commentators have drawn attention to ἀσφαλῶς, which could mean 'safely', as in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, Εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια, 'Peace and safety'. Judas could be seen as displaying an unexpected concern for Jesus' life. However, it seems more likely that the word is being used in the sense of 'securely', as in Acts 16:23, ἀσφαλῶς τηρεῖν αὐτούς, 'to guard them securely'.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> *Contra* Boring's suggestion that the title has 'overtones of failed discipleship' in Mark's Gospel (Boring, *Mark*, p. 402). Matthew finds Judas' use of ραββι more significant, and there it is indeed used as a means of underlining Judas' hypocrisy, but I do not find the same to be true in Mark.

<sup>228</sup> See Brown, *Death*, p. 255. Amasa's gory death also bears some resemblance to Judas' death in Acts 1:18, so Luke may also have noticed the resemblance.

<sup>229</sup> See Brown, *Death*, pp. 252-3.

Judas disappears from the narrative afterwards.<sup>230</sup> Both Matthew and Luke detail his death, via suicide (Matthew) or the wrath of God (Luke, in Acts). John does not go into his fate, but does add more detail. For Mark, he has served his purpose and he now vanishes. We should bear in mind that Mark's audience may have been aware of other traditions regarding Judas, perhaps similar to or identical with his gory end in Acts 1:18 or his suicide in Matthew 27:5. Although he makes extensive use of prophecy to forecast events beyond his remit, Mark otherwise stays entirely within the time-frame he has set for himself –the period from the baptism to the resurrection of Jesus. Unlike all the other gospels, he does not even go beyond it to describe the encounters between the risen Christ and his disciples –but as has been argued above, he seems to be relying on his audience's knowledge of such encounters, and alludes to them in the text. Likewise, it seems entirely plausible to suggest that Jesus' words regarding Judas in Mark 14:21 are an allusion to an unpleasant fate suffered by Judas, well-known to the audience but outside Mark's scope.

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<sup>230</sup> Eta Linneman (*Studien zur Passionsgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), p. 41) argues that Mark does not picture the person who attacks the high priest's slave in 14:47 as one of the disciples, since one of them would have attacked Judas rather than some stranger.

## Conclusion

At the end of this examination of Peter and Judas' role in Mark's Gospel, what can be said of Mark's portrayal of them, and consequently his assumptions and prejudices and that of his audience with regard to both men, and the ways in which they are contrasted with each other?

Based on my above findings, Peter seems to have three essential functions in Mark's Gospel, all of which are complementary and to some degree overlap. In the first place, Peter is a *witness*, who guarantees various traditions along with James, John, and once Andrew (Mark 13:3), although, paradoxically, these stories sometimes end with a command to secrecy (e.g. Mark 5:43). Traditionally, this secrecy would have been seen as being lifted after Easter, as with Jesus' command in Mark 9:9. In any case, the logic does not seem to trouble Mark any more than the logical problem of his notorious ending, in which the women's message is apparently never delivered to Peter and the others. As discussed, it seems highly likely that Peter's primary role as a witness is to Jesus' resurrection, an event that never actually takes place in Mark's Gospel, but which is heavily foreshadowed and of which his audience would have been very aware. In any case, Peter's use as a witness in the gospel itself does suggest something about the views Mark and his audience held on him. They clearly believed him to be a reliable source, otherwise there would be no reason to cite him, along with James and John, as the guarantor of various traditions. This in itself seriously undermines the arguments of most commentators who see Mark as hostile towards Peter.

Some of the 'hostile portrayal' theories do account for Peter's use as a witness. For instance, Loisy's generational conflict would admit the value of Peter and the other disciples as witnesses, but not interpreters. In Loisy's view, Mark is criticising the disciples for not having

understood the significance of what they themselves have seen. However, other theories, such as Weeden's, simply fall down on this point. Since Peter is more or less just a satirical reflection of Mark's contemporaries in Weeden's view, why would Mark have him act as an implicit guarantor for anything Jesus said or did?

The second role that Peter plays in Mark's Gospel is that of *disciple*. As discussed in the previous chapter, one of the most significant aspects of this role is that a disciple, by asking leading and sometimes rather literal-minded or imperceptive questions, allows his master to expound his teachings in greater detail or explain cryptic sayings. To get a sense of what the sayings section of the gospel might look like *without* the disciples' constant need for clarification, we need only look at the Gospel of Thomas.

Nor is this dullness by any means an indication that Mark thought poorly of Peter (although I would argue that the historical Peter has very little to do with his function in these sections in any case). Jesus' declared enemies in Mark's Gospel (the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees, the demons, the Roman soldiery, the high priest and Pilate) are not shown as unperceptive or bumbling. The demons are capable of identifying Jesus' true nature long before Peter's announcement of Mark 8:29 (see Mark 1:24, 1:34, and 5:7). Unlike his disciples, the chief priests, scribes, and elders are capable of understanding Jesus' cryptic parables (Mark 12:12) and are competent debaters themselves (Mark 12:13-27). The ability to understand Jesus is not necessarily a positive trait in Mark's Gospel. Moreover, another important aspect of a disciple's role was to make his teacher appear all the more impressive by comparison, Blondell's mimetic irony. This, Peter and his fellows undeniably do.<sup>231</sup> See, for instance, Mark 9:14-29.

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<sup>231</sup> See Macdonald, *Mark*, p. 21.

My suggestion for Peter's third function in Mark's Gospel presumes, based in particular upon Jesus' references to suffering and persecution in the Parable of the Sower and its interpretation (Mark 4:1-20), 8:34-9:10, 10:28-31, and the apocalyptic discourse of 13:3-37, a context of persecution or the immediate aftermath of persecution to Mark's Gospel.<sup>232</sup> The role that Peter plays here is that of a *coward*, what the Donatists would have called a *traditore*. He stands for the people who caved under pressure and renounced their Christian faith. Mark's treatment of Peter in this respect is not gentle, but he also drops hints that Peter can and will be rehabilitated, unlike Judas.<sup>233</sup> It is likely that Mark's audience were aware of a tradition of Peter's martyrdom. Clement of Rome, writing not long afterwards in the late first or early second century alludes to Peter's martyrdom in 1 Clement 5. If they were aware of such a tradition, this would completely alter the depiction of Peter's cowardice, as well as Mark's intention in portraying him in that way.

In any case, the three roles for Peter which I have outlined seem to account satisfactorily for the negative material. Mark *must* be positively inclined towards Peter to some degree to use him as a witness; I have argued that Peter's role as a disciple is literary convention; and while Mark condemns Peter for his cowardice it seems to be strongly implied that he will or already has been forgiven by the end of the gospel. My conclusion is that Mark and his audience were at least sympathetic towards Peter, although they may not have held him in the same high regard as Matthew or even Luke.

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<sup>232</sup> Juel, drawing on the work of Nils Dahl, suggests that the problem facing Mark's community was not persecution but exactly the opposite; they had become too complacent and relaxed and were in danger of falling asleep", as underscored by Mark 13:36 and the scene in Gethsemane. See Juel, *Master*, p. 88. This is an interesting idea, but it depends on a subjective reading of a handful of verses in the text, while the evidence for the Markan community's experience of suffering is in my opinion much stronger and more objective. For instance, Hendrika Roskam has written an impressively detailed analysis of the Greek of the four sections I mention, demonstrating that Mark did not just inherit sayings about persecution but redacted them specifically to heighten and emphasise the references to persecution, showing clearly that this was an important concern for him. See Roskam, *Purpose*, pp. 27-74. See also B.M.F. van Iersel, "The Gospel According to St. Mark – Written for a Persecuted Community?", *Nederlands Theologische Tijdschrift* 34 (1980)

<sup>233</sup> This is essentially Oropeza's theory (see Oropeza, *Footsteps*, pp. 11-47).

Judas, like Peter, has essentially three overlapping and complementary roles. In the first place, he is an *informant*. This is a better and more accurate description of the part he plays in Mark's Gospel than the term 'traitor'. Judas is defined as the one who handed Jesus over, rather than the one who betrayed Jesus' trust or gave away secret information with which he had been entrusted.<sup>234</sup> Judas is simply part of the machinery of persecution and as such his flat, one-dimensional portrayal is effective.

Secondly, Judas is an *apostate*. His association with the Twelve is constantly stressed. As Gubar points out, very little distinguishes him from the other disciples and Peter is, in many ways, treated much more harshly by Jesus and Mark than Judas.<sup>235</sup> However, the previous section on Peter argued that Mark ultimately has a positive view of Peter and the Twelve in general. This being the case, one has to assume that Judas' frequent identification with the Twelve is ironic in nature. It is suggesting that a different kind of behaviour would have been expected from one of the Twelve. He is not like Peter, somebody who failed his first trial for human, understandable reasons and for whom Mark holds out the promise of rehabilitation. He is someone who has willingly stepped outside the Christian community, and as such Mark has no interest in humanizing him or analysing his motives.<sup>236</sup>

Finally, Judas is an *unwitting agent of God*. Everything he does will ultimately lead to Jesus' sacrifice, and thus to great good. Mark's audience should not feel threatened by the existence of men like Judas, because God has accounted for their evil and will use it to the advantage of

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<sup>234</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, Judas' historic role may have involved testifying against Jesus in court, bearing witness to his prophetic threats against the Temple.

<sup>235</sup> Gubar, *Judas*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>236</sup> This argument would be weakened if one suggests that Judas' motive, like that of Peter, was one of fear, as Austin Farrer suggested (Farrer, *Study*, pp. 195-6). However, Mark does not indicate that the moment when Judas chose to inform on Jesus (14:10-11) was linked with fear of persecution.

the divine plan.<sup>237</sup> However, this does not absolve them of responsibility for their actions, for which they will still face judgement. This can be compared with Joseph's speech to his brothers in Genesis 45:4-15, in which Joseph argues that the evil that his brothers did in selling him into slavery ultimately saved Israel.<sup>238</sup>

Judas corresponds to the informers, some of them lapsed Christians and some of them anonymous strangers, who may have denounced Christians among Mark's community, and brought them to trial. Mark is portraying such people as evil, but ultimately unknowing agents of God, in that they are granting Christians the glory of martyrdom as Judas' action permitted Jesus to make the sacrifice of the Crucifixion.

We can conclude that one of the key differences between Peter and Judas in Mark's Gospel is the context in which Mark was writing. He seems to presume his audience is aware of Peter's status as the first witness to the risen Christ, since his ending seems to depend upon that fact for its intended effect. It also seems very likely that Mark also expected his audience to be aware of Peter's later martyrdom. *These facts are what retrospectively distinguish Peter from Judas in Mark's narrative.* Judas is headed back into obscurity at the end of Mark's Gospel, while the audience knows that Peter is bound for rehabilitation and probably ultimately a redemptive death.

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<sup>237</sup> See Cane, *Judas Iscariot*, p. 33.

<sup>238</sup> The correspondence is not perfect, since Joseph absolves his brothers of their crime (Gen 45:5) because of its positive outcome whereas, as we have seen in Mark 14:21, Jesus still calls woe upon the one who hands him over.

## **Chapter 4: Peter and Judas in the Gospel of Matthew**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will look at Peter and Judas in Matthew's Gospel. Although Matthew preserves the vast majority of Mark's Gospel, some of the changes he does make, and the additions he makes of stories featuring Peter and Judas, are very telling. For reasons of space, only these major changes will be highlighted in this chapter –smaller alterations featuring Peter, such as Matthew's use of him to question Jesus in Matthew 15:15, will not be examined in detail and the general discussion will be briefer.

In Matthew's Gospel, we see the reaction of an early reader of Mark's Gospel. The subtle differences in his portrayal of the two characters are because he is filtering such figures through different concerns and in a different context. In particular, Matthew is interested in Peter not just as a disciple, but also as a future leader and source of authority. Judas also holds some additional interest for him in the relationship Jesus' betrayal by Judas has with one of Matthew's preferred themes: the fulfilment of Scripture.

## 1. Setting and Context

As discussed earlier, this thesis accepts the widely-held theory of Matthew's dependence on Mark. Matthew has made numerous additions and amendments to Mark's account, most strikingly the five blocks of teaching material sometimes referred to as the Five Discourses, and he often makes changes to improve Mark's Greek style or to remove undignified or extraneous details but he has cut relatively little from it. Indeed, Matthew may even presume a knowledge of Mark's Gospel on the part of his audience. Thus, in Matthew 26: 67-68, the council members beat Jesus, and mockingly ask him to tell them which of them hit him. Matthew has omitted the important detail, from Mark's parallel account in Mark 14:65, that Jesus was blindfolded at the time, making sense of the taunt. He may simply assume his audience's familiarity with the earlier text at this and other points.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the date of Matthew's Gospel, most scholars are now in general agreement in placing it in the last quarter of the first century.<sup>2</sup> This is in the first case based on Matthew's use of Mark, which is generally presumed to have been written in the late 60s or early 70s.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the reference to the king's soldiers burning the city in Matthew 22:7 is an interpolation

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<sup>1</sup> See Nils Alstrup Dahl, "The Passion Narrative in Matthew" in Graham Stanton (ed.), *The Interpretation of Matthew* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), p. 45. Of course, it may simply be an oversight on Matthew's part but, if so, it is uncharacteristic. Matthew generally tends to improve the logic of Mark's narrative rather than weaken it (e.g. Matthew 26:73, which accounts for Peter's unexplained identification as a Galilean in Mark 14:70).

<sup>2</sup> See W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* Volume 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), pp. 128-131. R.T. France is unusual within recent scholarship in preferring a date for Matthew in the 60s (R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007), pp. 18-19) but the case he makes has not generally been considered persuasive. Likewise, Donald A. Hagner, who also makes a cautious case for Matthew to have been written in the 60s in "Determining the Date of Matthew" in Daniel M. Gurtner, Joel Willitts, Richard A. Burrige (eds.), *Jesus, Matthew's Gospel, and Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), arguing that Matthew seems to presume that the fall of the Temple will usher in the eschaton, and thus it cannot yet have occurred.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 3, p. 99.

into the wedding banquet parable, not present in Luke's parallel, Luke 14:16-24, which seems to be a reference to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE.<sup>4</sup> Based on the woes to the scribes and the Pharisees of Matthew 23: 1-36, and his distaste for the term 'rabbi' being applied to Jesus, Matthew would seem to be at odds with a rabbinic Jewish group of some sort, and the rabbinic movement was not formed until after the Temple's destruction. But Matthew's Gospel cannot have been any later than the start of the second century, since it is seemingly quoted by Ignatius of Antioch in the first decade of that century.<sup>5</sup>

B.H. Streeter first proposed Syria as the location for Matthew in 1924, based on textual clues such as the reference to Jesus' fame spreading throughout 'all Syria' in Matthew 4:24, where Mark 1:28 simply refers to Galilee, and this theory has become widely accepted.<sup>6</sup> Most scholars are more tentative about assigning Matthew to an exact location within Syria, but among those who do, Antioch is a popular suggestion.<sup>7</sup> This is an attractive possibility for two reasons. In the first place, Antioch had a large Jewish population. Matthew is clearly well-versed in the Hebrew Scriptures and the likelihood is that he himself was Jewish, and he and his community were certainly involved in a long-running and apparently bitter dispute with a possibly rabbinic Jewish group.<sup>8</sup> The second reason is that, according to church tradition, Peter had strong ties

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<sup>4</sup> Warren Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, the Epistle to the Ephesians, 14, with its echo of Matthew 12:33.

<sup>6</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, p. 1.138, J. Andrew Doole, *What was Mark for Matthew?* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), p. 3. However, Cedric Vine's *The Audience of Matthew: An Appraisal of the Local Audience Thesis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014) expresses scepticism with the entire idea of reconstructing Matthew's audience, presenting a striking case for the argument that Matthew's narrative is too dependent on Mark to present recognisably context-specific elements in itself. While this thesis does not fully accept this, one must be careful about drawing conclusions too great from too little evidence. In general, this thesis tries not to place too much weight on any one particular change Matthew makes to Mark, but on the apparent general tendency of his redaction.

<sup>7</sup> See Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 42, and the detailed discussion in David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Mathean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), pp. 53-62.

<sup>8</sup> Sim, *Matthew*, pp. 109-62.

to Antioch, and was later claimed as first bishop of the city.<sup>9</sup> He was certainly present in Antioch at least for a time, according to Galatians 2:11. If Matthew was based in Antioch, Peter's association with his hometown might lead to this gospel's noticeable interest in and emphasis on Peter throughout the narrative.<sup>10</sup> As such, this thesis will take it as likely although not certain that Matthew was indeed based in Antioch.

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<sup>9</sup> Origen, *Homilies on Luke* 6:4, Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History*, 3:36. Paul Parvis' essay "When Did Peter Become Bishop of Antioch?" in Bond and Hurtado (eds.), *Peter*, pp. 263-272, examines the question of how and why the tradition of Peter's bishopric arose.

<sup>10</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew* Vol 1, p. 144. Almost all the contributors to David Balch (ed.), *The Social History of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991) agree on Matthew's location in Antioch.

## 2. Peter

### 2.1. Overview: Matthew's Attitude towards Peter

With regard to the purposes of this thesis, Matthew shows a particular interest in Peter, possibly because of the Antioch connection.<sup>11</sup> He expands on Mark's version of the confession at Caesarea (Matthew 16:13-20) by adding a response in which Jesus blesses Peter by name (Μακαριος ει, Σιμων Βαριωνα) and appears to predict his destiny as the foundation of the church.<sup>12</sup> Matthew also adds the intriguing story of Peter attempting to walk on water in emulation of Jesus (Matthew 14:28-31), and adds two brief episodes featuring Peter (Matthew 17:24-27, the story of the temple tax, and Matthew 18:21-35, in which Peter asks Jesus about the limits of forgiveness –an exchange from Q in which Matthew has involved Peter).<sup>13</sup> All in all, Matthew's use of Peter in these sections is typical of the role of disciples in ancient biographical literature, as examined in Chapter 2. Matthew uses Peter's comments, questions, and actions to underline and punctuate important points in Jesus' teachings.<sup>14</sup>

Just as in Mark, Matthew's Peter acts as a spokesman for all twelve disciples, who are not otherwise differentiated in any significant way.<sup>15</sup> There are two possible meanings to the description of Peter as a spokesman. One is that, within the text, the other disciples accept Peter's right to speak for all of them. This appears to be the case in episodes such as Matthew

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<sup>11</sup> Sim, *Matthew*, pp. 198-99.

<sup>12</sup> Hengel, *Peter*, p. 14

<sup>13</sup> Brown, Donfried and Reumann, *Peter*, p. 78.

<sup>14</sup> See J. Andrew Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), p. 265. See also Smith, *Petrine Controversies*, p. 49, who points out that Peter's misunderstandings generally lead to further clarification.

<sup>15</sup> Terence L. Donaldson, "Guiding Readers – Making Disciples: Matthew" in Longenecker, *Patterns*, p. 32, Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1975), p. 327. Jack Dean Kingsbury's literary analysis treats Peter and the disciples as one single unit for the purposes of characterisation –see Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986), pp. 129-45.

17:4, when Peter appears to speak on behalf of himself, James and John, or Matthew 19:27, when he speaks on behalf of all the disciples. Peter's role in this sense is emphasized by Matthew.<sup>16</sup> The other possible sense of the description is that Peter is the *literary* representative of all the disciples. His characteristics, his virtues and his flaws are intended to reflect the collective characteristics of the group. As discussed in the Introduction, this would have been a familiar concept in the ancient world, where 'character', meaning the moral qualities held in common by society (or the lack of those moral qualities) was a more important factor in characterisation than 'personality', the individual and unique aspects of a particular person. And Peter also seems representative in this sense. Nothing throughout the text indicates that we are to take the other disciples as being either better or worse than him.<sup>17</sup>

It is generally commonplace to regard Matthew as being kinder and better-disposed towards the disciples in general, and Peter in particular.<sup>18</sup> A key change is in Matthew's version of the first storm narrative (Mark 4:35-41; Matthew 8:23-27). Mark's Jesus accuses his disciples of having no faith: οὐπω ἔχετε πίστιν; Matthew's Jesus says that his disciples have *little* faith, ὀλιγόπιστοι, a key difference. Matthew's disciples are not as rebuked as often as Mark's disciples (for instance, compare Mark 4:13 with its equivalent in Matthew 13: 18, in which Jesus explains the parable of the sower). In Matthew's version of the story of the request of Zebedee's sons (Mark 10:35-45; Matthew 20-28), it is the mother of James and John who asks for seats of honour. The blame for the selfish request is deflected away from two of the disciples to her.

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<sup>16</sup> Wiarda, *Peter*, pp. 98-99. Among other things, Matthew adds πρῶτος to his introduction of Peter in his list of the Twelve in Matthew 10:2. See Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, p. 117.

<sup>17</sup> David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 248. See also Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Figure of Peter in Matthew's Gospel as a Theological Problem", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 98(1) (1979), p. 80.

<sup>18</sup> For instance, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible: Matthew* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), p. 181, Loisy, *Origins*, p. 367, or Perkins, *Peter*, p. 66.

Why Matthew makes these changes is another question. It was the theory of the Tübingen School, discussed in the previous chapter, that Matthew belonged to the ‘Hebraist’ or ‘Petrine’ faction in the church, looked upon the Twelve rather than Paul as his predecessors, and thus naturally wished them to be portrayed in a positive light.<sup>19</sup> A stronger possibility is that these changes might simply be a reflection of Matthew’s noted tendency towards a more reverential attitude to the story. Matthew consistently edits out details in Mark that show a more fallible or simply human side to Jesus.<sup>20</sup>

One theory, suggested by Gerhard Barth, is that Matthew’s rehabilitation of Peter and the disciples is in fact much more limited than it might appear.<sup>21</sup> Barth argues that all the changes to the disciples’ portrayal mentioned above relate solely to their *understanding*, a concept that Matthew does not conceive of in the same way as Mark.<sup>22</sup> Because of Matthew’s characteristic interest in teaching material, and because the disciples stand as guarantors of this material, he does not wish to portray them as unable to grasp it properly. In other respects, he has no particular interest in rehabilitating the disciples and is even capable of worsening Peter’s portrayal, as with his addition of Matthew 14:28-31, and of an extra maidservant to his version of Peter’s denial in Matthew 26: 69-75.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Baur, *Church History*, pp. 26-45. Although Baur also believed that Matthew was the earliest gospel, and that it was Mark who had made the unflattering changes to the disciples’ portrayal.

<sup>20</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew* Vol 1, pp. 104-105. For instance, in Mark 6:5, Jesus *cannot* do any deeds of power among his unbelieving countrymen (καὶ οὐκ ἐδύνατο ἐκεῖ ποιῆσαι οὐδεμίαν δύναμιν), except for a few healings. In its Matthewan parallel, Matthew 13:58, he *does* not do *many* deeds of power in Nazareth (καὶ οὐκ ἐποίησεν ἐκεῖ δυνάμεις πολλὰς).

<sup>21</sup> Gerhard Barth, “Matthew’s Understanding of Law” in Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London: SCM, 1963).

<sup>22</sup> Barth, “Matthew’s Understanding” in Bornkamm, Barth, and Held, *Tradition*, pp. 104-109.

<sup>23</sup> Ulrich Luz expands on this idea in “The Disciples in the Gospel According to Matthew” in Stanton (ed.), *Interpretation*, pp. 101-108. And Michael Grant suggests that Peter’s significance to Matthew’s community was as the principal link between Jesus and Matthew’s community. See Grant, *Peter*, p. 34. See also Georg Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), pp. 198-206. Also making the case for a negative portrayal of Peter in Matthew are Kari Syreeni, in “Peter as Character and Symbol in the Gospel of Matthew” in David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni (eds.), *Characterisation in the Gospel: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (Sheffield: SAP, 1999) and Arlo J. Nau in *Peter in Matthew: Discipleship, Diplomacy, and Dispraise*

The difficulty with this theory is that, as we have discussed in Chapter 3, lack of intelligence was seen as no bar to a person's ability to accurately pass on tradition in the ancient world. Indeed, it might even be seen as a positive advantage.<sup>24</sup> Luz makes the related suggestion that Jesus' blessing of Peter in Matthew 16:17-19 is Jesus passing this authority not to an individual but to the community as a whole.<sup>25</sup> The evidence for this theory is likewise not strong, and its popularity may owe something to the theological concerns of Protestant scholars.

Even among those who agree that Matthew is positive towards Peter as a historical individual, there are differences over the significance of this fact. Reinhart Hummel represents the most common and general point of view in regarding Peter, for Matthew, as being established in the gospel as a distinct authority, a kind of chief rabbi.<sup>26</sup> Overman has suggested that Matthew is appealing to this authority in the context of intra-church disputes within his community.<sup>27</sup> Saldarini sees a similar use of Peter's claim to authority, but more as a way for Matthew's community to define themselves against other Jewish groups with rival claims.<sup>28</sup> And Sim argues that Matthew's community, which he takes to be based in Antioch, have embraced Peter's side in the dispute between himself and Paul at Antioch, and exalt Peter's authority to define themselves against Pauline Christians.<sup>29</sup> Kingsbury, on the other hand, argues that Peter

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(Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992). Nau's argument is that Matthew represents a charismatic movement within his community in Antioch, at odds with the established leaders who consider themselves heirs to Peter.

<sup>24</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 65-66.

<sup>25</sup> Luz, "Disciples" in Stanton (ed.), *Interpretation*, p. 108. Gundry makes a similar claim – see *Matthew*, p. 334.

<sup>26</sup> Reinhart Hummel, *Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kirche und Judentum im Matthäusevangelium* (Munich: Kaiser, 1966), pp. 59-64.

<sup>27</sup> J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), p. 140.

<sup>28</sup> Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago, IL: UCP, 1994), p. 100.

<sup>29</sup> David Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), p. 198-9. The similarity of Sim's theory to the ideas of the Tübingen School should be noted.

has purely historical significance to Matthew in his role as the first witness to the risen Christ, but that no transferable authority is given to him.<sup>30</sup>

Ultimately, one need not assent to the more detailed and complex proposals for Peter's significance in Matthew to recognize that he does indeed appear to be of exceptional, and generally positive, interest to Matthew.<sup>31</sup> However, this is not to say that Matthew does not in some ways place even more emphasis on Peter's failures than Mark does. This may be *because* Peter was an especially preeminent figure to Matthew's community.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Kingsbury, "Peter", *JBL* 98, pp. 67-83.

<sup>31</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, p. 2.652.

<sup>32</sup> Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, p. 195. David Howell suggests that the text draws a distinction between the ideal disciple, who is a version of the ideal reader, and the actual disciples – Peter and the others. David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), pp. 234-35.

## 2.2. Peter in Matthew's Gospel

### Walking on the Water (Matthew 14:22-33)

Peter's introduction, in Matthew 4:18-20, is virtually identical to Mark's version, although Matthew performs his usual improvements and clarifications of Mark's Greek.<sup>33</sup> Peter next appears prominently in Matthew 14:22-33, an expansion of Mark 6:45-52, in which Jesus walks on the water. In Matthew's expansion, Peter, seeing Jesus walking on the water, asks him to command him to join him. Peter does so, and starts walking across the water, but then is frightened by stormy weather (compare with Matthew 8:23-27 and its equivalent, Mark 4:35-41). He begins to sink, but Jesus rescues him and rebukes him for being of 'little' faith (though not 'no' faith, as in Mark's storm narrative).

Matthew's addition has no equivalent in Luke and so is not thought to be part of Q. The vocabulary and style is distinctly Matthean, so it may be presumed that it is his own composition –either one entirely original, or based on oral tradition. As previously discussed, Raymond Brown, inspired by C.H. Dodd's work, has proposed that this latter is the case and has tentatively put forward an intriguing theory: that the entire story was, in its original form, a post-Easter narrative involving an encounter between the risen Jesus and Peter.<sup>34</sup>

The basis for thinking so is the strong similarity between Matthew 14:22-33 and the epilogue of John (John 21:1-24).<sup>35</sup> In both stories, the disciples are in a boat on the Sea of Galilee (at

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<sup>33</sup> See Gundry, *Matthew*, pp. 61-65.

<sup>34</sup> Brown, Donfried and Reumann, *Peter*, pp. 79-81.

<sup>35</sup> There is a telling anecdote in Mary Laven's *Mission to China: Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit Encounter with the East* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011), p. 233. In producing an illustrated book of stories from the New

night in Matthew, at dawn in John). They see a figure in the distance but do not initially recognise it as Jesus. When assured that is the Lord, Peter impulsively leaps into the water to join his master. In the ensuing encounter between the two, Peter is reproved but ultimately forgiven. Furthermore, Brown argues that this was originally the story of the very first sighting of the risen Jesus.<sup>36</sup> Paul mentions that Peter was the first to see him in 1 Corinthians 15:5 (Paul never mentions the empty tomb tradition or the role of the Gospel's women witnesses). In the original version of this story, Brown argues, Peter is not with the other disciples. He has given up on the mission after Jesus' death and returned to his livelihood with other fishermen. It is Jesus' call and commission that brings his faith back and presumably leads him to reassemble the other disciples. Brown argues that both Jesus' conversation with Peter in John 21 and Jesus' blessing of Peter at Caesarea in Matthew 16 are versions of the same post-Resurrection commission to Peter.<sup>37</sup> Schillebeeckx has gone so far as to propose that the original Resurrection story was of the moment when Peter realised that his sin of cowardice was forgiven, comparing it to Paul's conversion experience.<sup>38</sup> If this is the case, and Matthew was working with a narrative that was originally post-Resurrection, he has made some major changes to our understanding of Peter's role and character by locating the two halves of the story during the living Jesus' ministry: the first half in Matthew 14:22-33 as the water-walking narrative and the second half as the blessing at Caesarea in Matthew 16:17-19.<sup>39</sup>

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Testament in Chinese, one of the stories that the Jesuits chose is Peter's attempt to walk on water. But the accompanying image is, in fact, based on an engraving that illustrated John 21:1-24 (Jesus is standing on the shore in the image in question, and not on the water). Even at a visual level, the stories are very similar. There is also the fact that in Matthew's version of the water-walking stories, the disciples initially mistake Jesus for a φάντασμα, a ghost or apparition (the only use of this word in the New Testament. This assumption makes more sense if the story originally took place in a post-crucifixion context, and the risen Jesus demonstrating that he is flesh and blood and not a spirit or a vision is a theme of post-Resurrection stories such as Luke 24:42 But as Heil points out, the disciples' fear is characteristic of theophanies and the verb form of φάντασμα, φανταζώ, is often used of supernatural phenomena in general (for instance, Hebrews 12:21) (see John Paul Heil, *Jesus Walking on the Sea* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), p. 58.

<sup>36</sup> Brown, *John*, p. 1087.

<sup>37</sup> Brown, *John*, p. 1092.

<sup>38</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1979), p. 389.

<sup>39</sup> Schweizer argues that Brown has gotten the order wrong –that in fact it is John who has transferred a story about the living Jesus into the post-Easter period –see Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Luke* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1984), p. 103.

How is the reader supposed to respond to Peter's behaviour in the story? Are we to applaud the way he leaves the boat or view it as an instance of 'spiritual adolescence' and foolhardiness? Some scholars have argued that Peter's decision to get out of the boat and run to Jesus is typical of the character: a bold, impulsive move that disastrously overestimates Peter's strength. This is characteristic of the motif that Wiarda considers key to Peter's character, the pattern of reversal, in which Peter has good intentions but misunderstands or fails Jesus trying to carry them out.<sup>40</sup> Tasker argues that Peter's request was presumptuous, a failure from the start, and only accepted by Jesus in order to show him his error.<sup>41</sup> But this is not persuasive. The strong indications are that Peter did the right thing in testing his faith, particularly given Jesus' positive response to his request; he simply failed the test.<sup>42</sup> The story has been widely accepted as a parable about believers faced with persecution (the fact that the sea represents chaos and evil support this interpretation), and foreshadows Peter's denial.<sup>43</sup> This will not be the last time that Matthew, like Mark before him, uses Peter to force his audience to consider the nature of failure and surrender under persecution.

### **The Confession at Caesarea (Matthew 16:13-20)**

Matthew makes a highly significant change to the story of Peter's confession at Caesarea (Matthew 16:13-20). In Mark's Gospel, Jesus asks his disciples as a whole who the people say he is; they reply as a whole. He then asks them who they think he is. His use of the plural

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<sup>40</sup> Wiarda, *Peter*, pp. 34-43. Wiarda lists twelve instances of this reversal motif featuring Peter throughout all four gospels, and argues persuasively that Peter is particularly associated with this pattern, not simply part of a general trend of reversals featuring Jesus' disciples.

<sup>41</sup> R.V.G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St Matthew* (London: Tyndale Press, 1961), pp. 145-6.

<sup>42</sup> See Richard Cassidy, *Peter*, p. 72.

<sup>43</sup> See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, p. 2.513.

second-person form, λεγετε, confirms that he is not asking Peter specifically, nor does anything indicate that the setting has changed. When Mark has Peter responding, we should not take this as an individual insight on his part: he is acting, as Mark has established he does, as spokesman for the entire group. Jesus then commands the entire group not to tell anyone the answer they have just given; Peter is not singled out for any individual accolade.

In Matthew's version, Jesus' response to Peter's answer indicates that, in contrast to Mark's version, Peter should be seen as having reached some kind of personal revelation. Jesus blesses Peter specifically (Μακάριος εἶ, Σίμων Βαριωνᾶ) and refers to his destiny to become head of the church. The sense of Mark's Gospel, in which Peter was simply acting as a spokesman for the disciples has been changed entirely by Jesus' response.

Some, such as Gundry, have suggested that the Βαριωνᾶ refers not to Peter's actual father but the prophet Jonah, in reference to the 'sign of Jonah' which Jesus promised at the start of the chapter (16:4).<sup>44</sup> This is the sign of death and resurrection which Jesus will first undergo but which will be repeated by those, like Peter, who follow him. If this interpretation is correct, it is another suggestion that Matthew is counting on an awareness of Peter's eventual fate amongst his audience. It has also been suggested that the surname may be related to an Akkadian loan word meaning 'zealot' or 'terrorist', although this theory has not found favour with most commentators.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 332.

<sup>45</sup> Cullman, *Peter*, p. 23. More imaginatively, R.W. Wall proposed a literary link here between Peter and the prophet Jonah, in that both were initially reluctant to preach to Gentiles. See R.W. Wall, "Peter, 'Son' of Jonah: The Conversion of Cornelius in the Context of Canon", *JSNT* 29 (1987), pp. 79-90.

Some scholars have argued that Peter is not, in fact, given authority in this scene. Gundry, for instance, distinguishes between Πέτρος, Peter's nickname, and πέτρα, rock.<sup>46</sup> Jesus is playing on the connection between the two words but he does not mean to identify Peter with the rock itself. The rock, the foundation of the church, is the teachings of Jesus. Peter represents all believers, he is the church itself which is founded on the rock of Jesus' words and the tension between his qualities, shortcomings and aspirations reflect Matthew's acceptance of the church's inherent problems. The 'keys' which Peter is given are the keys of interpretation given to all believers. Many scholars, such as R.T. France, would disagree, seeing this scene as marking Peter out as a natural leader.<sup>47</sup> He argues that the distinction between Πέτρος and πέτρα is only because the Greek word for 'rock' happens to be feminine. It must be made masculine for a man's nickname (obviously, the Aramaic version of Peter's name, Cephas, as used by Paul in verses such as Galatians 2:11, does not have the same problem). In fact, France argues that Peter's nickname only makes sense in terms of his place as foundation stone of the church.<sup>48</sup> He is certainly not rock-like in his stability or strength, as depicted in the gospels.<sup>49</sup> Raymond Brown likewise argues that this scene specifically explains Peter's nickname, rather than taking it as a given in order to make the pun.<sup>50</sup>

If Peter is singled out for special acclaim by Jesus, he is also singled out for the following rebuke, after misunderstanding. Mark's version, Mark 8:33, includes the line ὁ δὲ ἐπιστραφεὶς καὶ ἰδὼν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ before Jesus rebukes Peter. The point seems to be that all the disciples share equally in Peter's rebuke. Matthew 16:23 removes this line. This may well have

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<sup>46</sup> Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 334.

<sup>47</sup> R.T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), p. 254.

<sup>48</sup> France, *Matthew*, pp. 254-5.

<sup>49</sup> See Foakes-Jackson, *Peter*, p. 31.

<sup>50</sup> Brown, Donfried and Reumann, *Peter*, p. 76. Schweizer, on the other hand, does not see Jesus as actually giving Peter his nickname in this scene – as in Mark's Gospel, he is introduced to the reader already bearing this nickname, and Jesus merely refers to it during the confession at Caesarea. See Schweizer, *Matthew*, p. 75. See p. 6 for more discussion of this issue.

been simply because Mark's phrasing was odd and clumsy, but it still singles Peter out for condemnation to a degree that Mark's version does not. Peter is also described as a σκάνδαλον in Matthew, a stumbling block, which Perkins plausibly suggests may be another play on his nickname, completing the characteristic pattern of reversal.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Transfiguration, Temple Tax, and Forgiveness (Matthew 17:1-13, 17:24-27 and 18:21-22)**

Matthew's version of the Transfiguration makes a small number of changes to Mark's version (Matthew 17:1-13). Peter's suggestion that he build shelters for Jesus, Moses and Elijah sounds less odd, abrupt and impulsive by Matthew's addition of εἰ θελεῖς to Peter's offer, and also makes Peter sound more deferential.<sup>52</sup> It's also possibly significant that Peter offers to do so himself (ποιησῶ), not on behalf of all three disciples (ποιησομεν –Mark 9:5). Matthew also removes Mark's side-note that Peter was scared and did not know what to say. Matthew adds the detail of the disciples falling to the ground in terror. This seems partly to make it clearer how Moses and Elijah disappeared. Mark's καὶ ἐξάπινα περιβλεψάμενοι οὐκέτι οὐδένα εἶδον ἀλλὰ τὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον μεθ' ἑαυτῶν (Mark 9:8) is ambiguous. It is presumably meant to convey that Moses and Elijah disappeared with the passing of the cloud, but the καὶ ἐξάπινα makes it sound as if it happened afterwards. Matthew makes the action clearer by having the disciples fall to the ground; when they look up, Moses and Elijah have disappeared. It also gives another instance of the recurring image in which Peter falls (into the water, in 14:30; asleep, in 26:37), and Jesus stands over him with words of both reassurance and rebuke. Jesus

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<sup>51</sup> Perkins, *Peter*, p. 72.

<sup>52</sup> Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), p. 254.

says to the disciples (in 17:7) precisely what he said when they saw him walking on water: μή φοβεῖσθε.<sup>53</sup> The general effect of Matthew's changes is to make Peter seem more competent.

The story of the temple tax (Matthew 17:24-27) is unique to Matthew and sees Peter playing an important role. The collectors of the temple tax approach Peter and ask whether his teacher pays the temple tax. In the ensuing discussion between Peter and Jesus, Jesus affirms his theoretical right *not* to pay the tax, but tells Peter to go and fish; the first fish he catches will have a coin in its mouth that will pay the tax for them both.

The general consensus on this story is that it reflects a debate going on within Matthew's community, on the issue of whether they should pay taxes.<sup>54</sup> Matthew uses Jesus' response to Peter to acknowledge that Christians are theoretically not obliged to do so, but still strongly encourages them to do so.<sup>55</sup> It is also clear from this section that Peter is regarded within the text as a reliable spokesman for Jesus, since the inquirers go to him with their questions on Jesus' practice.<sup>56</sup> Peter also stands as a source of authority for Matthew's answer on this question. Since it was likely to have been contentious, it must be concluded that Peter was a figure held in exceptional respect by Matthew's audience, whether because of his general reputation as a pillar of the church, or because of local connections (such as the possible link between Peter, Matthew's Gospel, and Antioch).

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<sup>53</sup> France, *Matthew*, p.264.

<sup>54</sup> For instance, Saldarini, *Community*, pp 144-45. Warren Carter has argued that the 'temple tax' is actually a reference to the post-70 Fiscus Judaicus imposed on Jews, and that Matthew is encouraging his audience to pay it (*Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International), p.133). See also Paul Foster's "Vespasian, Nerva, Jesus, and the Fiscus Judaicus" in David B. Capes, April D. DeConick, Helen Bond and Troy Miller (eds.), *Israel's God and Rebecca's Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado and Alan F. Segal* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), pp. 312-15.

<sup>55</sup> Matthew's apparent attitude could be compared to that of Paul, Romans 13:6-7. As discussed in Chapter 3, the level of tolerance with which the Christian cult was treated varied depending on time and place, but refusal to pay taxes would certainly have brought retribution down on the heads of a Christian community.

<sup>56</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), pp. 199-200. See also Cassidy, *Peter*, p. 78.

The final mention of Peter (besides his expression of doubts on behalf of the group in Matthew 19:27, previously mentioned) before the Passion is Matthew 18:21-22, which follows up a discussion of church discipline in 18:15-20. Peter asks how many times a brother must be forgiven –as many as seven? Not seven but seventy-seven is Jesus' reply.

It is important to note that Peter's suggestion of forgiving a brother seven times is not meant to sound ungenerous. Seven was the traditional number of fullness, and numerous rabbinic texts regard three as an ample number of times to extend forgiveness.<sup>57</sup> But Jesus responds with a hyperbolically high number. The conclusion is that there must and can be no limitation to forgiveness.

There is nothing unusual about the fact that it is Peter who asks the question. In all of the gospels, Peter plays the role of lead disciple, as discussed in Chapter 3, who takes on the responsibility of asking these questions, supplying these common-sense ideas, and being answered by the evidence of his teacher's greater wisdom, generosity, or courage. But in the light of the events of the Passion, there may still be some special significance intended to this exchange between Peter and Jesus, in which the boundlessness of forgiveness is so stressed.

### **The Passion (Matthew 26:31-28:20)**

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<sup>57</sup> For the full list of rabbinic texts, see Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993), p. 537.

In Matthew 26:31-35, Jesus predicts the general failure of all the disciples. This takes the form of a quote from Zechariah, 13:7, and refers to them as the sheep, τα πρόβατα. The redeemable nature of this failure is emphasised by Jesus telling them he will go to Galilee afterwards, where they should follow. Peter insists that he will not deny Jesus, prompting a specific prophecy of his denial from Jesus.<sup>58</sup> Peter does distinguish himself with the force of his insistence on his loyalty. However, all the other disciples echo him (ὁμοίως καὶ πάντες οἱ μαθηταὶ εἶπαν).<sup>59</sup> Luke adapts this scene to include an assurance of Peter's eventual rehabilitation (Luke 22:32), as does John (John 13:36) but Matthew does not. This is the first of several instances in which Matthew seems almost to go out of his way to avoid resolving the question of what happened to Peter after his denial.

Matthew 26:36-46 is very similar to its source in Mark, with few substantial changes. Jesus does not refer to Peter as Simon in Matthew 26:40, which some scholars read as an additional rebuke, but this may just reflect Matthew's noted preference for the name Peter over Simon in any case.<sup>60</sup>

Matthew's account of Peter's denial (Matthew 26:69-75) is broadly the same as that of Mark. Matthew omits the detail of Peter warming himself by the fire: a typically material Markan detail (like the cushion on which Jesus sleeps in the storm narrative of Mark 4:38). Peter's transgression is made even worse by the fact that in 26:72, he swears an oath that he does not know Jesus, a direct violation of Jesus' prohibition against swearing oaths in Matthew 5:33-

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<sup>58</sup> Davies and Allison suggest, admittedly speculatively, that the tradition may originally have contained two separate prophecies, one referring to all the disciples and one just to Peter, which Mark then combined in a natural and logical way, by having Peter protest at the first prophecy, to be answered by Jesus' prophecy applying specifically to him. See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, p. 3.483.

<sup>59</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, p. 3.184.

<sup>60</sup> See Chapter 3, p. 37.

37.<sup>61</sup> Matthew adds another maid to Peter's interrogation, reflecting his preference for pairs of characters (as with the two blind men in Matthew 20:29-33). Matthew also improves the narrative logic of the scene. It's not clear in Mark's version how Peter's interlocutors know that he's a Galilean (Mark 14:70), whereas in Matthew's versions, Peter's accusers recognise his accent (Matthew 26:73).<sup>62</sup> Likewise, Matthew simplifies the prophesied circumstances of Peter's denial, from two cock-crows to one.<sup>63</sup>

Wiarda suggests that tension is created during the scene leading up to the denial, by the audience's uncertainty over Peter.<sup>64</sup> Impressed by his bravery in following Jesus to the high priest's house, the audience may wonder if Jesus was wrong about Peter's denial. However, the denial has simply been foreshadowed and symbolically played out too often over the course of the gospel, not to mention the fact that we may presume that Matthew's community already knew the story of Peter's denial.<sup>65</sup> It should feel tragically inevitable.<sup>66</sup> As in Mark's Gospel, Peter weeps after realising how he has failed Jesus, and Matthew adds *πικρῶς* as an intensifier (Matthew 26:75). Mary Anne Tolbert has argued that Peter's tears should not be taken as a sign of repentance as such, rather simply an awareness of his failure, like the rich young man's grief in Mark 10:22 and Matthew 19:22.<sup>67</sup> However, the much more widely-held view is that, at least in Matthew's Gospel, Peter's remorse is not hollow but paves the way for his redemption, unlike the suicidal regret of Judas.<sup>68</sup> Peter's weakness is both a warning and an encouragement to Matthew's audience.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Paul S. Minear, *Matthew: The Teacher's Gospel* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984), p. 133.

<sup>62</sup> Dibelius argues that Jewish texts of the period show that Galileans had a pronounced and distinctive accent. See Martin Dibelius (trans. Charles B. Hedrick and Frederick C. Grant), *Jesus* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1949), p. 40.

<sup>63</sup> Overman, *Church and Community*, pp. 367-68.

<sup>64</sup> Wiarda, *Peter*, p. 86.

<sup>65</sup> Keener, *Matthew*, p. 654.

<sup>66</sup> See Perkins, *Peter*, p. 64.

<sup>67</sup> Tolbert, *Sowing*, p. 218.

<sup>68</sup> France, *Matthew*, p. 1038; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, pp. 562-571; Keener, *Matthew*, p. 654.

<sup>69</sup> Hagner, *Matthew*, p. 807.

Although Jesus addresses all eleven surviving disciples at the end of the gospel (28:16-20), there is no personal scene of reconciliation and forgiveness between Peter and him, as there is in John's Gospel (John 21:1-24). This is particularly noticeable because Matthew's Gospel makes a point of having Jesus single out Peter among the disciples and address both praise and criticism to him (most significantly, of course, in Matthew 16:17-19). What is more, unlike Mark, Matthew is not indifferent to issues such as character resolution. Mark's Judas, task accomplished, simply disappears but Matthew takes the time to reveal his remorse, his attempt to return his pay and his suicide (Matthew 27:3-10). But regarding Peter, Matthew even goes so far as to remove Mark's one fleeting post-Resurrection reference to Peter in Mark 16:7: 'But go, tell his disciples and Peter...' (τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ). Matthew's angel, in Matthew 28:7, simply refers to the disciples (although that obviously includes Peter).

Gundry's position is that this is because Peter's denial, in Matthew's Gospel, constituted definitive apostasy.<sup>70</sup> But J.P. Meier is justifiably dismissive of this claim, pointing out the reference in Matthew 28:16 to the eleven surviving disciples' journey to Galilee clearly includes Peter.<sup>71</sup> Overman suggests that Peter receives no special rehabilitation in Matthew's Gospel because there is nothing special about his denial; he did no better and no worse than any other disciple after Jesus' arrest and thus the general rehabilitation at the end of the gospel should be taken as applying to him as well.<sup>72</sup> But we should bear in mind that Matthew's audience can be taken as being very much aware of Peter's high status within the early church,

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<sup>70</sup> Gundry, *Matthew*, pp. 548-551.

<sup>71</sup> John P. Meier, "Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art (Book Review)", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 103(3) (1984), pp. 475-477. It could also be argued that Gundry's suggestion contradicts his own theory about the significance of Peter's surname.

<sup>72</sup> Overman, *Church and Community*, pp. 370-71.

particularly given the possible Antioch connections. Reference to his rehabilitation would be seen as both unnecessary and less effective, from a narrative point of view.

### 3. Judas

#### 3.1. Overview: Matthew's Attitude towards Judas

Matthew does not add much to Mark's portrayal of Judas, with one important exception. In his only major addition to Mark's Passion narrative, he gives us the story of Judas' remorse and suicide (Matthew 27:3-10). This story has some details in common with Luke's version of Judas' death (the Field of Blood or Ἀγρὸς Αἵματος, most prominently). Because of this, it seems likely that Matthew and Luke were drawing on the same source, a Christian tradition that linked Judas' death in some way to a location nicknamed the Field of Blood. Matthew has combined this tradition with Mark's scanty details on Judas to create a theologically charged account of the betrayer's death.

Many commentators assume that Matthew has more sympathy for Judas than Mark, given that his only major addition to the Passion is the story of Judas' repentance and suicide.<sup>73</sup> This is possible but it is important to note that Matthew has clearly discernible literary and theological motives in the addition of the story of Judas' death, reasons which are less to do with sympathy for the traitor and more with one of his favoured themes, the fulfilment of prophecy.

In general, however, Judas is not a figure of great prominence in Matthew's Gospel. As we shall see, Matthew's main interest in him is in providing a contrast with Peter. Although they both fail Jesus, Matthew uses various literary techniques to emphasise that it is Judas' failure that is the more egregious. Matthew also uses Judas to symbolize the rejection of Jesus by his own people, and Judas' death in Matthew's Gospel ominously foreshadows the Jewish War.

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<sup>73</sup> Saari, *Judas*, pp. 91-98; Klassen, *Judas*, pp. 96-107.

### 3.2. Judas in Matthew's Gospel

#### The Passion (Matthew 26:14-27:10)

Judas' decision to betray Jesus comes in Matthew 26: 14-16. Matthew keeps Mark's juxtaposition of this scene with the immediately preceding episode of the woman who anoints Jesus (Matthew 26:6-13).<sup>74</sup> Unlike Mark's Judas, the motivations of Matthew's Judas are made explicitly clear: he asks the chief priests *Τί θέλετέ μοι δοῦναι κἀγὼ ὑμῖν παραδώσω αὐτόν;* ('What will you give me if I hand him over to you?'). The chief priests pay Judas thirty pieces of silver. It is important to the plot that they pay him on the spot, as opposed to simply promising him the money, as in Mark 14:11. This allows Judas to return it later on.<sup>75</sup>

Matthew's changes are important and characteristic. Judas' new concern with money places the selfless behaviour of the woman with the ointment in even sharper contrast than previously.<sup>76</sup> The exact sum is generally taken as a reference to the payment of the shepherd in Zechariah 11:12, particularly since both sums of money are ultimately thrown into the temple treasury.<sup>77</sup> Some commentators also see a connection to the sum required for restitution after the killing of a slave in Exodus 21:32.<sup>78</sup> In either case, the sum itself should be seen as derisively low, far from the huge sum spent on the ointment (given in Mark 14:5, though not Matthew, as over three hundred denarii). Although Judas' motive is greed in this gospel, he asks for a remarkably small sum (which he ultimately returns). Once again, it is clear that the evangelists

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<sup>74</sup> Schlatter notes the contrast between the woman's selflessness and Judas' selfishness. Adolf Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthäus* (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1948), p. 737.

<sup>75</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, p. 3.450.

<sup>76</sup> Edwards reads a direct connection, that Judas was one of those protesting the waste, as being strongly implied. Richard A. Edwards, *Matthew's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985), p. 85.

<sup>77</sup> Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, pp. 316-17. Matthew's Judas asking how much may be intended less to explain his motives and more to give Matthew an opportunity to specify the exact sum in question.

<sup>78</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, p. 3.452. See also Susan Gubar, *Judas: a Biography* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2009), pp. 68-70.

have other concerns than a modern consistency of motivation and character; in this case, Matthew's characteristic interest in relating the events of Jesus' life to passages from Scripture.

Matthew preserves Mark's account of Jesus' prediction of his betrayal, the protests of his disciples ('Surely not I, Lord?'), and his woe on the betrayer (Matthew: 26:20-24), but he adds a detail of his own. Judas' protest is singled out in 26:25 and he addresses Jesus as ῥαββί and not κύριος as the other disciples do (the use of both titles is also a Matthean addition to this section). Jesus' response to Judas, Σὺ εἶπας, is identical to his later response to Pilate in Matthew 27:11, when asked if he is King of the Jews.

The reasons for Judas' response being highlighted in this manner have been debated. Some feel that, along with his later remorse, it makes Judas a more sympathetic character in Matthew's Gospel. He asks Jesus if he is the betrayer because he is seemingly unaware himself, or perhaps in a spirit of irony or reluctant resignation, or as a plea for Jesus to prevent the betrayal.<sup>79</sup> But a more straightforward and plausible interpretation is that Judas is simply trying to blend in and disguise his true intentions by echoing his fellow disciples' protests.<sup>80</sup> However, he is still linguistically distinguished from the others, marked out by his choice of title for Jesus. Judas calls Jesus ῥαββί, and he will later address him this way again in Gethsemane in Matthew 26:49. Although in Mark, Peter addresses Jesus as 'Rabbi' (Mark 9:5, 11:21), it has entirely negative connotations in Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 23:7-8) and Judas is the only disciple to use it.<sup>81</sup> It seems very likely, therefore, that Judas' language is meant to identify him with the latter-day Jewish group with whom Matthew is in conflict, who may have been an early rabbinic or proto-rabbinic group.<sup>82</sup> Jesus' response to Judas, wonderfully terse and ironic,

<sup>79</sup> Overman, *Church and Community*, pp. 358-60.

<sup>80</sup> France, *Matthew*, p. 990.

<sup>81</sup> Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, p.203; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, pp. 3.459-464.

<sup>82</sup> Overman, *Church and Community*, p. 360; Sim, *Matthew*, p. 123.

fulfils the double function of making clear that Jesus was aware of exactly which disciple would betray him but also explaining the failure of the other disciples to act. Jesus' response is ambiguous and non-committal (just as it is in response to Pilate). It could mean 'Yes, as you say, it is not you', it could also mean, 'Yes, as you say, it is you' (and *you* must accept the consequences).<sup>83</sup> Hearing it, the other disciples have no reason to believe that Judas is being identified as the traitor, but it is clear to the audience.

Judas arrives, with a crowd of armed Temple servants, in Matthew 26:47. Matthew preserves the signal of a kiss from Mark's Gospel, and also the fact that Judas addresses Jesus as 'Rabbi' (as he does in Mark 14:45). As we have seen, however, Judas is unique among the disciples in using this term in Matthew's Gospel, though not in Mark. Perhaps Judas' original use of ῥαββί in Mark struck Matthew as of greater significance than it might to us, because of the conflicts taking place in his own milieu. Matthew (Matthew 26:50) also adds Jesus' reply to Judas: Ἐταῖρε, ἐφ' ὃ πάρει.

This terse phrase is susceptible to an even larger number of possible interpretations than Σὸ εἶπας. The NRSV translates it as 'Friend, do what you are here to do.' This has the effect of placing Jesus firmly in control of his own arrest and betrayal, by actually commanding Judas to carry his work out, a theme that John will achieve through similar means in his own gospel.<sup>84</sup> As with the prediction of woe, it takes some of the horror and difficulty out of the betrayal. But that is not the only possible reading. The Authorized Version preferred 'Friend, wherefore art thou come?' and this sense, that Jesus is asking a question rather than issuing a command, has been followed by more modern commentators. Margaret Davies also considers the possibility

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<sup>83</sup> It contains the same sceptical overtones of a colloquial English phrase such as 'If you say so!' in response to a declaration.

<sup>84</sup> As does Matthew's addition of another passion prediction from Jesus in Matthew 26:1-2, directly before the chief priests gather.

that it is intended as an exclamation of horror: ‘Friend, what a deed you are here for!’<sup>85</sup> Considering these and a number of other possibilities, Davies and Allison eventually express a preference for ‘Friend, is *that* [the kiss] why you are here?’ and their argument is persuasive, not least because it is consistent with the ironic, even arch, tone of Jesus’ one other exchange with Judas in Matthew’s Gospel, in Matthew 26:25.<sup>86</sup>

The story of Judas’ remorse and suicide (Matthew 27:3-10), Matthew’s only substantial addition to Mark’s Passion narrative, follows immediately after Peter’s denial, heightening the sense of a parallel between the two disciples, the last two to be mentioned by name in the gospel.<sup>87</sup> The conclusion of Judas’ story is placed between Jesus’ trial and his meeting with Pilate, so as not to interrupt the narrative flow.<sup>88</sup> Seeing Jesus condemned, Judas feels remorse and attempts to return the thirty pieces of silver, declaring that he has sinned by betraying innocent blood (echoing Deuteronomy 27:25), although the reason for his change of heart is unclear. The priests refuse it, so he throws it into the temple, and then hangs himself. Seeing the sum as blood money and therefore unclean, the priests decide to use it to establish a graveyard for strangers, the Field of Blood.

There are a couple of similarities with Acts 1:16-20, Luke’s version of Judas’ death. Both feature a ‘Field of Blood’ outside Jerusalem, purchased with the reward for Jesus’ capture, and neither feature Judas living to enjoy his payment. But otherwise, the details of the account are completely different. The most likely explanation is that the early church preserved the tradition of a connection of some kind between Judas and a place known as the Field of Blood,

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<sup>85</sup> Davies, *Matthew*, p. 186.

<sup>86</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, p. 3.510.

<sup>87</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, p. 3.571.

<sup>88</sup> France, *Matthew*, p. 1037.

but not the details of this connection, and so both Matthew and Luke independently fleshed it out.<sup>89</sup>

Matthew's additions are certainly characteristic. In the first place, the story itself serves to fulfil Jesus' woe to Judas of Matthew 26:24, Matthew having a special interest in the fulfilment of prophecy.<sup>90</sup> The reference to the Hebrew Scriptures, a mixture of Zecariah 11:12 and Jeremiah 32:6-15, is also highly characteristic of Matthew, and Judas' decision to hang himself echoes the suicide of Ahithophel in 2 Samuel 17:23, after his betrayal of David.<sup>91</sup> The fulfilment of prophecy also indicates that God's plan encompasses even betrayal.<sup>92</sup> The fact that the priests acknowledge the silver as blood money indicates that they accept their guilt for Jesus' death, an acceptance made both explicit and general in Matthew 27:25, foreshadowing the violence and suffering of the Jewish War.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, Brown sees Matthew's main interest in the scene as being a depiction of the frantic and futile efforts of those responsible for Jesus' death to rid themselves of the symbol of their responsibility (see Matthew 23:30-31).<sup>94</sup>

How was Matthew's audience intended to take Judas' remorse and suicide? It might be taken as a final redemptive action for Judas.<sup>95</sup> But rehabilitation would contradict Jesus' prediction of woe to his betrayer.<sup>96</sup> It has been argued that Matthew's use of μεταμεληθεις rather than

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<sup>89</sup> See Paffenroth, *Judas*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>90</sup> Dahl, "Passion", in Stanton (ed.), *Interpretation*, p. 49.

<sup>91</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, pp. 3.565-66. Ahitophel and Judas are the only two characters in the Bible to hang themselves, although Sarah considers doing so in Tobit 3:10. Wilhelm Rothfuchs suggests, in *Die Erfüllungszitate des Matthäus-Evangeliums* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1969), pp. 43-44, that Matthew may invoke Jeremiah because of his historic role as the prophet of final judgement on Jerusalem.

<sup>92</sup> Margaret Davies, *Matthew* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), p. 193.

<sup>93</sup> Keener, *Matthew*, p. 661.

<sup>94</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *Death*, p. 637.

<sup>95</sup> David Daube, in "Judas", *California Law Review*, 82(1) (1994), pp. 95-108. Daube writes with the intense passion that Judas' status as an outsider and a perceived scapegoat seems to always arouse in certain writers, such as William Klassen and Hyam Maccoby. The problem with his case, as with those of the other two mentioned, is that the exact nature of his position is unclear and further obscured by his dramatic tone: is he making a literary, a historical, or a theological case for Judas' rehabilitation?

<sup>96</sup> Brown, *Death*, p. 641.

μετανοεῖν to reflect Judas' state of mind is significant, indicating that Judas' regret is ultimately hollow and not fruitful as genuine repentance would be.<sup>97</sup> But the difference between the two words is not as great as all that and Matthew's choice of words could be taken to describe Judas' state of mind in that single moment, as David Daube has argued.<sup>98</sup>

It might instead be more appropriate to consider instead the nature of Judas' action. James Tabor and Arthur Droge have argued that Judas' action was an atonement for his sin.<sup>99</sup> But although there was a tradition of noble and heroic suicide in the Graeco-Roman tradition, and there are Jewish texts that celebrate martyrdom (for instance, 4 Maccabees 17:11-24), suicide itself (as opposed to martyrdom at the hands of an oppressor) is condemned in Jewish texts of the period, such as Josephus' *War* 3.5:369: 'Now, self-murder is a crime most remote from the common nature of all animals, and an instance of impiety against God our Creator.'<sup>100</sup>

Even in the Graeco-Roman tradition, it could be doubted that suicide, particularly suicide by hanging, would erase the infamy of a traitor, as this passage from Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica*, Book 2: 772-801, a poetic retelling of the story of Jason and the Golden Fleece makes clear:

But as for me, on the day when he bides the contest in triumph, may I die either straining  
my neck in the noose from the roof-tree or tasting drugs destructive of life. But even

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<sup>97</sup> Hagner, *Matthew*, p. 812. However Origen, in *Contra Celsum* 2.11, interprets Judas' repentance as genuine.

<sup>98</sup> Daube, "Judas", p. 97.

<sup>99</sup> J.D. Tabor and Arthur J. Droge, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), p. 113.

<sup>100</sup> William Whiston's translation. See Brown, *Death*, p. 643. Josephus, of course, also wrote Eleazar's famous speech in favour of suicide in *The Jewish War* 7.8.7 but Mason has argued persuasively that Josephus is simply trying to write from Eleazar's point of view, in the Thucydides style, and that Eleazar's point of view does not reflect his own (Mason, *Josephus*, p. 193-94).

so, when I am dead, they will fling out taunts against me; and every city far away will ring with my doom...<sup>101</sup>

Medea, the speaker, is contemplating betraying her country for the sake of her love, Jason, then killing herself to evade the shame of such an action. She ultimately decides against suicide because she is aware that even killing herself cannot wipe out the shame. It seems most likely, therefore, that rather than a redemptive act of repentance, Matthew sees Judas' suicide as the shameful fate which Jesus had predicted for him.<sup>102</sup>

Some, such as R.T. France, have argued that the fundamental distinction between Peter and Judas in Matthew's Gospel is that Peter sinned only with words whereas Judas' premeditated betrayal was one of action, and therefore unforgivable.<sup>103</sup> Keener, on the other hand, argues that the difference between the two disciples lies in their *response* to their failures, both of which are forgivable as everything is forgivable.<sup>104</sup> Brown suggests that the key difference is Judas' partial responsibility for the shedding of Jesus' blood.<sup>105</sup> However, the real difference, to Matthew's mind, seems to be prophecy itself; both Judas and Peter simply play their parts in the fulfilment of prophecy.

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<sup>101</sup> Apollonius of Rhodes (trans. R.C. Seaton), *Argonautica* (London: William Heinemann, 1912).

<sup>102</sup> Contra Saari, *Judas*, p. 95.

<sup>103</sup> France, *Matthew*, p. 1038.

<sup>104</sup> Keener, *Matthew*, pp. 654-656. Keener also suggests that the priests are also the real targets of this episode's satire, in the contrast between their immense concern for purity laws and their total indifference to the fate of their own agent.

<sup>105</sup> Brown, *Death*, p. 641.

## Conclusion

Pedro Valente refers to Peter and Judas, paired in various ways throughout the gospels, as the two faces of Janus, and this is especially true of their use in Matthew's Gospel.<sup>106</sup> As previously discussed, Mark used the techniques of mimetic irony to keep his audience at a certain distance from Peter, even at times when they were also encouraged to identify with him. The focus was always on his relationship with Jesus, and the ways in which Peter's qualities, like those of Socrates' interlocutors or Apollonius' disciple Damis, could be used to make Jesus more impressive.

That feature of Peter's characterisation is still present in Matthew's Gospel but it is muted, with a greater emphasis on Peter's authority. This may be in part because of what Peter represented to Matthew's audience. But it is also because Peter is not just being characterised in relation to Jesus. He is also being characterised in relation to Judas. It is all the more important to distinguish him because the two perform similar acts of apostasy at the climax of the gospel. We are also given more on Judas' motives and feelings about the betrayal. Mark's vision of an anonymous informer has been replaced by a more inherently knowable person.

However, Matthew has already drawn attention to the authority Peter has received from Jesus, and alleviated much of the most stinging aspects of Mark's portrait of him as a stereotypical disciple. We are given no such sense of any redeeming features from Judas.

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<sup>106</sup> Pedro Valente, "Le traître nécessaire?: Judas l'Isariote", *Revue française de psychoanalyse*, 72(4) (2008). David E. Garland also notes the parallels between them in *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the First Gospel* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1993), p. 255.

Peter and Judas' reactions to their actions are placed back to back in Matthew's Gospel. Peter's reaction is to weep bitterly, fulfilling the requirements Cyprian of Carthage, dealing with his own church crisis in *On the Lapsed* 30, would later make for apostates to re-enter the church:

Do we believe that a man is lamenting with his whole heart, that he is entreating the Lord with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning, who from the first day of his sin daily frequents the bathing-places with women; who, feeding at rich banquets, and puffed out with fuller dainties, belches forth on the next day his indigestions, and does not dispense of his meat and drink so as to aid the necessity of the poor?<sup>107</sup>

Judas, by contrast, enters into a fit of suicidal despair.<sup>108</sup> His death scene is laced with references to scriptural forecasts. At the same time that Matthew portrays the incorrect reaction to apostasy and failure on Judas' part, he also portrays it as having been dictated by the scriptures long ago, leaving Judas hanging in a web of prophecy. Even more so than Mark, Matthew's version of events thus has a hortatory aspect, in making such an emphatic point of Judas' attempt at evil as simply part of the divine plan.

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<sup>107</sup> Cyprian of Carthage (trans. Robert Ernest Wallis), *The Writings of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1868).

<sup>108</sup> Garland suggests that his mistake may have been seeking absolution from the *Temple*, and not Jesus. Garland, *Matthew*, p. 256.

## Chapter 5: Peter and Judas in Luke-Acts

### Introduction

Luke provides a unique opportunity for a study of Peter and Judas. With Acts, Luke continues the narrative of Christian history begun in his gospel, and is able to expand on the post-Resurrection career of Peter (and, to a much lesser extent, Judas) –an aspect of the story that the other evangelists only hint at.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Matthew does something to soften Mark’s apparently harsh portrayal of all the disciples, and in particular that of Peter. Luke goes even further in this respect.<sup>1</sup> The most unflattering elements of the disciples’ portrayal are toned down or omitted. In Luke 8:25, Jesus’ rebuke of his terror-stricken followers is changed to ‘Where is your faith?’ (Ποῦ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν;) from that of Mark’s Jesus in Mark 4:40 ‘Have you no faith?’ (οὐπω ἔχετε πίστιν;). Likewise, the sarcastic sting of their protest of the impossibility of feeding the five thousand in Mark 6:37 is extracted by a blander and less blatantly sceptical response in Luke 9:13: εἰ μήτι πορευθέντες ἡμεῖς ἀγοράσωμεν εἰς πάντα τὸν λαὸν τοῦτον βρώματα.<sup>2</sup> In Luke 9:45, Luke also accounts for the disciples’ inability to understand the plain meaning of Jesus’ prediction of his own suffering and death in a way that does not require them to be extraordinarily obtuse.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Richard N. Longenecker, “Taking Up the Cross Daily: Discipleship in Luke-Acts” in Longenecker, *Patterns*, p. 55 or Oropeza, *Footsteps*, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> Luke’s disciples still highlight the difficulty of what they think they are being asked to do, but Luke omits Mark’s disciples’ estimate of the huge amount which this would cost –two hundred denarii.

<sup>3</sup> Luke explains that the meaning of Jesus’ words were concealed from the disciples at that point in time (Luke 9:45, reiterated in Luke 18:34). See François Bovon (trans. Christine M. Thomas), *Luke* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002), p. 363.

Most notably, Luke largely eschews the Markan motif of the disciples abandoning Jesus and fleeing during the Passion. In Luke 22:28, Jesus tells the disciples ‘You are those who have stood by me in my trials’ (ὁμεῖς δέ ἐστε οἱ διαμεμενηκότες μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἐν τοῖς πειρασμοῖς μου), a description which could in no way be applied to Mark’s disciples during the Passion. He also omits the Zecariah prophecy in Mark 14:27 concerning the scattering of the sheep, and refers to *all* those who knew Jesus, and not just the women of Mark 15:40, looking on at the crucifixion in Luke 23:49.<sup>4</sup>

As we shall see, Peter very much shares in this general rehabilitation. Indeed, some commentators have suggested that Luke might have omitted the denial itself if it had not become such a well-known and inextricable part of Christian lore at this point.<sup>5</sup> But, as will be discussed, Luke’s use of the denial is in fact characteristic of his general approach to the low points and disputes of early Christian history. He acknowledges these events but plays them down. As Andrianjatov Rakotoharintsifa put it: ‘Luke’s ecumenism does not make real conflicts disappear but seeks to manage them in the best possible way.’<sup>6</sup>

One of the disadvantages of Luke’s approach is that it tones down the vivid qualities that Mark brings to his portrayal of the disciples. One only needs to compare the disciples’ remark in

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<sup>4</sup> Donald Senior argues that Luke feels an aversion to directly contradicting Mark (as opposed to strategically omitting elements of his account), and that the ambiguous language of this section is aimed at supplying the *impression* that all Jesus’ disciples (including Peter) remained throughout the time of trial, without outright stating it. Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), p. 95.

<sup>5</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Luke* (Nashville, TN: Holman, 1992), p. 546; Oropeza, *Footsteps*, p. 132. Drawing attention to a theory of G. Klein’s, Brown raises but does not push for the possibility that Luke may have been familiar with a source in which Peter did *not* deny Jesus (see Brown, Donfried Reumann, *Peter*, p. 121.) Damgaard disagrees with Stein’s suggestion, arguing that Luke shows sufficient independence from Mark that, had he chosen to, he could have removed the denial (Finn Damgaard, “Moving the People to Repentance: Peter in Luke-Acts” in Bond and Hurtado (eds.), *Peter*, p. 121). Of course, it is self-evidently unprofitable to discuss what Luke might or might not have done, as opposed to what he *did*, but Damgaard’s point is relevant to his greater argument, which we will return to in this chapter, which is that Peter’s denial serves a specific literary and theological purpose for Luke.

<sup>6</sup> Andrianjatov Rakotoharintsifa, “Luke and the Internal Divisions in the Early Church” in C.M. Tuckett (ed.), *Luke’s Literary Achievement: Collected Essays* (Sheffield: SAP, 1995), p. 171.

Mark 13:1, Διδάσκαλε, ἴδε ποταποὶ λίθοι καὶ ποταπαὶ οἰκοδομαί, with Luke's equivalent reported speech in Luke 21:5: Καὶ τινῶν λεγόντων περὶ τοῦ ἱεροῦ, ὅτι λίθοις καλοῖς καὶ ἀναθήμασιν κεκόσμηται.<sup>7</sup> By using more elegant and dignified language, Luke obscures the image Mark created of wide-eyed country boys seeing Jerusalem for the first time. And this is the general pattern, although Luke does preserve a couple of episodes unflattering to the disciples (their squabbling ambition in Luke 9:46 and 22:44, their suspicion and hostility towards outsiders in Luke 9:49 and 9:51-56).

The blandness of the disciples stands in contrast to Luke's evident gifts as a writer and the obvious appreciation of and sympathy for rogues and rascals that the parables show. The characters in Luke's parables have been compared favourably to Theophrastus' *Characters* in this respect, with C. Clifton Black arguing that Theophrastus' caricatures, while witty, are too one-dimensional, restricted by their author's misanthropy and sour superiority, while Luke's light-footed rogues still have the all-important capacity to surprise us.<sup>8</sup> This being the case, one might expect Peter and perhaps even Judas, to be used in this kind of capacity as well – a comic buffoon or a shrewd scoundrel. But Luke makes no moves in this direction, perhaps letting his reverence for the founders of the church master his natural sense of humour. This characterisation tendency carries on in Acts: as R.I. Pervo notes, it is very much a story of 'good guys versus villains'.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Luke does not specify that it is the disciples who are speaking, although the following section, Luke 21:7, seems to imply it.

<sup>8</sup> C. Clifton Black, *The Rhetoric of the Gospel: Theological Artistry in the Gospels and Acts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), pp. 67-82.

<sup>9</sup> R.I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1987), p. 21. The one possible exception to this rule is Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24), a sly schemer much like the characters from some of Luke's parables, whose portrayal is a mixture of positive and negative qualities. Talbert lists a set of parallels between the deeds and actions of Jesus in the gospel, and those of Peter and Paul in Acts in Charles H. Talbert, "Discipleship in Luke-Acts" in F.F. Segovia (ed.), *Discipleship in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985), p. 52.

However, Luke does seem to make some play with one of the stereotypical features of the behaviour of disciples, as outlined in Chapter 2, in his adaptation of Mark and Q. In Mark 2:18, Jesus is asked why his disciples do not fast, when John the Baptist's disciples and the Pharisees do. Luke's version, 5:33, has Jesus being asked why his disciples carry on 'eating and drinking' (ἐσθίουσιν καὶ πίνουσιν). Later on, the same words in Luke 7:34 will be used for the contrast between the masters of the two sets of disciples, John and Jesus. John does not eat bread or drink wine, but the Son of Man eats and drinks (ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων).

By using vocabulary to link these two verses, one adapted from Mark and one from Q, Luke has performed an interesting play on expectations. As shown in the third chapter, one common literary trope regarding discipleship was that the disciple was more concerned with food and material things than his ascetic, self-controlled master.<sup>10</sup> But it is now Jesus who has the reputation of being 'a glutton and a drunkard' (νθρωπος φάγος καὶ οἰνοπότης).<sup>11</sup> Is it possible that somewhere in here is a historical reminiscence of an earlier, non-Christian contrast between John and Jesus as master and disciple respectively?<sup>12</sup>

In any case, as we shall see, Luke's attitude towards the disciples means that his portrayal of Peter also accentuates Peter's good qualities –and his portrayal of Judas is necessarily

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<sup>10</sup> For instance, Alcibiades' excessive indulgence in alcohol in the *Symposium* or Amelius' taste for meat in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*. Note that in texts such as the *Acts of Peter*, a now spiritually mature Peter is especially notable for his asceticism. See Lapham, *Peter*, p. 69.

<sup>11</sup> Robert J. Karris discusses the significance of Jesus' characterisation as such in *Luke: Artist and Theologian* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1985), pp. 57-65.

<sup>12</sup> Luke evades the necessity of stating outright that John baptised Jesus, and the theological problems that this causes, by simply presenting Jesus' baptism as a *fait accompli* in Luke 3:21. Based on the evidence Josephus presents, as well as scattered hints such as Acts 18:25 and 19:3, Mason makes a very plausible case for the idea that John the Baptist was very well-known and well-respected among Jews in the first century, and that his connection with Jesus was very much played up by the evangelists for this reason (*Josephus*, pp 151-63). On the other hand, it is highly likely that he *did* at least baptise Jesus, given the discomfort that the evangelists evidently feel with this act. And so it is at least possible that the John movement told stories which celebrated their master's asceticism and humorously contrasted it with the gluttony and excessive drinking habits of his student Jesus.

complicated. Judas' failure seemed on a par with the general failure of the disciples in Mark, but this can no longer be the case here.

## 1. Setting and Context

Luke is unique among the evangelists in that he is the only one to deliberately provide information on his setting, context, and motives in writing, in the prologue of Luke's Gospel (Luke 1:1-4) and Acts (Acts 1:1), in which he dedicates the work to a certain Theophilus. It is unclear whether Theophilus was a real person or simply a literary device. Luke presents himself as a second or third-generation Christian, mentions that 'many' (πολλοί) have already written narratives such as the one he is embarking on, briefly discusses his methodology, and explains that this text is meant to complete Theophilus' instruction.<sup>13</sup> It is overwhelmingly accepted that Luke and Acts were written by the same person in the same time period and were, as they are presented, intended as two halves of the history of the early Jesus movement.<sup>14</sup>

The late second century Muratorian Canon was the first to name this evangelist as Luke, the 'well-known physician' and companion of Paul, and Irenaeus of Lyon, also in the late second century, also describes Luke as a companion of Paul.<sup>15</sup> Church tradition generally agreed this to be the Luke mentioned in Philemon 24, Colossians 4.14, and 2 Timothy 4.11, although

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<sup>13</sup> See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (2 vols.) (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2.34.

<sup>14</sup> Loveday Alexander, in her study of the Lukan prologue, has argued against the view that places Luke's language and tone amongst historians such as Thucydides, Tacitus, or Josephus. She sees the wording of the prologue as more in keeping with the tone of technical texts. See L.C.A. Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993). David Aune, in *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1987), p. 77, has rejected the idea that Luke is a biography, since it must be read together with Acts which is self-evidently not a biography. But Luke's Gospel itself can clearly be read as a biography of Jesus, and Acts as a historical monograph which *contains* a biography (of Paul) or as Talbert's 'succession narrative'. In Sean Adams' overview of the discussion in "The Genre of Luke and Acts: The State of the Question" in Sean Adams (ed.), *Issues in Luke-Acts* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2012), he notes that the consensus tends toward the conclusion that Luke is biography while Acts is history.

Patricia Walters has challenged the assumption that the same author wrote both Luke and Acts, in *The Assumed Authorial Unity of Luke and Acts: A Reassessment of the Evidence* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), but this has not been found generally persuasive (see, for instance, Mikeal C. Parsons and Heather M. Gorman's "The Assumed Authorial Unity of Luke and Acts: A Review Essay", *Neotestamentica* 46 (1) (2012), pp. 139-52. Walter's book revives the arguments of A.C. Clark (*The Acts of the Apostles* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933), pp. 393-408) and A.W. Argyle ("The Greek of Luke and Acts, *NTS* 20 (1974), pp. 441-45).

<sup>15</sup> Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1. For the Muratorian Canon fragment, see Bruce Metzger's *The Canon of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), pp. 305-307.

Origen was of the belief that it was rather the Lucius mentioned in Romans 16:21.<sup>16</sup> Some still take this view of Luke today, pointing to the so-called ‘we’ passages of Acts (Acts 16:10-17, 20:5-15, 21:1-18, and 27:1-28:16), in which Luke writes of Paul’s journeys in the first person plural, and also arguing that the apparently inconclusive end of Acts indicates that it must have been written in the mid-60s before the end of Paul’s trial.<sup>17</sup> But it has been pointed out that lines such as Acts 20:22-24, 36-38, and 21:11-14 make little sense except as ominous hints of Paul’s death, making them extremely unlikely to have been written before the event.<sup>18</sup> It is also generally agreed that Luke is dependent on Mark (Luke 1:1 itself arguably implies this) and Mark is widely agreed to have been written in the late 60s or early 70s. Adding further evidence, Luke appears to refer directly to the fall of Jerusalem, an event that occurred in 70 CE, in Acts 19:43 and 21:20.<sup>19</sup> In a characteristically clear and compelling essay, Steve Mason argues that there is also strong evidence to suggest that Luke was familiar with Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities*, published 93/94 CE.<sup>20</sup> There is, however, no evidence that Luke is familiar with Paul’s letters, generally believed to have been collected at the very end of the first century.<sup>21</sup> Luke, of course, would not necessarily have had access to the very first collections of Paul’s letters but it does make it unlikely that he was as late as the mid-second century, as some have suggested.<sup>22</sup> A date in the last quarter of the first century therefore seems most likely and will be the view taken by this thesis.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that of the three letters, only Philemon is generally agreed to have been written by Paul. For Origen’s attribution, see Origen, *Commentary on Romans*, 10.39.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), p. 18 or John A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976), pp. 86-117.

<sup>18</sup> Edgar J. Godspeed, *New Solutions of New Testament Problems* (Chicago, IL: UCP, 1927), p. 94-100. In addition, could ‘many’ accounts of Jesus’ life and death already have been written by the mid-60s?

<sup>19</sup> Christopher M. Tuckett, *Luke* (Sheffield: SAP, 1996), pp. 17-18. C.H. Dodd has argued that the details Luke gives of Jerusalem’s fall could have been those of any ancient siege (“The Fall of Jerusalem and the Abomination of Desolation”, *JRS* 37 (1947)) but see Esler’s list of the unusual specifics of the Jerusalem siege to which Luke refers, *Community*, p. 28. Luke also does not seem to view the fall of the Temple as an eschatological event, likewise suggesting that he is writing afterwards.

<sup>20</sup> Steve Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), pp. 185-229.

<sup>21</sup> Jack Finnegan, “The Original Form of the Pauline Collection”, *HTR* 49 (1956), pp. 85-103.

<sup>22</sup> J.C. O’Neill suggests such a date in *The Theology of Acts in its Historical Setting* (London: SPCK, 1970).

<sup>23</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke*, pp.53-59.

The question of whether Luke was indeed a companion of Paul is another matter. Some take the ‘we’ passages as literary devices or use of a diary source by Luke, and consider a direct connection with Paul unlikely.<sup>24</sup> They argue that the Paul of Acts and the Paul of his own letters are very different, and that Luke shows little knowledge of or interest in Paul’s special concerns (for instance, Luke rarely refers to Paul as ‘apostle’, a title about which Paul is most emphatic in letters such as 1 Corinthians and Galatians).

If one accepts the later date of Luke-Acts, it does seem possible that Luke may have been writing about a man he had known personally decades ago, the harsher and more strident aspects of Paul’s character softened and smoothed out by time, wishful thinking, and the growing hero-worship that seems to have quickly emerged around Paul after his death.<sup>25</sup> But this could equally well be used as an argument for Luke never having known Paul in person. For the purposes of this thesis, it makes little difference with one possible exception: Paul’s relationship with Peter, as recorded in Galatians, seems to have been very fractious at least at one time. If Luke had been a member of Paul’s inner circle, and we are to understand this dispute as being a permanent rupture between the two apostles, we might expect that to be reflected in a negative portrayal of Peter by Luke.<sup>26</sup> But, on the contrary and as this chapter will show, Luke is the most positive of the evangelists towards Peter –more so even than Matthew.

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<sup>24</sup> Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1987), xxxix-x; Vernon K. Robbins, “By Land and by Sea: The We-Passages and Ancient Sea Voyages” in Charles Talbert (ed), *Perspectives on Luke-Acts* (Danville, VA.: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, 1978) pp. 215-242; William Sanger Campbell, *The “We” Passages in the Acts of the Apostles: The Narrator as Narrative Character* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> Gamble suggests that Paul must have quickly become revered greatly after his death, given how soon collected versions and imitations of his letters seem to have appeared. See Gamble, *Books and Readers*, p. 63.

<sup>26</sup> Bockmuehl, at least, very firmly denies that there is any evidence that the argument between Paul and Peter in Antioch led to a permanent break. See Markus Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: BakerAcademic, 2012), p. 29.

Another point discussed regarding Luke is whether he was Jewish or Gentile. It is generally considered that he must be the latter. Both the gospel and Acts show a sympathy for Gentile Christians and a suspicion of Jews.<sup>27</sup> The fact that Greek is clearly his first language and he appears to know neither Hebrew nor Aramaic, based on his use of Mark, also suggests that he is unlikely to be Jewish, or at least Palestinian Jewish.<sup>28</sup> This impression is reinforced by his lack of interest in the details of Jesus' conflicts with the Pharisees.<sup>29</sup> Nolland has suggested that Luke was himself a god-fearer, and was writing for Christian god-fearers, based on Luke's obvious familiarity with the Septuagint.<sup>30</sup> However, too little is known about the god-fearers as a group to make any strong claims along these lines.

Finally, there is the question of Luke's location. There are the fewest clues to his location of any of the four evangelists, barring a generally disregarded link to Antioch and Achaia in the Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Luke.<sup>31</sup> Those who favour a Roman location for Mark might place Luke there as well, given his use of Mark, but he also uses Q, which would place him in Syria.<sup>32</sup> It is generally agreed that Luke was part of an urban Christian community somewhere in the Hellenistic world, and that is as much as we can say.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> E.A. LaVerdiere and W.G. Thompson, in "New Testament Communities in Transition: A Study in Matthew and Luke", *TS* 37 (1976), pp. 567-97, have, however, argued that Luke (unlike Matthew) wrote for a wide range of communities. See Philip Esler's *Community and gospel in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), p. 26.

<sup>28</sup> See Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 52.

<sup>29</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke*, p. 41.

<sup>30</sup> John Nolland, *Luke: 1-9:20* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

<sup>31</sup> See the Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Luke, quoted in Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels* (London: T&T Clark, 1992), p. 335. Koester dates the reference to Achaia to the second half of the fourth century, making its historical value low.

<sup>32</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), p. 35.

<sup>33</sup> Marshall, *Luke*, p. 33.

## 2. Peter

### 2.1. Overview: Luke's Attitude towards Peter

It is undisputed that Luke is very positive towards Peter, even if Evans' comparison between the relationship between Jesus and Peter in Luke's Gospel, and Jesus and the beloved disciple in John's Gospel, may be a slight exaggeration.<sup>34</sup> But Peter is certainly the prime beneficiary of Luke's rehabilitation of all the disciples, and his related desire to show a harmonious and unified church.

The theories of F.C. Baur and the Tübingen School in regards to Peter's portrayal in the gospels have already been discussed. It was the position of the Tübingen School that Luke, a Paulinist, wanted to bridge the rift between the two groups (the traditional Jewish Christians represented by Peter and James, and the Gentile-engaging missionaries led by Paul and Barnabas in Acts) and wrote his gospel and Acts in this spirit.<sup>35</sup> Although he played down any conflict between Peter and Paul, he also used Peter's unquestioned position within the church to bolster the apostolic status of his own hero, Paul, which was supposedly more in doubt among his contemporaries (see, for instance 1 Corinthians 9:1-2).

Danker proposes what is almost the exact reverse of the Tübingen School's theory. He argues that in Luke's time and among his circle, there was considerable doubt as to *Peter's* status as an apostle, owing to his denial of Jesus and the incident with Paul at Antioch recounted in

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<sup>34</sup> Craig A. Evans, *Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), p. 83.

<sup>35</sup> See H.H. Wendt, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen Vondenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1899), p. 10 or F.C. Baur (trans. Eduard Zeller), *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1876), p. 6.

Galatians 2:11-14.<sup>36</sup> Luke's portrayal of Peter is intended to certify Peter as an apostle and a pillar of the church.

More recently, Talbert has argued that Peter's role in the Lukan writings is related to their genre. Talbert argues that the closest comparison with Luke-Acts in antiquity is of biographies of philosophers that contain a second volume, detailing the sayings and deeds of the philosopher's most notable students.<sup>37</sup> The actions and speeches of Peter (and Paul) in Acts are intended to form a parallel to those of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke.

The problems with the Tübingen School's approach have already been discussed in this thesis.<sup>38</sup> Although many of their most provocative ideas still have value, they must be considered very much of their time –influenced both consciously and unconsciously by the theological dispute between the Protestant and Catholic churches, and too enamoured by the 'big idea' of a Petrine/Paulinist split accounting for so much of the New Testament's undertones.<sup>39</sup>

Danker's suggestion is novel but not ultimately sustainable. Internal evidence within Luke's Gospel strongly suggests that Luke's audience would have been well aware of who Peter was.<sup>40</sup>

Of course it does not necessarily follow that they respected him but I have already argued, in

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<sup>36</sup> Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St Luke's Gospel* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1988), p. 115. Grappe has also argued that Peter was forced to yield his position of authority to James as a result of his transgression at Joppa (Acts 10), presented in Acts 11:18 as being accepted by the church as divinely mandated after initial criticism. C. Grappe, *D'un temple à l'autre: Pierre et l'église primitive de Jérusalem* (Paris: Press Universitaire de France, 1992), pp. 278-79. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of Peter's historic role in the early church and his relationship with James.

<sup>37</sup> Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke-Acts in its Mediterranean Milieu* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 20-49. See also the discussion of genre in Chapter 2, pp. 11-16.

<sup>38</sup> See Chapter 3, p. 17.

<sup>39</sup> As noted in Chapter 3, part of the longevity of the Tübingen School's arguments is accounted for by this very factor. The idea of a single theological conflict defining (and explaining) the New Testament in this way has an undeniable aesthetic appeal, and aesthetics are as important to the impact of a theory as logic and evidence.

<sup>40</sup> Bock, *Luke*, p. 436.

Chapter 3, that Mark's Gospel (the presumable basis for an 'anti-Petrine' view) actually depends on his audience's prior awareness of Peter as a pillar of the church. Luke's adaptation of Mark actually details Peter's career as such, but there is no evidence that it is pushing back against any kind of anti-Peter sentiment within the church.

Finally, Talbert's proposal has come under fire from various sources, but it may have much more merit than some critics are prepared to allow it.<sup>41</sup> There are undoubted parallels between Jesus and Peter in the first and second halves of Luke's work respectively. Viewing Peter's role in this way makes sense of the apparently abrupt shift in his characterisation between the Gospel and Acts –even though Luke does tone down Peter's incomprehension, there is still a very definite shift between the disciple in the Gospel and the teacher, preacher, and worker of miracles in Acts.<sup>42</sup> As previously discussed, in Chapter 2 of this thesis, 'disciple' and 'teacher' were roles in ancient literary texts, and one person could play both at different points in the same text. Along these lines, Wiarda has suggested that the most significant change that Luke makes to Peter's portrayal is to shift the focus from Peter's struggle with himself to Peter's bond with Jesus.<sup>43</sup>

If one accepts this view of Peter's role in Luke's Gospel and the Acts, it is interesting to consider the question of who, if anyone, is now playing the Peter, or disciple, role in Acts to Peter himself? We will consider this as we examine Peter's portrayal in Acts.

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<sup>41</sup> Talbert's methods and theories come under sharp criticism from David Aune in "The Problem of the Genre of the Gospels: A Critique of C.H. Talbert's *What is a Gospel?* In *Gospel Perspectives* (ed. R.T. France and David Wenham) (Sheffield: JSOT, 1981), pp. 29-60. Talbert gives a spirited third person rebuttal in *Reading Luke-Acts*, pp. 57-68.

<sup>42</sup> As Longenecker points out, in "Taking Up The Cross Daily", p. 72, Luke never uses the term μαθητής in Acts, presumably because he feels it no longer describes the post-Resurrection status of any of the Twelve.

<sup>43</sup> Wiarda, *Peter*, p. 170.

## 2.2. Peter in Luke's Gospel

### The Call (Luke 5:1-11)

Peter's first mention in Luke comes in Luke 4:38, in which he is referred to as Simon.<sup>44</sup> This is the story of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, which Luke places *before* his version of Peter's call narrative.

In this call narrative (Luke 5:1-11), Peter recognises Jesus' authority from the start, referring to him as ἐπιστάτα, but he is not filled with awe until Jesus demonstrates his power by performing the miracle of the fish.<sup>45</sup> This narrative singles out Peter himself in a way that Mark's version does not.

As we have already discussed in Chapter 4, Luke's version of Peter's call narrative shares obvious elements with that of Mark, but also bears a strong resemblance to John 21:1-23, the post-Resurrection story of the risen Jesus' reconciliation with Peter. In particular, the idea that Peter begs for Jesus to depart because he is a sinful man (Luke 5:8) strikes some commentators as a reference to his denial.<sup>46</sup> But the language Peter uses is also highly characteristic of a theophany (compare Isaiah 6:5, for instance).<sup>47</sup> Thus, it is likely that again Peter's character is

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<sup>44</sup> Luke generally refers to Peter as 'Simon' (with the exception of 5:8, the only instance of Luke using the double name 'Simon Peter') until 6:14, in which Peter seems to formally receive his nickname. From this point on, with the two exceptions of 22:31 and 24:34, Peter is referred to as Peter. Stein suggests that the first of these two exceptions is intended as a deliberate reproach, a hint that he is returning to his old, pre-Jesus self (Stein, *Luke*, p. 552). Marshall thinks it more likely that Luke is simply following his sources on both these occasions (Marshall, *Luke*, p. 239).

<sup>45</sup> Wiarda, *Peter*, p. 134.

<sup>46</sup> Brown, *John*, pp. 1089-91.

<sup>47</sup> Wolfgang Dietrich, *Das Petrusbild der Lukanischen Schriften* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1972), pp. 49-51; Nolland, *Luke: 1-9:20*, p. 222.

being delineated according to a set of generic conventions, conventions that the original audience would have grasped instinctively.

### **Confession and Transfiguration (Luke 9:18-36)**

Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah – Luke 9:18-20, differs little from Mark's version, although Luke omits the rebuke of Peter as Satan that follows immediately after in Mark (Mark 8:33), since Peter's objection to Jesus' prediction of the Passion is removed. Likewise, there is no significant difference regarding Peter in Luke's version of the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36). Peter's odd suggestion, that they build three dwellings on the mountain for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, is made somewhat more explicable by Luke's explanation that Peter and the other two were exhausted by lack of sleep (Luke 9:32). These two changes are part of Luke's previously noted tendency to make Peter's portrayal more positive.

### **The Passion (Luke 22:31-24:53)**

In Mark 14:27-31, Jesus' prediction, invoking Zechariah 13:7, that all the disciples will desert him prompts Peter to protest that he at least will never do so, which in turn prompts Jesus' prophecy that Peter will deny him three times that very night.<sup>48</sup> Luke, however, omits the first prophecy –indeed, Luke 22:28 seems to imply that the disciples will *not* desert him, and as a result they will be made judges over the twelve tribes of Israel in the Kingdom of God (Judas' presence at this point seems to have been overlooked).

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<sup>48</sup> See Chapter 4, p. 20.

In Luke's version, 22:31-34, the prophecy of Peter's denial comes when Jesus addresses him as Simon, doubling his name (an indication of both affection and concern, leading naturally into the revelation of Jesus' prayer for Peter).<sup>49</sup> Jesus reveals that Satan has 'demanded' (ἐξητήσατο, meaning he has also already received) the right to sift the disciples like wheat.<sup>50</sup> The image is of Satan violently shaking and separating the disciples, tossing them helplessly up into the air.<sup>51</sup> Peter's initial fall to Satan is inevitable, but Jesus declares that he has prayed that Peter's faith will not fail, that when he returns he will be able to 'strengthen' (στήρισον) his brothers.<sup>52</sup> Peter protests that he will follow Jesus to prison and to death, whereupon Jesus predicts that Peter will deny knowing him three times before the cock crows.<sup>53</sup> It is, of course, noteworthy that Peter will in fact be imprisoned repeatedly for the sake of the Christian message in Acts, and I have already argued that the tradition of Peter's martyrdom would have been known to the audience of the gospels.<sup>54</sup> This is one of the ways in which Luke subtly rehabilitates Peter's image, by changing his promise, from the unfounded bluster of Mark 14:29 into something which the audience knew he would fulfil, even if not at the time he imagined.<sup>55</sup> In this way, the transition between Peter's role in the gospel and in Acts is made less abrupt.

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<sup>49</sup> Wiarda, *Peter*, p. 135. See, for instance, Luke 10:41, "Martha, Martha", or Luke 13:34, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem".

<sup>50</sup> The word ἐξητήσατο is used this way in the Testament of Benjamin 3:3.

<sup>51</sup> John Paul Heil, *The Meal Scenes in Luke-Acts: An Audience-Oriented Approach* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1999), p. 191.

<sup>52</sup> Dietrich (*Das Petrusbild*, p. 173) suggests that Peter's role in 'strengthening' his brothers is in arranging for filling the empty place left by Judas among the Twelve, as he does in Acts 1:15-26. But this places far too narrow and specific an interpretation of Jesus' words. See also Richard Cassidy, *Peter*, p. 52.

<sup>53</sup> Like Matthew, Luke has the cock crowing just once and not twice as in Mark, streamlining the story of Peter's denial and making it more elegant. Green argued that this indicates a different source (J.B. Green, *The Death of Jesus: Tradition and Interpretation in the Passion Narrative* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), p. 64), but it seems a logical change for Luke to make of his own initiative. See the discussion in Jay M. Harrington, *The Lukan Passion Narrative: The Markan Material in Luke 22:54-23:25* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. 548.

<sup>54</sup> Kingsbury, *Conflict*, p. 130.

<sup>55</sup> See Perkins, *Peter*, p.85.

This episode is absolutely essential to Luke's entire project with regard to Peter. I have argued, in the previous chapters, that Matthew and Mark's portrayal of Peter is very much affected by two important factors invisible to the modern reader: 1) their audiences' extra-textual awareness of the place of Peter in Christian tradition, as a pillar of the church and first witness to the risen Lord, and 2) the role Peter plays in terms of the genre of the text, as the disciple of a teacher.

Because of the two-part structure of Luke's history, both of these factors are altered. Luke does not need to resort solely to prophecies and implications to hint at Peter's future as a pillar of the church but in Acts he can show Peter in this role. And likewise, Peter succeeds Jesus as teacher and wonder-worker in Acts.<sup>56</sup> He no longer possesses the attributes and characteristics of a disciple character.

Peter's denial is the hinge between his portrayal in Luke's Gospel and in Acts, and Luke is at pains to demonstrate that the experience of denial makes him a *better* fit for the role of church pillar, rather than undermining him, as one might assume. Luke has adroitly shifted the idea of Satanic testing from the question of whether Peter will deny Jesus (he will, as is accepted fact in Christian circles by Luke's time), but whether his faith will recover from this setback. And so even the denial is made to seem triumphant in a way. Satan has been allowed to do his worst to the disciples, and yet the only one who falls to him is Judas, the one whose fall was predestined in any case.

In addition, one of the central questions of this thesis, and the reason its inquiry pairs Peter and Judas, is this: what, in the minds of the evangelists, distinguishes Peter from Judas? To put it

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<sup>56</sup> See Talbert, *Reading Luke-Acts*, pp. 20-49.

another way, what makes Peter's sin in denying Jesus forgivable but Judas' in handing him over unforgivable? I have suggested possibilities in the case of Mark and Matthew, and will do so in the case of John, but it seems clear here. Jesus prays for Peter, and he does not pray for Judas.<sup>57</sup> Of course, the question that a modern reader would then have is *why* he does not pray for Judas –but as Danker rightly says, this line of inquiry would have held no interest for Luke.<sup>58</sup>

Luke retains the story of the disciples sleeping at the Mount of Olives while Jesus is praying (Luke 22:39-46), but he removes the emphasis on Peter (not naming any of the disciples involved specifically), and softens the general failure by, firstly, condensing it into just one incident of the disciples falling asleep (not three as in Mark) and, secondly, explaining that the disciples were sleeping 'because of grief' (ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης).<sup>59</sup> Although this may seem a rather implausible reaction to sorrow, it assures us that the disciples are in the appropriate frame of mind for the night, and their neglect of their duties is not simple laziness.<sup>60</sup>

Luke makes a few changes to the denial scene itself. Peter does not warm himself by the fire, does not swear, and does not attempt to leave.<sup>61</sup> In Mark 14:66-72, Peter's accuser the first two

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<sup>57</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Luke: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), p. 129. Oropeza suggests that the difference is actually that Peter repented, while Judas did not (Oropeza, *Footsteps*, p. 133). But it could just as well be said that Judas did not repent *because* Jesus did not pray for him –that is the logic of Jesus' prayer in Luke 22:32.

<sup>58</sup> Danker, *New Age*, p. 351. See Chapter 1, pp. 11-12, on the question of Judas' action as a question of predestination and free will.

<sup>59</sup> Evans notes that this is line with Luke's general tendency to spare Peter –Evans, *Luke*, p. 84.

<sup>60</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury suggests that the disciples' grief is symptomatic of cowardice and thus a negative characterisation but this is not consistent with the general tone of Luke's characterisation of the disciples. He also argues that the fact that Peter neglects to pray in this scene is the sole reason that he later cannot withstand testing. This is also unconvincing in that it offers a narrow and obtrusively mechanical explanation for an event that has already been spoken of as inevitable (Luke 22:34). Besides which, if Luke wanted us to understand that Peter was directly affected by the disciples' failure here, why would he have removed Peter's name from Mark's account? See Kingsbury, *Conflict*, p. 131. However, the fact that Peter does not pray here is undoubtedly significant.

<sup>61</sup> Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, p. 122. Senior points out that in Luke 22:56, the fire illuminates Peter rather than warming him, perhaps recalling Luke 11:33-36. Senior, *Passion*, p. 96.

times is the servant girl. In Luke 22:54-62, the servant girl instigates the questioning, but the subsequent accusations come from an unspecified but male ‘other’ (ἕτερος) and then another one (μᾶζ ἄλλος τις), also masculine.<sup>62</sup> Fitzmyer suggests that Luke’s change may have been to satisfy the legal requirement of two male witnesses of Deuteronomy 19:15, heightening the already existing trial undertones to the scene of Peter’s denial.<sup>63</sup> In response to the questions, Peter in turn rejects his bond with Jesus, his identity as a disciple, and even his homeland – although he never directly denies Jesus himself.<sup>64</sup>

Luke also adds, in 22:61, the detail of Jesus turning and looking at Peter (impossible in Mark’s version, since Jesus is already inside and on trial). Luke adds this powerful moment of silent reproach, and intensifies Peter’s grief and shame –he weeps ‘bitterly’ in Luke (πικρῶς). The general effect of these changes is to increase the audience’s sympathy for Peter, while still demonstrating his weakness in contrast with the steadfastness of his master.<sup>65</sup>

As we have already discussed, Damgaard makes a brief but compelling case for the idea that Peter’s denial is not just forced upon Luke by a tradition too well-known to discard, but of crucial literary and theological significance.<sup>66</sup> Without his denial and subsequent repentance, Peter would not be in a position to lead the people in general to repentance for the killing of Jesus, as he does in Acts 2:37-42. Damgaard highlights several striking parallels between Peter’s denial and the people’s demand for Jesus’ death in Luke 23: 18-25. This theory once again emphasises the importance of Peter’s denial (and Jesus’ prayer for Peter) as a crucial

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<sup>62</sup> For the sake of comparison, Matthew (Matthew 26:69-75) introduces a second accuser – another servant girl.

<sup>63</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke*, p. 1460. See Chapter 3, pp. 78-95.

<sup>64</sup> Perkins, *Peter*, p. 86.

<sup>65</sup> Marshall, *Luke*, p. 839. Schuyler Brown also argues that the fact that Peter simply claimed not to know Jesus, and not that Jesus was not the Messiah, is also a sympathetic element which Luke has introduced. Brown, *Apostasy*, pp. 70-71. Karris is in agreement with this line of thinking –see Karris, *Luke*, p. 113.

<sup>66</sup> Damgaard, “Moving the People”, in Bond and Hurtado, *Peter*, pp. 121-29.

bridge between his portrayal in the Gospel and in Acts.<sup>67</sup> It also makes for an interesting parallel with Cassidy's theory that Peter, in Matthew, was the one placed in charge of decisions regarding who could enter (and re-enter) the church, just as in popular imagination Peter guards the gates of Heaven.<sup>68</sup> Peter has ascended to this role not because he is an unimpeachable paragon but because he himself has failed and been readmitted, and so he can be expected to make his decisions with mercy and humility.

Luke also neatly matches Peter's final appearance in Luke's Gospel with what amounts to his final appearance in Acts, Acts 12: 1-17.<sup>69</sup> In this section, Peter finally does fulfil his promise to Jesus, going to prison and facing execution for his sake. When an angel miraculously frees him, Peter makes his way to the home of Mary, mother of John Mark, but he is held up by another servant girl, Rhoda, who is so excited on recognising his voice that she rushes away to tell everyone else, without pausing to let Peter in. The same word, παιδίσκη, is used to describe both Rhoda and the servant girl who identifies Peter outside the house of the high priest. Peter's encounters with both these women are similar, but his changed circumstances in Acts emphasise how complete his redemption is.

Peter has already redeemed himself slightly by the end of the gospel. In Luke 24:12, he is the only one of the disciples to credit the women's story enough to race to the tomb and verify that it is indeed empty. However, serious doubt has been cast on the authenticity of this passage, which many early manuscripts lack.<sup>70</sup> Later, reference is made to an appearance of the risen

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<sup>67</sup> One could make a comparison between Peter and Clamence, the hero of Albert Camus' existentialist novel of 1956, *The Fall*. Like Peter, the collapse of Clamence's self-image is triggered by an act of cowardice – failing to try and help save the life of a suicidal young woman. For Clamence, his recognition and acceptance of his own guilt in this matter allows him to both judge and forgive the sins of others.

<sup>68</sup> See Cassidy, *Peter*, p. 75.

<sup>69</sup> Peter does appear again in Acts 15:6-11, but only briefly. To all intents and purposes, Paul takes over as the protagonist of Acts after Acts 12.

<sup>70</sup> Joseph B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts: A Defining Struggle* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), p. 104.

Jesus to Peter (Luke 24: 34). The fact that this is so only seems to reinforce the idea, based on 1 Corinthians 15: 5 and discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, that one major and well-known reason for Peter's status in the early church is that he was the *first* witness of the risen Jesus. Luke appears to be referring to this, even though his own account does not show any such one-on-one encounter between Peter and the risen Jesus.

### 3. Judas

#### 3.1. Overview: Luke's Attitude Towards Judas

A common view among scholars is that Judas is one of the primary victims of Luke's tendency to paint solely in black and white when it comes to the main characters of his history. Susan Gubar sums up the general impression by saying that in 'every change Luke made to the biblical narrative, Jesus becomes more mystically powerful and Judas more satanically evil'.<sup>71</sup> Judas has gone from being the ambiguously motivated character of Mark to a figure of Satanic evil, a necessary counterpoint to the righteous power of Jesus.

A more unusual viewpoint is represented by Josephine Massyngberde Ford, extending the arguments of earlier commentators such as Vincent Taylor and Friedrich Rehkopf. She argues that Luke in fact goes out of his way to avoid condemning Judas, and likewise to avoid portraying Jesus doing the same, in order to demonstrate the redemptive power of love for enemies.<sup>72</sup> Since the evidence for this interesting but eccentric theory rests mainly on one verse (Luke 22:47), it will be discussed in greater detail below.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, some have suggested that Luke is embarrassed by Judas, and would prefer to keep his presence in the narrative to a minimum.<sup>74</sup> He includes the betrayal, presumably because it was a simply fixed part of the Passion narrative at that point, and he includes the account of Judas' death in Acts in order to explain Matthias' induction into the Twelve, but Judas himself is of

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<sup>71</sup> Gubar, *Judas*, p. 76. See also Paffenroth, *Judas*, pp. 18-22.

<sup>72</sup> J. Massyngberde Ford, *My Enemy is My Guest: Jesus and Violence in Luke* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), p. 120.

<sup>73</sup> Klassen also maintains that Luke portrays Judas neutrally, and is reliant on sources that reflect a strong bond between Jesus and Judas. Klassen, *Judas*, p. 128.

<sup>74</sup> Senior, *Passion*, p. 66.

no literary or theological interest to Luke. One of Luke's preferred themes is the faithfulness of the Twelve. Judas could play a relatively prominent part in Mark's narrative, in which the Twelve were far less reliable, and in Matthew's, because the details of his death could be used to further Matthew's strong interest in fulfilled prophecy, but Judas does not serve any of Luke's themes in this way.

I believe that a mixture of the first and third arguments is most likely to be the case. There is evidence to suggest that Judas' Satanic evil in Luke is not his own creation but the product of one of the traditions that reached him.<sup>75</sup> It is thus more difficult to argue that Judas' Satanic possession should be considered key to Luke's personal theological concerns. But Judas does fall very much into, and even forms the prime example of, the category of Lukan villain, with the requisite gruesome punishment in Acts. However, it is also true that this villainy exists uncomfortably with Judas' membership of the Twelve, a status which as we have already seen, Luke treats with much more reverence than Mark.<sup>76</sup> My argument is that this is the primary theological difficulty that Judas presents Luke with, and that much of Luke's portrayal of Judas is an attempt to grapple with this problem.

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<sup>75</sup> See the discussion on p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> See Paffenroth, *Judas*, p. 18.

### 3.2. Judas in Luke's Gospel

#### Judas' Introduction (Luke 6:16)

Judas' literary and theological use in Luke is to further a theme of especial interest to the evangelist: that of the ongoing battle between Jesus and Satan.<sup>77</sup> In Luke's version of the Q Temptation, the Devil only leaves 'until an opportune time' (Luke 4:13).<sup>78</sup> The Devil makes only a tactical retreat. In Luke 10:18, Jesus accounts for the success of the seventy-two over demons by telling them of a vision in which he saw Satan fall 'like lightning' from heaven.<sup>79</sup> But this is again only a presage of things to come, and Satan remains active and in power in the world at large.<sup>80</sup> Judas is to become one of his weapons.<sup>81</sup>

This is hinted at by a slight but important change which Luke makes to Judas' introduction among the Twelve, in Luke 6:16. As we have already seen, Mark's introduction to Judas at the end of his list of the Twelve (Mark 3:19) reads καὶ Ἰούδαν Ἰσκαριώθ, ὃς καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτόν.<sup>82</sup> As shown in the discussion of Klassen, παραδίδομι simply meant 'to hand over'. There is no evidence that it carried any connotations of betrayal. Although I have rejected

<sup>77</sup> Luke prefers the term ὁ διάβολος and only seems to use Σατανᾶς when he is directly using a source, such as Mark. See Marshall, *Luke*, p. 169. For a discussion of Satan in Luke, see Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), pp. 37-57.

<sup>78</sup> 'And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season', to quote the simple but effective King James version.

<sup>79</sup> As Fitzmyer says (*Luke*, pp. 856-64), there is no connection here to Isaiah 14:12, sometimes erroneously thought to be a reference to Satan.

<sup>80</sup> The position of Conzelmann is that Jesus' victory over Satan after the temptations created an interim period in which Satan was temporarily deprived of power in the world –see Hans Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit: Studien zur Theologie des Lukas* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1954), p. 22. In this he follows a number of older German commentators such as Johannes Weiss and Erich Klostermann. But Marshall disagrees, citing evidence of ongoing Satanic activity throughout Luke's narrative (4:33-37, 8:12, 9:38-42, 10:17-18, 11:14-22, 13:11-17), as does Schuyler Brown (see I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1970), p. 87 and Schuyler Brown, *Apostasy and Perseverance in the Gospel of Luke* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1969), pp. 5-19).

<sup>81</sup> See Stein, *Luke*, p. 535.

<sup>82</sup> The αὐτόν refers to Jesus, of course.

Klassen's conclusion that Mark (or his sources) therefore did not see Judas as a traitor, the linguistic point is still important.

Luke, on the other hand, changes it to καὶ Ἰούδαν Ἰσκαριώθ, ὃς ἐγένετο προδότης; Judas Iscariot *who became a traitor*.<sup>83</sup> As I argued in the chapter on Mark, the conclusion to draw from Mark's choice of words is *not* Klassen's sentimental pro-Judas one. Rather, we should assume that Judas' main interest for Mark is the effect that his actions had on his master. His motives, and the spirit in which those actions were carried out, are irrelevant.

But Luke's change turns our attention away from Judas' action and on to the man himself, telling us not about an action he performed but a change that took place within him as a result of the action he performed.<sup>84</sup> The immoral nature of that action is also emphasised as a result.<sup>85</sup>

### **The Passion (Luke 22:3-48)**

As with all three Synoptics, no more is heard of Judas until Jerusalem and the beginning of the Passion. In Luke 22:3, Satan enters into Judas (fulfilling the ominous promise of Luke 4:13) and inspires him to go to the chief priests and offer to give Jesus up.<sup>86</sup> As with the equivalent passage in Mark (Mark 14:10), it is stressed in his reintroduction that Judas is one of 'the

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<sup>83</sup> See Acts 7:52 or 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:4.

<sup>84</sup> By doing so, Luke also eschews the tactic adopted by John (discussed in the following chapter), in which Judas cannot be said to have become a traitor, with the theological difficulties that involves, because he was from the start a self-interested unbeliever involved in Jesus' movement for purely personal gain. See J.B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 260.

<sup>85</sup> Zwiep, *Judas*, p. 48. See also Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1971), p. 138, and Gubar, *Judas*, p. 76.

<sup>86</sup> Curiously, Judas' surname is spelt the Hellenistic way, Ἰσκαριώτης (Ἰσκαριώτην in the accusative) here, while Luke spelt it Ἰσκαριώθ in 6:16. The latter spelling is Mark's, while Matthew uses the former. Luke may have used the more Semitic form in Judas' introduction because of his dependence on Mark. See Fitzmyer, *Luke*, p. 1374.

number of the Twelve' (ὄντα ἐκ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ τῶν δώδεκα).<sup>87</sup> As we now see, both Matthew and Luke spotted Judas' lack of motive for his actions in Mark's Gospel, and they have ascribed different motives of their own to him. Matthew's Judas is interested in money, Luke's Judas compelled by Satan.

But as I have already stressed, we should not interpret the motive behind these changes as being comparable to a modern novelist's interest in the inner life of his or her characters, or even necessarily to early Christian curiosity about Judas.<sup>88</sup> As I have already discussed, Matthew's interest in the money motif is so that he can specify that Judas was paid thirty silver coins, echoing the sum paid the shepherd in Zechariah 11:12 and providing Matthew with yet another Scriptural allusion. And the fact that Luke's Judas is possessed by Satan allows Luke to cast the betrayal as a movement in the war between Jesus and Satan, one of his own favoured themes.

Luke, in Luke 22:21-23, follows Mark's version of Jesus' prediction of Judas' betrayal and the attendant woe but omits the remark of Mark 14:20 that it would have been better for the betrayer never to have been born. The main difference is that, rather than Jesus' identification of the traitor as one who dips in the bowl with him, Luke's Jesus simply says that his 'hand' (χεῖρ) is at the table. Referring to the hand of a person as a synecdoche for the entire person was a common Semitic figure of speech, particularly when dealing with issues of friendship

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<sup>87</sup> Noting Luke's use of ἀριθμός, where Mark identifies Judas as 'one of the Twelve', Marshall speculates that perhaps Luke wished to suggest that Judas, simply *numbered* among the Twelve, was not in reality one of them. See Marshall, *Luke*, p. 788. On the importance of the Twelve for Luke, see Fitzmyer, *Luke*, pp. 253-57. Schürmann argues that Luke's uncharacteristic use of Σατανᾶς suggests that he is using a source here (perhaps also used by John in John 13:27?), but this cannot be proven. See Heinz Schürmann, *Jesu Abschiedsrede* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1957), p. 102. Soards maintains that Luke and John are drawing on the same source –see M.L. Soards, *The Passion According to Luke: The Special Material of Luke 22* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), p. 49.

<sup>88</sup> Although this latter explanation is obviously more compelling, it should be noted how very little there is on Judas in any early Christian source.

and hostility.<sup>89</sup> Luke may have chosen for Jesus to express himself in this way because in Mark, it is ambiguous as to whether Jesus is identifying a specific person as the traitor or simply declaring that the traitor is among those present. As we shall see, whether familiar with Mark or not, John takes the former option while Luke prefers to make it clear that Jesus meant the latter. The perils of both options, from a rhetorical and narrative point of view, have already been discussed. If Jesus does *not* identify the traitor, his powers of judgement and prophecy are in question. If he does, immediate and obvious plot holes appear in the narrative.

The disciples' discussion of who the traitor might be then abruptly segues into a discussion of who is the greatest among them (22:24-27). This seems to be Luke's adaptation of Mark 9:33-37, in which the disciples bicker about who is the greatest among them, although he seems to have chosen an odd place to relocate it. Fitzmyer suggests, plausibly, that Luke's logic is that the discussion goes from who is the traitor, the *worst* disciple, to who might be the *best*.<sup>90</sup> In a way, this is the question that occupies all four evangelists –whom to present as the counterpoint to Judas and his betrayal, to give a positive example to oppose the negative example of his behaviour.

The last appearance by Judas in Luke's Gospel is Luke 22: 47-48, in which Judas comes with a crowd to arrest Jesus at the Mount of Olives. While in Mark (Mark 14:43), Judas is simply accompanying the crowd, Luke specifically describes him as leading them, foregrounding his villainy. Mark's explanation of Judas' kiss is omitted. Ford's reading of this, which is based on the arguments of Vincent Taylor and Friedrich Rehkopf, is that Judas' kiss is not cynical at all in Luke (whether as part of a prearranged signal with the men he is guiding, or simply a

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<sup>89</sup> Friedrich Rehkopf, *Die Lukanische Sonderquelle* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1959), p. 12.

<sup>90</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke*, p. 1412.

hypocritical gesture of affection towards the teacher he is betraying), but a sincere gesture of respect, perhaps the indication of a last-minute crisis of conscience.<sup>91</sup> As mentioned above, this is an intriguing theory but it seems to be resting a great deal of weight on a single omission, particularly when Jesus' 'emotionally charged' response to Judas' attempt to kiss him, οὐδα, φιλήματι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδω; seems to suggest that the gesture is indeed intended as a signal. Luke's change may simply be to better show Jesus' awareness of the plot against him.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ford, *Enemy*, p. 120.

<sup>92</sup> Brittany E. Wilson, *Unmanly Men: Refigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 223.

## 4. Acts

### 4.1. The Death of Judas (Acts 1:15-20)

Judas' death in Acts is narrated by Peter, in Acts 1:15-20.<sup>93</sup> As we have seen, it bears a number of common features with his suicide in Matthew, but the account itself is completely different. Instead of returning the money and killing himself, Luke's Judas buys a field, in which he falls down one day and is disembowelled.<sup>94</sup> The place becomes known as the Field of Blood, or Hakeldama. Matthew's version explains the Field of Blood and its connection with Judas as the foreigners' graveyard which the priests established with the tainted money he returned.<sup>95</sup>

Luke's Judas is the first victim of divine justice in Acts –a recurring motif in which those who commit blasphemy or fall to Satan's temptation, such as Ananias and Sapphira, meet horrifying, often gruesome ends. As the first of them, Judas' career and death provides the model for these figures. The Field of Blood is an 'image of grotesque and deserved punishment at the providential hand of God'.<sup>96</sup> Luke follows a tradition in Jewish writing showing blasphemers, such as Antiochus in 2 Maccabees 9:5-12 or Jehoram in 2 Chronicles 21:15,

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<sup>93</sup> Although the description of Judas' death itself, 1:18-19, is surely an aside by the narrator and no longer Peter, given the reference in 1:19 to the name of the Field of Blood in 'their' (the Jews) language. M. Wilcox argues that these verses are not Luke's composition, in "The Judas Tradition in Acts 1:15-26", *NTS* 19 (1973). Klassen suggests that Peter's speech about Judas reflects a special sympathy and understanding for Judas because of Peter's own failure, but this is not evident to me. Klassen, *Judas*, p. 121.

<sup>94</sup> Johnson suggests that we are not to envision Judas simply tripping and falling, but rather falling from the roof of his farmhouse or perhaps from a ladder, citing the incident in Chariton of Aphrodisias' *Callirhoe*, 1.3.1, in which Ariston, Chaereas' father, falls from a ladder on his farm and is seriously injured. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), p. 36. The verses detailing Judas' death are generally agreed to be pre-existing tradition which Luke has worked into Peter's speech (see Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven, CT: YUP, 1998), p. 218).

<sup>95</sup> As I suggested in Chapter 4, there must have been some traditional link between Judas and a place called the Field of Blood, which Luke and Matthew (or their sources, in Luke's case) explained in different ways.

<sup>96</sup> Paffenroth, *Judas*, p. 12.

suffer horrific fates, often involving things such as entrails or maggots issuing forth from their body.<sup>97</sup> There is a similar, though less pronounced, trend in Greek writing.<sup>98</sup> Notably, the implication is that Judas' sin is no longer simply treachery but now blasphemy. Jesus' majesty has been increased.

Peter uses two quotations from the Psalms to account for Judas' defection, Psalm 69.25 and Psalm 109.8, identifying the enemies of the psalmist with the enemies of Christ.<sup>99</sup> It is not surprising that the basis for Judas' betrayal was sought in Scripture. As this thesis has discussed, betrayal by one of their own was a traumatic, and perhaps recurring event for the early Christians.<sup>100</sup> It was also a weakness in their disputes with the outside world, as we can clearly see from Celsus' attacks. The idea that Judas' betrayal was mandated by God's divine plan and predicted in the Scriptures would have brought comfort to the early Christians, and strengthened a vulnerable section of their rhetorical defences. The paradox that so fascinates modern writers such as Borges, the idea that it took the sin of Jesus' betrayal to save the world, not to mention the questions of culpability and free will that it raises, do not seem to have occurred to them.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, it is not until more philosophically educated people such as Origen began to join the Christian movement that these questions first came to be addressed.

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<sup>97</sup> See Gubar, *Judas*, p. 80.

<sup>98</sup> Zwiep, *Judas*, pp. 63-68; O. Wesley Allen, Jr., *The Death of Herod: The Narrative and Theological Functions of Retribution in Luke-Acts* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), pp. 29-74.

<sup>99</sup> Anthony Cane, *The Place of Judas Iscariot in Christology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 51-52.

<sup>100</sup> See Chapter 3, p. 91-92.

<sup>101</sup> Borges' short story "Three Versions of Judas" concerns itself with these questions (as does "The Sect of the Thirty", both of them present in the 1962 collection *Labyrinths*). Borges' mixture of real and imagined theological history is so skilful that at least one Biblical scholar has cited his fictional theologian and Judas biographer, Nils Runeberg, as a real source. See Klassen, *Judas*, p. 26 and p. 40. Present day Biblical scholars are often at pains to stress Judas' full responsibility for the action he committed (for instance David L. Tiede, *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1980), p. 107) but it does not seem to me that this is a source of particular concern to the evangelists themselves. 2 Thessalonians 2:11 and Mark 4:10-12 reveal a similar indifference to such questions, which may have their roots in such passages from the Hebrew Scriptures as Exodus 10:1-2. On the general concept of the acceptance of fate over personal responsibility by ancient Mediterranean society, see Malina, *Windows*, p. 114.

## 4.2. A New Peter?

Beyond what has already been mentioned, this thesis will not discuss Peter's role in Acts in detail. The interest of this thesis lies in the gospels' portrayal of Peter and Judas as disciples, their interaction and relationship with Jesus and the way that they do or do not conform to Graeco-Roman literary expectations of discipleship. As already discussed in Chapter 2, although Peter plays a significant role in Acts, he is no longer playing the role of disciple, and his distinctive character traits as such (as identified by Wiarda) no longer apply.<sup>102</sup> Despite the important role he plays in Acts, giving eight speeches and performing numerous miracles, he is not distinguished in terms of character from Paul, Philip, Stephen, or other prominent Christian figures in the narrative.<sup>103</sup> What makes Peter so distinctive in the gospels are his traits of overconfidence, impulsiveness, literal-mindedness, cowardice, and lack of perception (although, as noted, even in his gospel Luke plays them down more than any other evangelist). None of these traits are present in the Peter of Acts, rendering him a more dignified but less appealing and interesting figure, at least to modern readers.<sup>104</sup>

This supports the argument that this thesis has been proposing: that the most distinctive elements of Peter's character in the gospels (overconfidence, literal-mindedness, cowardice,

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<sup>102</sup> Wiarda, *Peter*, pp. 72-91

<sup>103</sup> In a linguistic analysis of the speeches in Acts, Mason (*Josephus*, p. 195-96) has shown that nothing is done to distinguish one Christian speaker from another in terms of vocabulary, characteristic concerns, or patterns of speech. There is a sense of different settings and contexts to the speeches, for instance in Paul's speech to the Athenians (Acts 17:22-31), but nothing more. As Mason points out, this is in contrast to Greek historians such as Thucydides. Although Thucydides admits to personally composing most of the speeches in his *Peloponnesian War*, he still varies the tone and style of each speaker based on their identity and personality.

<sup>104</sup> As discussed in the Introduction, ancient readers generally looked for consistency rather than contradictions in literary and historical figures, and might have been puzzled by the idea that a mixture of good and bad traits makes a character more authentic or interesting. Consider Philo's tongue-in-cheek 'apology' for beginning by listing the merits of the man he intends to execrate, in *Against Flaccus* 6. See Laurel Fulkerson's article "Plutarch on the Statesman: Stability, Change, and Regret", *Illinois Classical Studies* 37 (2012), pp. 51-74, in which she argues that Plutarch saw inconsistencies in character as a sign of a deeply flawed nature.

etc.) do not primarily come from recollections of the historical Peter (although these may play a part), nor from hostility towards Peter on the part of Mark or other contributors to the tradition, but on the role Peter plays in the narrative as disciple. If we accept this, Peter's transformation in Acts makes perfect sense. He is no longer a disciple and so he no longer embodies the disciple's archetypal qualities.<sup>105</sup>

But do any characters inherit this role in Acts? Talbert has argued that Acts is a 'succession narrative' in which Peter, and later Paul, takes on Jesus' role as teacher and wonder-worker.<sup>106</sup>

Do we see any new instances of the archetypal disciple features among the people they draw around them?

As this chapter has already pointed out, Luke is not enamoured of this character type. Peter and the other disciples have much of it removed from their portrayal in Luke's Gospel. Besides this general desire on Luke's part for greater dignity for his characters, as Oropeza points out, no Christians apostatize under physical pressure or perform similar acts of cowardice in Acts, though they may be tempted by wealth.<sup>107</sup> To portray any such thing would run counter to Luke's aim of showing Christianity's irresistible growth across the Mediterranean world.

This is not to say Luke is without humour. As already discussed, Luke's version of the parables of Jesus are possessed of considerable sly wit and charm, and Pervo has highlighted a number of sections in Acts that strongly suggest an authorial sense of humour.

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<sup>105</sup> There is one possible exception, which is the jailbreak scene in Acts 12: 1-11. Pervo makes a case for reading this in a spirit of tongue-in-cheek humour (Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1987), pp. 61-64). Peter does exhibit a few stereotypical disciple traits, such as his sleepiness (the angel needs to kick him to wake him up), his need for explicit instructions (how to put his clothes on), his confusion, and the comic details of the scene in which he is left outside Mary's house, hammering on the door to be let in.

<sup>106</sup> Talbert, *Reading Luke-Acts*, pp. 20-49.

<sup>107</sup> Oropeza, *Footsteps*, p. 158.

Some of these incidents and figures also contain hints of the disciple stereotype. For instance, the story of Eutychus (Acts 20: 7-12) could be read in this way. As Peter does in Mark 14:32-42 and its parallels (and as he almost does in Luke 9:32), Eutychus falls asleep, even though the room is well-lit, with disastrous, tragicomic results, on an occasion that is supposed to be solemn and sombre. Like Alcibiades, Amelius, and Peter himself, he does not have the necessary ascetic willpower to overcome the needs of his body. Since this is Eutychus' only appearance in Acts, it is inadvisable to make too much of this, but the parallels are striking.

Indeed, Dibelius found the entire Eutychus incident so distasteful that he assumed that it was from a 'secular' source that Luke had adapted into a story about Paul.<sup>108</sup> Bale makes an interesting case for the possibility that the joke is not entirely on Eutychus, but also on Paul.<sup>109</sup> Paul, evidently in love with the sound of his own droning voice, continues to speak on, not at all perturbed, even after Eutychus' dramatic fall and recovery. Bale suggests that there may be a deliberate piece of sly ambiguity about the final verse of the episode: ἤγαγον δὲ τὸν παῖδα ζῶντα, καὶ παρεκλήθησαν οὐ μετρίως. Is their relief purely because Eutychus is alive, or also perhaps because Paul has finally finished speaking and gone away?

This interpretation might seem inconsistent with the master-disciple dynamic as it has been portrayed so far, in which the master's dignity and ascetic self-control is always contrasted against the disciple's impulsiveness and need for food and sleep, with the latter as the only apparent possible source of any humour –what Blondell refers to as mimetic irony.<sup>110</sup> But in fact this is not necessarily the case in the texts we have examined. Socrates' prolixity,

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<sup>108</sup> Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (London: SCM, 1956), pp. 17-19.

<sup>109</sup> Alan J. Bale, *Genre and Narrative Coherence in the Acts of the Apostles* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), p. 189-90.

<sup>110</sup> See Chapter 2.

flirtatiousness, and disingenuous style of questioning is the subject of some affectionate jabs from his admirers in Plato's dialogues; Porphyry describes Plotinus' lectures as borderline incoherent at times; and even Philostratus sometimes expresses frustration with Apollonius' characteristically riddling, indirect way of expressing himself.<sup>111</sup> The philosopher or holy man, in Graeco-Roman biography, is an individual who lives on another plane of existence, with wisdom so far beyond our own that it can seem bizarre and unworldly, with such ascetic strength that he can forget the basic natural needs of others. The disciple is the assisting figure through whom these gifts are made apparent, but the disciple is also simply a normal human being with whom the reader can identify, who is trying like the reader to make the sense of this teacher.<sup>112</sup> In Chapter 2, the master-disciple dynamic was compared to Holmes and Watson, but there is also sometimes a hint of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza to the mixture as well.

Another possible candidate for the 'new Peter' is John Mark. John Mark travels with Paul and Barnabas to Cyprus in Acts 13, but he parts ways with them when they leave for Pamphylia and returns to Jerusalem instead (Acts 13:13).<sup>113</sup> At first glance, this is presented neutrally by Luke.<sup>114</sup> But as Luke Johnson points out, the word Luke chooses to describe John Mark's action is ἀποχωρέω.<sup>115</sup> In Epictetus' *Discourses*, 4.1.53, this word can indicate dissent. More importantly, for our purposes, it is used in LXX Jeremiah 46.5 to describe falling back in fear and 3 Maccabees 2.33 to describe apostasizing under pressure. These connotations suggest that Luke is implying cowardice as John Mark's motive.

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<sup>111</sup> Consider the teasing of Socrates by Phaedrus and Alcibiades in the *Symposium*, Porphyry's *On the Life of Plotinus* 8, and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 3:15, all discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>112</sup> The wry humour to which this leads is also very characteristic of the Jewish rabbinic tradition.

<sup>113</sup> Black discusses this episode and its historical plausibility in C. Clifton Black, *Mark: Images of an Apostolic Interpreter* (Columbia, SC: USCP, 1994), pp. 25-44.

<sup>114</sup> This is Barrett's understanding: C.K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), pp. 626-627.

<sup>115</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, p. 229.

It becomes clear in Acts 15: 36-41 that Paul certainly considered John Mark's action a desertion of the cause, and as a result, he and Barnabas quarrel and separate.<sup>116</sup> The word ἀφεστήξω is now used of Mark's action, a word with definite associations with desertion and apostasy (see Xenophon's *Anabasis*, 2.4.5).

Just why did John Mark refuse to accompany Paul to Pamphylia?<sup>117</sup> Beyond his suggestive choice of words, Luke casts no further light on this question. He presumably either simply does not know himself, or else does not wish to expand any further on an incident that obviously runs totally counter to his goals in writing this history. But scholars have speculated that John Mark may have been motivated by disillusionment, exhaustion, or reluctance to accommodate the needs of Paul's illness (see Galatians 4:13).<sup>118</sup> One possibility that has gained considerable traction is the idea that John Mark, a Jewish Christian from Jerusalem, was uncomfortable with the increasingly Gentile-oriented stance of Paul's mission. C. Clifton Black has gone so far as to describe John Mark's departure in Acts as a bittersweet farewell to the Jewish Jerusalem church itself.<sup>119</sup>

But if we see John Mark as motivated by cowardice, as the use of ἀποχωρέω may suggest, we see immediate and obvious parallels –with Peter in the gospels, with the anonymous young man of Mark 14:51-52, with the disciples of Apollonius of Tyana, who refuse to accompany

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<sup>116</sup> Given how reluctant Luke is to show in-fighting within the early Christian movement, this rift between Paul and Barnabas must have been deeply embedded in the traditions he received, although the Paul-Barnabas feud receives much less scholarly attention than the Paul-Peter feud. See Witherington, *Acts*, p. 472. It is also worth noting that, if Colossians 4:10 is given any weight, Barnabas may have had blood ties to John Mark. Spencer also points out that the original issue may here be the split between Barnabas and Paul on table fellowship (see Galatians 2:13). F. Scott Spencer, *Acts* (Sheffield: SAP, 1997), p. 158.

<sup>117</sup> This question is the subject of literary speculation in a vignette in John Updike's 1997 novel *Toward the End of Time*.

<sup>118</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, p. 627.

<sup>119</sup> Black, *Rhetoric*, pp. 102-117.

him into the east.<sup>120</sup> He is playing one of the most important roles that a disciple can play in an ancient work of literature: emphasising, through contrast, the willpower and steadfast courage of his master. Adela Collins also suggests that, if Luke thinks of John Mark as the author of Mark's Gospel, one of his primary sources, he may deliberately be attempting to undercut his authority in order to justify his own history.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Also struck by the parallels with Peter, Joel Marcus (Mark 1-8, p. 24) suggests that, if there is anything to the traditional identification of the author of Mark's Gospel with John Mark, that the intensity of the scene featuring Peter's denial in Mark's Gospel may have been inspired by Mark's recollection of his own desertion of Paul.

<sup>121</sup> Collins, *Mark*, p. 5.

## Conclusion

It is important to Luke's rhetorical and theological aims that Jesus founds a successful and long-lived movement, and that his disciples show themselves to be worthy successors. This means easing off some of the material he finds regarding the disciples, particularly Peter, in his source material, and in general making less use of the archetypal features of a disciple, as outlined in Chapter 3.

It also places him in a difficult position with regard to Judas, whose dual role as member of the Twelve and traitor means that he does not fit neatly into Luke's scheme. Luke's method for dealing with this is to emphasise the difference between Peter's failure, a temporary aberration, and that of Judas, the permanent act of *becoming* a traitor, as is made clear by his very first appearance in the gospel. Peter is saved and strengthened because of Jesus' prayer for him while Judas is permanently lost.

The divide between the two characters is made evident in Acts. Peter is the *de facto* protagonist of the first half of the book, a teacher and wonder-worker in the tradition of his master, and his redemption is made complete by his penultimate appearance in the text, when he finally fulfils his vow by facing prison and the possibility of execution for Jesus' sake, and neatly matched by his second encounter with a serving girl. Judas, by contrast, faces divine retribution and dies early on in Acts, his death setting the pattern for that of the gruesome deaths of a series of traitors and evil-doers throughout the narrative.

## **Chapter 6: Peter and Judas in John's Gospel**

### **Introduction**

John's Gospel is unusual not just in the fact that its chronology, style, and characterisation of Jesus is so different from the Synoptics, but because we have material from the same community –the Johannine Epistles, which give us a firmer understanding of the theological and pastoral concerns of John's Gospel than we can gain from the Synoptics. This is of obvious relevance to this thesis, and my review of Peter and Judas in the Fourth Gospel will be bearing the Epistles in mind.

John is also unique among the gospels because of his introduction of an enigmatic new figure: the unnamed disciple whom Jesus loved. As this study has shown, the treatment of Peter and Judas in the gospels is based on a certain master-student dynamic which involves unspoken presumptions about what the role of a disciple is. The beloved disciple upends many of these assumptions, and dramatically changes the dynamic between Jesus, Peter, and Judas as a result.

## 1. Setting and Context

It is generally though not quite universally presumed that the three Epistles of John were produced by the same community but in a period after the Gospel itself was written (perhaps ten years later), based on the different situation they seem to describe.<sup>1</sup> Based on the evidence of Eusebius, John's community has been traditionally located in Ephesus, and the Epistles present it as a leading member of a network of local churches with independent leaders.<sup>2</sup> The author of the Epistles, known as the Elder, seems to have looked on as a spiritual leader by at least some of these churches.<sup>3</sup> He kept in touch with them through itinerant disciples such as the Demetrius mentioned in 3 John 12.

Since the advent of the social-critical mode of Biblical studies, the setting and social context of John's Gospel has received a great deal of attention. This is unsurprising. In the first place, we have something unique in the Johannine writings in possessing both a gospel and letters. The Pauline (and deuterio-Pauline) letters give us direct information –sometimes a great deal of information, on the social issues, doctrines, and practices of the early Christian churches, but not very much on how they conceived of the earthly Jesus and his ministry. The Synoptic Gospels provide clear information on the latter but we know almost nothing for certain about to whom they were addressed and the motivation for their writing (besides Luke's formal address to Theophilus in Luke 1:1-4). Assuming that the connection between them is genuine, the Gospel and three Epistles of John give us both. We can apply what we know of John's setting from the Epistles to the Gospel and vice versa, and thereby emerge with a better and

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1982), pp. 19-35.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, 23:1.

<sup>3</sup> See Thatcher, *Gospel*, p. 61.

more rounded understanding of a single Christian church or group of churches, their teachings, disputes, and social memory.

In the second place, John's Gospel is such an unusual text, so strikingly different from the Synoptics in both structure and theology, that it has been irresistible for scholars to speculate on the circumstances of its creation –particularly for scholars during the heyday of the source-obsessed German Biblical criticism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

It is with this in mind that we turn to Rudolf Bultmann. Bultmann was an early pioneer in re-examining the Gospel of John in the light of the new mode of Biblical criticism, which was sceptical regarding the traditional attribution of the gospel to John, the son of Zebedee. Bultmann was convinced that the Fourth Gospel was written by a convert from Gnosticism, who had rejected his baroque former belief system but was still profoundly influenced by its vocabulary and world-view.

Bultmann's theory is characteristic of general trends within Biblical scholarship during and before his period. During the 1920s, for instance, it was generally assumed that John's was the most 'Hellenistic' of the Gospels, with critics pointing to his use of the word *λόγος* in the Prologue as clear evidence of influence from Greek philosophy.<sup>4</sup> John's Gospel was framed as the encounter between the Jewish Messiah of the early church tradition with neo-Platonic philosophy. More recently, however, various studies have argued that there is nothing exclusively Hellenistic or philosophically technical about the terms used by John –there are as many parallels in roughly contemporary Jewish writings (for instance, the Dead Sea Scrolls).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Stephen Smalley's discussion of this in *John: Evangelist and Interpreter* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1978), pp. 5-6.

<sup>5</sup> See the overview in George Beasley-Murray's *John* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1987), pp.iv-v.

In addition, scholarship has generally turned away from the assumptions underlying the former theory. This is the idea that we can with confidence trace certain ideas within a text back to their original source in the culture or school of thought that created them, unwinding the numerous strands of influence woven into any single text. This can still be an illuminating and worthwhile activity, but scholarship today tends to be far less doctrinaire about the exclusive and characteristic qualities of certain ideas.

The most influential study of John's community in recent times has been done by J. Louis Martyn. Martyn was the first to propose reading John's Gospel as a 'two-level drama', in which John is not just writing an account of Jesus' ministry but also an allegorical account of his own community's experience.<sup>6</sup> The literary device allowing this two-level reading is the Paraclete which Jesus promises to his disciples in John 15:26.<sup>7</sup> The Paraclete, which comes after Jesus' death, is the spirit of truth which first enables real understanding of the events described in John's Gospel. Before that, full understanding eluded even participants in these events, such as the disciples, allowing John full use of dramatic irony.<sup>8</sup> John will sometimes refer to events that have not yet taken place to explain allusions in the narrative, explaining that the disciples only understood these things later on, with the implicit aid of the Paraclete.<sup>9</sup> For this reason, it makes sense to think of John's Gospel not simply as an attempt to write a life of Jesus, even to the limited extent that the Synoptics represent such an attempt, but as a way of using the story of Jesus to discuss contemporary events. Based on this suggestion, Martyn argued that John's Gospel contains strong evidence that John and his fellows were a group of Christian Jews who

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<sup>6</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 68.

<sup>7</sup> Martyn, *History and Theology*, p. 142.

<sup>8</sup> Note that the doctrine of the Paraclete can also be used to answer appeals to tradition from authorities such as Peter or even Jesus himself from rival Christian groups. The traditions of Jesus' teachings are not made irrelevant, but their significance is made relative by the Paraclete. See Thatcher, *John*, pp. 20-35, for a discussion of the ramifications of the Paraclete doctrine for the Johannine sense of history.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, John 12:16: 'His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.' See Thatcher, *John*, p. 25.

had been expelled from their synagogue not long before the composition of John's Gospel because of the increasingly dramatic claims they made for Jesus' divine status, leaving behind a certain number of crypto-Christians in the synagogue.<sup>10</sup> These statements of faith were probably made in a series of escalating claims and counter-claims between John's followers and his opponents, perhaps some of the first rabbinic Jews. While the initial discussion might simply have been on whether or not Jesus was the Messiah (perhaps we might imagine a version of a scene like Acts 5:33-39), as the two sides became more entrenched and the debate became more heated, the claims of John's community for Jesus became more and more dramatic, resulting in the living God we see in John's Gospel.<sup>11</sup> Martyn argues that the resentment and shock of this break is clearly apparent in the Gospel's fearful, hostile references to 'the Jews' (most infamously in John 8:44 when Jesus refers to them as 'children of the Devil') and the way that the two-level drama of expulsion from the synagogue and the Jewish community play out throughout the narrative, in verses such as John 9:22.<sup>12</sup> Martyn linked this to the *Birkhat ha-Minim*, one of the second-century Eighteen Benedictions that Jews were required to recite in the synagogue.<sup>13</sup> Martyn understood the *Birkat ha-Minim*, the 'Blessing on the Heretics' (generally seen as a euphemistic description of a curse) as referring to Christians. Including it among the Eighteen Benedictions was a way of ensuring that the expulsion of the Christians would remain permanent.

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<sup>10</sup> Martyn, *History and Theology*, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> Notice that Martyn's suggestion, unlike those of Bultmann and others of his generation, does not require any direct influence from the 'god-man' myths of the Hellenistic world. See also Selina O'Grady, *And Man Created God: Kings, Cults and Conquests at the Time of Jesus* (London: Atlantic Books, 2012), p. 338. O'Grady suggests that the divinisation of Jesus in John's Gospel was due to its late date, an assertion that is often made within Biblical studies but rarely supported. It is natural to assume that, over the course of time, the stories surrounding a figure such as Jesus will become more and more exaggerated and reverential. But the leap between the wonder-worker of the Synoptics and John's eternal incarnate *λόγος* is another matter altogether.

<sup>12</sup> Martyn, *History and Theology*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>13</sup> Martyn, *History and Theology*, pp. 34-41.

Criticism of Martyn's theory often centres on the Birkhat ha-Minim and it is certainly difficult to demonstrate that they existed in John's time, or even that they refer to Christians.<sup>14</sup> However, it is important to understand that the Birkhat ha-Minim is far from central to Martyn's argument. Its basis is not in external sources but in the evidence from the gospel itself, particularly John's puzzling and apparently contradictory feelings towards 'the Jews'.

Raymond Brown built on Martyn's theories to argue that we can with some confidence trace the history of the Johannine church from their expulsion from the synagogue, the changes in their theology prompted by the arrival of Samaritan converts, the schism between the Johannine Christians of the Epistles and their proto-Gnostic opponents, and finally (though speculatively) the absorption of John's Christians into the Catholic Church and his opponents into the Gnostic movement.<sup>15</sup> In Brown's view, the Gospel was written perhaps 90 CE, and the Epistles some ten years later.<sup>16</sup> The exceptional hostility displayed towards the Jews might be accounted for by the addition of a group of Samaritan converts (a special interest in Samaritans being displayed by Jesus' lengthy conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-42).<sup>17</sup> In any case, Brown believes that the Samaritan newcomers were the catalyst for a new, broader and non-Davidic understanding of the nature of the Messiah.<sup>18</sup> Although the Gospel was written

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<sup>14</sup> For just a small sample of the criticism of Martyn's use of Birkat ha-Minim, see Günter Stemberger, "Die sogenannte "Synode von Jabne" und das frühe Christentum", *Kairos* 19 (1977), pp. 14-21, William Horbury, "The Benediction of the Minim and Early Jewish-Christian Controversy", *JTS* 33 (1982) pp. 19-61 and Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70-170 C.E.* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), pp. 169-94. Richard Bauckham feels that the Johannine community in general is an illusion, and criticises Martyn's book as the source of the scholarly obsession with it, but his arguments have already been addressed in Chapter 2. David A. Lamb has made a similar case for the universality of John's audience in *Text, Context and the Johannine Community: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Johannine Writings* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> See Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1979).

<sup>16</sup> Brown, *Community*, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> Brown, *Community*, p. 40.

<sup>18</sup> Brown, *Community*, pp. 44-45.

during a period of unity within the Johannine church, we see schisms appear in the later Epistles.

Recently, Tom Thatcher and Richard Horsley have proposed a different explanation for John's negative use of the term Ἰουδαῖοι. In their opinion, it refers to Judeans, sometimes as a synecdoche for the priesthood.<sup>19</sup> This theory runs into difficulties in John 4: 7-26, when the Samaritan woman refers to Jesus as a Ἰουδαῖος. Horsley and Thatcher suggest that the Samaritan woman made the false assumption that Jesus was Judean, since he had come from the south, and that Jesus did not correct her. This seems unconvincing. Jesus does not simply tacitly accept the designation during the conversation, but specifically aligns himself with the Ἰουδαῖοι in John 4:22: ὑμεῖς προσκυνεῖτε ὃ οὐκ οἶδατε: ἡμεῖς προσκυνοῦμεν ὃ οἶδαμεν, ὅτι ἡ σωτηρία ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐστίν. The first person plural pronoun ἡμεῖς surely corresponds to οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, given the final clause of this verse. Thatcher and Horsley are right to draw our attention to the issues with using terms like 'Jews' and 'Judaism' too casually, without reference to the very different situation of first century Palestine, but Ἰουδαῖος does seem to have a more general sense than simply 'citizen of Judea'.

Thatcher has also argued that in fact the Epistles came *before* the Gospel. While Brown would argue that the Gospel was intended to deal with external conflict and the Epistles internal conflict, Thatcher argues that they are both ultimately aimed at the internal division within John's community, while still maintaining the community's rhetorical defences against outsiders.<sup>20</sup> Thatcher claims that the intention in writing a gospel is to create an official and

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<sup>19</sup> Richard Horsley and Tom Thatcher, *John, Jesus and the Renewal of Israel* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2013), p. 41.

<sup>20</sup> Thatcher, *John*, p. 33.

unalterable ‘memory’ of Jesus which will support the views of John’s Christians, with its written form giving it unique gravitas and authority.<sup>21</sup>

Without wishing to overplay the evidence of the Birkat ha-Minim themselves, this thesis sees an expulsion from the synagogue as the most reasonable and plausible hypothesis so far put forward.<sup>22</sup>

Until relatively recently, it has widely been taken for granted by most influential commentators that John was unfamiliar with the Synoptics.<sup>23</sup> But this view has been challenged by Richard Bauckham, and in Andrew Lincoln’s recent commentary on John.<sup>24</sup> Both scholars point to parallels such as the ones between John 4:46-54 and Matthew 8:5-13 or Luke 7:1-10, and argue that John might well have adapted these verses from the Synoptics, introducing his own characteristic concerns and motifs. This thesis also tentatively endorses this thesis, as John’s portrayal of Peter seems to make most sense as an adaptation of the Synoptics’ version of the man.

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<sup>21</sup> Thatcher, *John*, p. 146.

<sup>22</sup> See Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 82-89.

<sup>23</sup> C.H. Dodd was one of the pioneers of this view in *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: CUP, 1963) and C.K. Barrett’s *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: SPCK, 1978) was among the few major twentieth century commentaries to disagree with the consensus.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Bauckham, “John for Readers of Mark”, p. 151, in, *Gospels*, Lincoln, *John*, pp. 26-39.

## 2. Peter and Judas

Peter and Judas are bound together in John's Gospel (mostly due to the introduction of the beloved disciple), more intimately even than in Matthew, and so in this chapter, I will eschew the previous format of considering them one at a time and instead give a combined study of both of them in John's Gospel. The benefits of doing so should be clear by the end of this chapter.

### 2.1. Overview: John's Attitude towards Peter

The question of John's attitude to Peter is complicated by his introduction of an important but strangely anonymous figure, the mysterious disciple 'whom Jesus loved' (ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς). As discussed in the previous chapters, Mark's apparently highly critical image of Peter is modified by a number of important contextual factors. One, discussed in Chapter 2, is the fact that disciples of great thinkers in the ancient world were often portrayed as dull-minded and literal, if earnest, in order to allow their masters to display their greater wisdom to full advantage and also to deliver further exposition on various points of their teaching. Another, discussed in Chapter 3, is that Peter in Mark's Gospel is less a distinct individual (whether considered as a historical figure *or* a literary character) and more a reflection of the Twelve as a whole. His good points are their good points, his failings are their failings.

But these qualifications do not apply in the same way to John's Gospel, where a disciple (or perhaps several disciples) is introduced who seems to succeed where Peter fails and who is, in fact, continually being compared to Peter. Indeed, even his sobriquet refers to John 13:23, in which the key point is that he and not Peter has the place of honour at Jesus' side. At the same

time, John is also more restrained than Mark in his negative portrayals of Peter and the Twelve and also includes, in John 21, a somewhat cryptic but moving reconciliation between Peter and his master.<sup>25</sup> A number of different theories have been proposed to explain what or whom the beloved disciple and his rivalry with Peter represent. This thesis favours the argument put forward by Raymond Brown. Brown argues that Peter in John's Gospel represents the hierarchical church, from which John's community has separated itself (or with which it has never been aligned).<sup>26</sup> Based on the evidence of the Johannine Epistles, John's community is a looser and more charismatic organization, with more focus on individual leadership than traditional authority structures.

This view makes John's Gospel in part an implicit response to the ultimate authority given to Peter by the tradition in texts such as Matthew 16:17-20. Drawing on the pre-existent characterisation of Peter as literal-minded, impulsive, and unreliable (as we have seen, in themselves simply the stock characteristics of many 'disciple' characters), John employs it to draw an advantageous comparison with the representative of his church: the spiritually advanced beloved disciple.<sup>27</sup> Although a range of possibilities for his identity will be discussed later in this chapter, perhaps John maintains the beloved disciple's anonymity so that every member of his community can identify with him.

However, as already mentioned, John's Gospel is by no means purely negative towards Peter.<sup>28</sup>

This would suggest, in the first place, that John's community feels less hostility towards the

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<sup>25</sup> The scholarly consensus is that John 21 is an addition to the original gospel, given the emphatic finality of John 20:30-31. However, I will argue below that the chapter is consistent with rather than divergent from the general thrust of Peter's portrayal throughout the Gospel.

<sup>26</sup> Brown, Donfried and Reumann, *Peter*, pp. 143-47.

<sup>27</sup> The point of comparison between the beloved disciple and Porphyry in the latter's life of Plotinus, as discussed in Chapter 2, should be clear.

<sup>28</sup> Compare it, for instance, with a Sethian Gnostic text such as the Gospel of Judas, in which the apostles are portrayed sacrificing their own children.

hierarchical church than they evidently do towards 'the Jews'. John's main interest in the episodes comparing Peter and the beloved disciple is to emphasise the beloved disciple's primacy, not Peter's failure as such.<sup>29</sup> This in turn suggests that Peter's authority is to some extent, and perhaps reluctantly, accepted by John's audience. Emphasising the beloved disciple's advancement over Peter only makes sense if there is a pre-existing assumption of Peter's pre-eminence.

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<sup>29</sup> Quast argues that Peter is presented positively, but as simply one among the disciples and not exemplary in any way. Kevin Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple: Figures for a Community in Crisis* (Sheffield: SAP, 1989), pp. 53-54.

## 2.2. Overview: John's Attitude towards Judas

As we have already seen, Mark's attitude towards Judas is difficult to decipher purely because Mark seems to have little interest in Judas. Not just his primary but his sole importance in Mark's Gospel is to act as Jesus' betrayer –the motives for this action are as irrelevant to Mark as Judas' subsequent history. Neither of Mark's two Synoptic adaptors, Matthew and Luke, felt quite as indifferent towards Judas –they may have been at least partly motivated by the curiosity of their listeners. Matthew has Judas clearly motivated by money in his version of Judas' meeting with the Temple priests in Matthew 26:14-16 while Luke posits Satanic possession in Luke 22:3. Likewise, they both give accounts of Judas' end; Matthew from suicide in Matthew 27:3-10 and Luke from a horrific accident in Acts 1:18.

John combines both of the other two Synoptics' motives. John 12:1-8 makes it clear that Judas is avaricious and dishonest but during the Passion, his decision to betray Jesus is not motivated by money but by the Devil (John 13:2). However, like Mark and unlike Matthew and Luke, John does not give us any description of Judas' eventual fate.

Some scholars, notably William Klassen and Hyam Maccoby, seem to have seen in the sheer animus directed by John at Judas something resembling a personal dislike. As we have already seen, Maccoby argues that John is part of a general movement to blacken Judas' character in order to distance the early Christian church from its Jewish roots.<sup>30</sup> This thesis will be arguing that the idea that Judas is especially and notably vilified in John, as compared to the other three gospels, is something of a misreading of the text. John is not a temperate author and he certainly creates a contemptible character in his Judas, but a couple of factors mediate it. The first of

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<sup>30</sup> Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot*, p. 25.

these factors is the possible context of various tropes and archetypal features regarding Judas' characterisation, such as we have already seen affects our understanding of Peter's portrayal. The second is the surprising way Judas and the beloved disciple are compared and contrasted at the Last Supper. Both these points will be discussed below.

### 2.3. Peter and Judas in John's Gospel

John is a dualist thinker, setting the tone for the gospel with the interplay between light and darkness in the Prologue, 1:1-18. Pairs of characters predominate throughout the story – Andrew and the anonymous disciple in 1:35-39; Philip and Nathaniel in 1:43-46; Mary and Martha in 11:1-6; Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea in John 19:38-39.<sup>31</sup> These pairings are often implicitly used for the purpose of contrast and comparison, generally in terms of how they respond to Jesus (John's single most consistent method of characterisation). This is also true of Peter, Judas and the uniquely Johannine figure of the beloved disciple, who will be discussed in greater detail below, in the section on John's Last Supper.<sup>32</sup> Peter and the beloved disciple are paired several times throughout John's Passion narrative, each time with immensely significant consequences for their characterisation. Peter and Judas are never explicitly paired, but their actions during the Passion can be compared and contrasted with interesting results. Finally, there is a surprising and even somewhat disturbing pairing of Judas and the beloved disciple at John's last supper in John 13:21-30, as we shall see. This is an added reason for considering the characterisation of Peter and Judas together in this chapter.

#### Calling of the Disciples (John 1:29-42)

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<sup>31</sup> See James H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), p. 234.

<sup>32</sup> David R. Beck prefers to use the more correct appellation 'the disciple whom Jesus loved', since he feels that using the term 'beloved disciple' (or worse, the shorthand BD) in the manner of a title dispels some of the character's crucial anonymity. See Beck, "'Whom Jesus Loved': Anonymity and Identity, Belief and Witness in the Fourth Gospel", p. 222, in Christopher W. Skinner (ed.), *Characters and Characterisation in the Gospel of John* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013). His argument has merit but I have still found the relative elegance of 'the beloved disciple', slightly misleading as it may be, preferable to the cumbersome 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'.

Jesus gathers his first disciples, including Peter, in a different way in the Gospel of John than he does in the Synoptics. As in the Synoptics, Jesus is among the crowds at the wilderness camp of John the Baptist. John the Baptist identifies him as the Lamb of God (ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ) to two of his disciples, one of whom is Simon Peter's brother Andrew (John 1:35-42). Andrew and his unnamed fellow disciple follow Jesus back to the place where he is staying, and come to the conclusion that he is the Messiah (John 1:41). What was a climactic moment of insight for the apostles in the Synoptics (Matthew 16:16, Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20) is here merely the beginning of the disciples' understanding of Jesus.<sup>33</sup> Andrew returns to tell Simon Peter who is brought to Jesus. Jesus gives him his nickname Cephas, the Aramaic word for rock which the evangelist translates into Greek as Πέτρος.

Andrew's companion is not named. There are three significant unnamed disciples in John's Gospel. One of them is Andrew's companion, one of them is the disciple whom Jesus loved (τὸν μαθητὴν ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς) who plays a key role in the Last Supper, the resurrection narratives and supporting the Gospel's testimony, and the last is the disciple who is known to the high priest of John 18:15-16 (ὁ μαθητὴς ... ὁ γνωστὸς τοῦ ἀρχιερέως) who gets Peter into the high priest's house. But are these three unnamed figures all intended to be one and the same? Or does John at least intend us to consider this as a possibility?<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 116.

<sup>34</sup> Craig S. Keener considers but ultimately dismisses this idea. See Keener, *John*, p. 468. Richard Bauckham, on the other hand, argues for identifying the unnamed disciple with Andrew as the beloved disciple. See Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, p. 128. Bauckham argues that the identifying feature of the beloved disciple, the fact that Jesus loves him, cannot logically be used to identify him before he even meets Jesus. This is a weak argument, however. As we have seen, oral narrative has a tendency to introduce and identify characters by their most notable acts or features, regardless of the chronology involved. Note, for instance, the way that Judas is introduced in all four gospels as the one who handed Jesus over, even though in all cases that event only occurs well after his introduction.

Andrew also precedes his brother, although he is formally identified as ‘the brother of Simon Peter’ in 1:40 (ὁ ἀδελφὸς Σίμωνος Πέτρου), suggesting that John assumes Peter will be more familiar to his audience than his brother.<sup>35</sup> As Keener points out, Andrew is several times the agent that introduces resources and new followers to Jesus throughout John’s Gospel (6:8-9; 12:22).<sup>36</sup> This as well may be a way of relativizing Peter’s role, in effect downplaying his importance by placing more emphasis on his brother’s action. Unless we consider Andrew to be of particular interest to John’s community (which is not otherwise indicated), we should note the indication that here John appears to be more interested in restricting and relativizing Peter’s role than he is in replacing him with any one particular figure.

Finally, Jesus’ first encounter with Peter, in John 1:42, is interesting. Jesus gives Simon Peter his nickname here. Uniquely in the Gospels, Peter’s Aramaic nickname, Cephas, is given here as well as the Greek Πέτρος. We know from Paul’s letters that ‘Cephas’ was how Peter was known in his own day (Corinthians 9:5; Galatians 1:18 and 2:1-14, although he also refers to him as Πέτρος in Galatians 2:7 and 2:8).<sup>37</sup>

It is interesting that Jesus formally bestows the nickname on Peter when they first meet. Mark, in Mark 3:13, mentions that Jesus called Simon Peter but there is no one scene where Peter receives his nickname. The closest parallel to John 1:42 is the blessing of Peter in Matthew 16:17-19. Jesus tells him he is ‘rock’ (Πέτρος) and on this ‘rock’ (πέτρα) he will build his church. It is not clear whether Matthew thinks that this is the *origin* of Peter’s nickname or whether he believes that Jesus is simply making a reference to it. The latter seems more likely

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<sup>35</sup> Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, p. 58.

<sup>36</sup> Keener, *John*, p. 475.

<sup>37</sup> See Cullman, *Peter*, p. 20. See pp. 58-59 of this thesis for more discussion of this point.

but the phrasing seems similar to John 1:42, in which Jesus certainly is bestowing Peter's nickname on him for the first time.

In addition, it seems highly significant that in John 1:42 Jesus refers to Peter as Σίμων ὁ υἱὸς Ἰωάννου. The name of Peter and Andrew's father is not widely testified to in the New Testament (unlike, for instance, the fact that James and John were the sons of Zebedee). In fact, the only source for his father's name besides John 1:42 is Matthew 16:17, where he is called Σίμων Βαριωνᾶ, the Aramaic equivalent of 'Son of Jonah' or 'Son of John'. Furthermore, as previously discussed, it has been argued that is not a literal reference to Peter's father but to the prophet Jonah and the 'sign of Jonah' (τὸ σημεῖον Ἰωνᾶ) of Matthew 12:38; the Resurrection.<sup>38</sup> If this is the case, then it seems clear that John is adapting Matthew 16:17-19 (or the tradition on which it was based). He has made the moment immensely less important by locating it at the very beginning of Jesus and Peter's relationship and omitting the reference to Peter's authority.

As Farelly points out, Peter is passive and silent all the way through this first encounter with Jesus, and is not characterized in any way.<sup>39</sup> His traditional role in confessing Jesus as the Christ has been passed on to his brother.

Unlike the Synoptics, John never lists all of the disciples at one time, perhaps because of his fondness for using unnamed disciples for key scenes, and he uses the term δώδεκα only four times throughout the gospel (6:67, 6:70, 6:71, and 20:24).<sup>40</sup> In addition, the disciples as a group

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<sup>38</sup> Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 332.

<sup>39</sup> Nicolas Farelly, *The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel: A Narrative Analysis of their Faith and Understanding* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), p. 91.

<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Judas and Thomas are the only disciples specifically identified as members of the Twelve (Judas in 6:71, and Thomas in 20:24).

play a different role in John. The emphasis in the Synoptics is on Jesus' teachings regarding the Law and moral behaviour. The disciples are foils to Jesus, students who ask him leading questions or require him to clarify ambiguous points. But John's Jesus gives long soliloquys regarding the mystery of his own identity rather than the short statement, question and answer format that the Synoptics use. As a result, the disciples in John tend to act as witnesses rather than students.

### **The Devil Among the Twelve (John 6:60-71)**

When Peter returns to the story, in John 6:67, it is to reaffirm that he and the others of the δώδεκα will stay by Jesus, even though many of Jesus' other disciples have abandoned him, offended at his speech describing himself as the bread of life (6:35-40). Peter affirms that Jesus is the Holy One of God (ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ - a rarely used title for Jesus, used by a demon in Mark 1:24) who has the words of eternal life. Jesus accepts his confession but declares that one of the Twelve is a 'devil' (καὶ ἐξ ὑμῶν εἷς διάβολός ἐστιν).<sup>41</sup> The narrator explains that this is a reference to Judas. Uniquely among the gospels, he also gives the name of Judas' father, Simon Iscariot.<sup>42</sup> Koester has suggested that the reference to Judas' earthly origins is intended to form a contrast with the description of him as a devil, setting up a dynamic we will see repeated throughout the gospel.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Kysar points out the interesting fact that Jesus never performs any exorcisms in the Gospel of John, even though it seems likely that Jesus' initial claim to fame was as an exorcist (see Mark 1:27). See Robert Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), p. 13.

<sup>42</sup> As discussed in the first chapter, if there is any historical basis for John's identification of Judas' father, it removes any basis for thinking that 'Iscariot' was an individual nickname for Judas. At the least, we can assume, for whatever it is worth, that John does not think of it as such, even if the Synoptics may do so.

<sup>43</sup> Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), p. 73.

This is often taken as John's version of Peter's Synoptic confession of Jesus as the Christ. It receives a relatively muted response from Jesus, since the disciples have understood Jesus in that sense from the beginning of John's Gospel.<sup>44</sup> Despite his affirmation of Jesus, Peter does not yet understand, to paraphrase Culpepper, that receiving the words of eternal life may lead to death.<sup>45</sup> And here there is less of a sense of the Twelve as an elite group of disciples chosen by Jesus and more of them as the remnants or hard core left behind after many of his followers left, unable to bear his 'hard word'.<sup>46</sup> Yet there remains a traitor among them –one of the possible indications in John's Gospel that his community may already be dealing with internal dissension as well as pressure from the outside.

Just as Peter's confession in John 6:68 is taken as a version of his confession in Mark 8:29, Jesus' subsequent declaration that there is a devil among the Twelve can be seen as a version of Jesus' follow-up in Mark 8:33, in which he rebukes Peter as Satan.<sup>47</sup> Farelly argues that *διάβολός* is used indistinguishably from *Σατανᾶς* in the New Testament.<sup>48</sup>

The narrative emphasises twice (6:64 and 6:71) that Jesus was aware that Judas would betray him. Jesus' response to Peter; *Οὐκ ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς τοὺς δώδεκα ἐξελεξάμην, καὶ ἐξ ὑμῶν εἷς διάβολός ἐστιν*; makes the paradox clear. Jesus had handpicked the twelve fully aware that one of them will betray him. From the fragments of Celsus that Origen preserves, already discussed several times in this thesis, it seems possible that it was this aspect of Jesus' story that sceptical

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<sup>44</sup> Brown, Donfried and Reumann, *Peter*, p. 137.

<sup>45</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 120.

<sup>46</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 117. This continues the theme introduced in John 1:29-42, in which Jesus himself does not take the initiative in calling his first disciples.

<sup>47</sup> Keener, *John*, p. 477; Brown, *John*, p. 601. Brown also speculatively suggests a link between the term Peter uses for Jesus, *ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ*, and the fact that it is a literal demon who addresses Jesus as such in Mark 1:24.

<sup>48</sup> Farelly, *Disciples*, p. 107. Henry Ansgar Kelly's study of Satan in the Judeo-Christian tradition, *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), p. 110, suggests this.

pagans found particularly ludicrous.<sup>49</sup> How could a living god have chosen a traitor for his inner circle?

John is aware of this difficulty. 6:71, reads ‘He was speaking of Judas Iscariot, for he, *though one of the twelve*, was going to betray him’ [emphasis mine]. The NRSV’s ‘though’ in ‘though one of the twelve’ is editorial, since the Greek simply reads εἰς ἐκ τῶν δώδεκα but it seems an entirely reasonable interpretation of John’s motive in bringing up Judas’ membership of the twelve. This is John’s first mention of the twelve, and beyond this section, the only other reference to it is in John 20:24, which identifies Thomas as being one of the twelve.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, the abruptness with which the twelve are introduced, and Jesus’ claim that he has chosen them, an event not portrayed in the text, seem to suggest that John expects an existing familiarity on his audience’s part with the concept of the twelve.<sup>51</sup>

Whether John is responding to Celsus-like criticism (or potential criticism) or not, he does lay a great deal of emphasis on Jesus’ foreknowledge of Judas’ betrayal, even more than the Synoptic accounts. This serves his purpose, since he is able to at once make Jesus in total control at all times, even in the matter of his arrest, but he is also able to display the voluntary nature of Jesus’ sacrifice by portraying him as knowingly choosing the man who would betray him.

The idea of Judas being a devil from the beginning (just as the devil himself was a murderer from the beginning in John 8:44), merely hiding his true nature from the believers he stands among, is strikingly similar to the theology of 1 John 2:19: ‘They went out from us, but they

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<sup>49</sup> Origen, *Against Celsus*, 2.18: ‘How is it that, if Jesus pointed out beforehand both the traitor and the perjurer, they did not fear him as a God, and cease, the one from his intended treason, and the other from his perjury?’

<sup>50</sup> Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), p. 231.

<sup>51</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 413-16.

did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But by going out they made it plain that none of them belongs to us.’ In both this verse, and the description of Judas as a devil *before* he carries out his treachery, apostasy and betrayal are not linked to an inner change of heart.<sup>52</sup> Rather, they are simply a revelation of the true nature of the apostates and the traitor.<sup>53</sup> They themselves have been aware of their true nature all along, and were simply deceiving those around them who trusted them. As Oropeza has argued, this interpretation has strong hortatory power to those remaining within the community, and goes a long way towards addressing the trauma of schism.<sup>54</sup>

### **A Liar and a Thief (John 12:1-8)**

Judas reappears in John’s adaptation of the anointing at Bethany in 12:1-8, in his version done by Mary, sister to Martha and Lazarus.<sup>55</sup> She is already identified as such in John 11:2, in another instance of a character being introduced by their most significant role in the text before they have even performed it.<sup>56</sup> In Matthew’s version, Matthew 26:6-13, the disciples object to the waste of money that the anointing represents, money that could be given to the poor if the

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<sup>52</sup> On the demonic bond between Judas and the Jews of 8:41-44, see Gubar, *Judas*, p. 84.

<sup>53</sup> Hyam Maccoby has a different opinion on this passage. He sees the description of Judas as a devil as a *prediction* of what is to come. According to Maccoby, we see the human Judas in John 12:1-8 (discussed below) –a hypocritical thief, vulnerable to demonic possession because of his greed and weakness. The moment at which Judas becomes a devil himself is John 13:27, after Jesus feeds him the sop of bread. See Maccoby, *Judas*, pp. 63-67.

<sup>54</sup> Oropeza, *Footsteps*, pp. 180-89.

<sup>55</sup> Based on the fact that the equivalent episode in Mark (Mark 14:3-9) takes place in the home of a certain Simon the leper, and that Judas’ father’s name in John’s Gospel is given as Simon (John 6:71), J.N. Sanders suggested that Judas was the brother of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha (“Those whom Jesus loved”, *New Testament Studies* 1 (1954), pp. 29-41), and that his hard-headed business sense here casts him as a kind of ‘male Martha’ gone wrong. As with Hyam Maccoby’s imaginative merging of Judas Iscariot, the other Judas among the Twelve, and Jesus’ brother Judas, this theory makes far too much play with the coincidence of two characters sharing the same very common name.

<sup>56</sup> Bauckham, who believes that John expects listeners to know Mark, argues that John 11:2 is specifically intended to supplement one of the gaps in Mark’s account. See Bauckham, “John for Readers of Mark”, p. 151, in Bauckham (ed.), *Gospels*.

ointment had been sold. In Mark 14:3-9, it is simply ‘some who were there’ (ἦσαν δέ τινες). But in John’s Gospel, Judas objects and the narration informs us that his concern is hypocritical.<sup>57</sup> He actually wants the money because he is the group’s treasurer and he steals from the common purse –he is a thief.<sup>58</sup> It is a rare example of direct characterisation in the Fourth Gospel, as opposed to indirect or dramatic characterisation.<sup>59</sup>

From a literary standpoint, John’s adaptation does not at first seem an improvement. One of the intriguing aspects of the anointing of Bethany is that the anonymous woman’s critics have a point.<sup>60</sup> Jesus has consistently railed against the ostentatious consumption of wealth represented by luxuries like costly oils. Concern for the poor has been one of the primary tenets of his movement. His reaction to the anointment seems like a rejection of everything he had been teaching, until we get to his revelation that πάντοτε γὰρ τοὺς πτωχοὺς ἔχετε μεθ’ ἑαυτῶν, καὶ ὅταν θέλητε δύνασθε αὐτοῖς εὖ ποιῆσαι, ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε.<sup>61</sup> This episode, located at the beginning of the Passion narrative in both Matthew and Mark, signals that we are entering the last act of Jesus’ life. By making the objector Judas, and making clear that his concern is hypocritical, John removes the shock of the story and obscures the point it is making.<sup>62</sup> He does

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<sup>57</sup> Farelly points out that this is unusual for John, who rarely explains his characters’ motives. Farelly, *Disciples*, p. 116.

<sup>58</sup> John has Jesus already using the same word, κλέπτῃς, in John 10:1-10, describing those who would try to enter the sheepfold any other way than through him. The use of the same word to describe Judas may be coincidence, but may also be an attempt to reinforce Judas’ role as the archetypal apostate. In addition, the revelation that Judas does not care about the poor (οὐχ ὅτι περὶ τῶν πτωχῶν ἔμελεν αὐτῷ) echoes Jesus’ earlier description, in John 10:13, of the hireling who does not care for the sheep (οὐ μέλει αὐτῷ περὶ τῶν προβάτων). See Brown, *John*, p. 448.

<sup>59</sup> James L. Resseguie, “A Narrative-Critical Approach to the Fourth Gospel” in Skinner (ed.) *Characters*, pp. 10-12.

<sup>60</sup> Michaels goes so far as to suggest that it was Judas who spoke this line in the original version to which Mark had access, and that Mark changed it because it cast Judas in too *positive* a light! John’s innovation was not to put the words in Judas’ mouth, but to add material making it clear that he was being hypocritical. See Michaels, *John*, p. 668.

<sup>61</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, there are parallels here with the way that Plato undermines critics of Socrates like Thrasymachus, obscuring the validity of their points by portraying their behaviour and manner as noxious.

<sup>62</sup> Gubar, *Judas*, p. 85.

develop Judas but as an almost comically villainous character.<sup>63</sup> However, the portrayal of Judas may have its roots in genuine anxiety and problems experienced by the early Christians.

Lucian of Samosata's portrayal of the Christians in *The Passing of Peregrinus* 13 suggests that they have a reputation for gullibility, easy prey for confidence tricksters and charlatans. Writing a parodic life of the Cynic and sometime Christian philosopher Peregrinus Proteus, Lucian portrays Peregrinus as a con man duping the Christians of Palestine. He mocks them for allowing Peregrinus to take advantage of them by supporting him and feeding him:

The poor wretches have convinced themselves, first and foremost, that they are going to be immortal and live for all time, in consequence of which they despise death and even willingly give themselves into custody; most of them. Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another after they have transgressed once, for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws. Therefore they despise all things indiscriminately and consider them common property, receiving such doctrines traditionally without any definite evidence. So if any charlatan and trickster, able to profit by occasions, comes among them, he quickly acquires sudden wealth by imposing upon simple folk.<sup>64</sup>

A certain anxiety about money and frauds is also supported by a range of Christian testimony. Paul is extremely sensitive to the suggestion that he might be taking advantage of his converts and relying on them for financial support (1 Corinthians 9:1-18), even though he also insists

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<sup>63</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, however, authors of the ancient world were generally less concerned with rounded, complex characters in any case.

<sup>64</sup> Lucian of Samosata (trans. A.M. Harmon), *Works of Lucian of Samosata* (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1913).

on his theoretical right to such support, as an apostle. It is something of a concession to the Philippians that he allows them to support him while he is in prison (Philippians 4:10-20). It was while Peregrinus was in prison as a Christian martyr that he began receiving support from the Christians. Acts shows two early disputes over money within the early church. The first is the incident involving Ananias and Sapphira, in which the couple withhold some of the money from a sale of land from the church and are struck dead (Acts 5:1-11) much as Judas is in Acts 1:18-20. The other is the dispute between the Hellenists and the Hebrews, in which the Hellenists protest over having to support the Hebrew widows without having any preachers of their own (Acts 6:1-6). The Didache warns against false prophets who will demand money, food, and hospitality (Didache 11:3-12).<sup>65</sup>

The conclusion of all this seems to be that the early Christian movement, being a widely dispersed movement with a theoretically communal ethos and an initially vague and ill-defined hierarchy, was very much at the mercy of plausible frauds. Furthermore, some Christian authors were aware of this and attempted to set rules that would prevent charlatans from taking advantage of Christian communities. In characterizing Judas as a thief and a fraud, John may not have been simply creating a pantomime villain but playing on and satirizing a type with which his audience would have been familiar.<sup>66</sup> This may coexist with John's portrayal of Judas as a prototypical apostate. The two may even be connected. Disputes over doctrine and personality clashes within the early church could surely only have been exacerbated by overlapping arguments about money. It also combines with Judas' earlier characterisation of

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<sup>65</sup> See Thomas O'Loughlin, *The Didache: A window on the earliest Christians* (London: Baker Academic, 2010), pp. 117-21.

<sup>66</sup> In Gubar's opinion, it is also helpful in showing that Judas was a hypocrite who could have no legitimate reason for betraying Jesus, not even Caiaphas' cynical belief that it would be necessary to have Jesus killed in order to deter Roman anger. See Gubar, *Judas*, p. 85.

the devil, and the cosmic horror of his action in betraying Jesus to portray Judas' evil as 'cosmic and awesome... empty and trivial. It is both demonic and all too human.'<sup>67</sup>

The Synoptics all explain Judas' betrayal with a short scene involving Judas visiting the high priest and being promised money for his betrayal ((Matthew 26:14-16, Mark 14:10-11 and Luke 22:3-6 respectively). John omits this, noting only that 'The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him' (John 13:2). It is not even clear that money as opposed to Satanic influence alone is responsible for his decision, despite the reference to his dishonesty and greed in 12:1-8. In any case, Judas has been described as a 'devil' and his future betrayal has been foreshadowed from early on in the gospel. Motivation seems almost irrelevant with the sheer weight of inevitability.<sup>68</sup>

### **The Last Supper (John 13:1-14:12)**

Peter's next named appearance in the narrative is in John 13:1-11 during the Last Supper. Peter first refuses to allow Jesus to wash his feet and then, told that it must be done, asks that not just his feet but also his hands and head be bathed (μη̄ τοὺς πόδας μου μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν). Peter's initial refusal followed by his subsequent enthusiasm could be seen as a further characterisation of Peter as impulsive, literal, and flighty.<sup>69</sup> But it is also a moment that characterises Peter in a more subtle way, in that it reveals a conventional, rigid attitude on

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<sup>67</sup> Paffenroth, *Judas*, p. 34.

<sup>68</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, this is a feature of oral narrative. See Propp, *Morphology*, p. 81, and Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, p. 57.

<sup>69</sup> PHEME PERKINS disagrees with this viewpoint, seeing Peter's reaction to Jesus' proposal as another instance of Jesus being misunderstood, one of John's recurring themes. See PERKINS, *Peter*, p. 97. SAVAS AGOURIDES argues that Peter's initial reluctance and subsequent enthusiasm symbolise his apostasy and restoration to apostolic office, in "Peter and John in the Fourth Gospel, *Studia Evangelica* 4 (1968). But this ignores Jesus' less-than-positive response to Peter's suggestion (John 13:10).

his part towards power and authority.<sup>70</sup> Although his devotion to Jesus is a positive trait, if Peter cannot imagine his leader washing his feet, he presumably does not think of his own leadership role as being ultimately concerned with serving others, and feels threatened by the implications of Jesus' act.<sup>71</sup> In asking that Jesus bathe his head, Peter is trying to manipulate Jesus back into the role of baptizer and into the power-structure that Peter understands.<sup>72</sup> If one accepts Peter as in some sense symbolizing the church hierarchy as John's community perceived it, they are making a powerful critique of it here.<sup>73</sup>

After the washing is done, Jesus comments *καὶ ὑμεῖς καθαροὶ ἐστε, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ πάντες*. The narration explains this in 13:11 as another reference to Judas, once again emphasising Jesus' foresight. This is emphasised again in 13:18, in which Jesus stresses that he does not give his blessing to all present, that he knows whom he has chosen in order to fulfil the supposed prediction of Psalm 41:9, 'The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me', traditionally seen as written by David of Ahitophel.<sup>74</sup> The idea that Jesus did not just have foreknowledge of Judas' betrayal but handpicked him specifically in order to fulfil prophecy is an advance on the Synoptics and seems tailored to respond to the problems with Jesus' insight and charisma that Judas' action represents.

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<sup>70</sup> Farelly, *Disciples*, p. 93. Maynard suggests that Jesus' action here is a test and while Judas fails (John 13:10), Peter himself comes perilously close to doing so as well. A.H. Maynard, "The Role of Peter in the Fourth Gospel", *NTS* 30 (1984), p. 535.

<sup>71</sup> Sandra Schneider, "The Foot-Washing [John 13:1-20]: An Experiment in Hermeneutics", *CBQ* 43 (1981), p. 82.

<sup>72</sup> Helen C. Orchard, *Courting Betrayal: Jesus as Victim in the Gospel of John* (Sheffield: SAP, 1998), p. 168.

<sup>73</sup> G.F. Snyder, in "John 13:16 and the Anti-Petrinism of the Johannine Tradition", *Biblical Research* 16 (1971) suggests that Peter's standing as the first witness, the foundation of apostolic authority, is being subtly denigrated here in favour of those who feel a personal spiritual connection to Jesus in the present (that is, John's community, the people whom the beloved disciple represents).

<sup>74</sup> Helms, *Gospel Fictions*, p. 106.

Jesus also refers to Judas as the ‘son of destruction’ (ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας) in 17:13, describing him as the one follower whom he could not save, so that the scriptures might be fulfilled.<sup>75</sup> ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας is used elsewhere in the New Testament, in 2 Thessalonians, of the ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας—the man of lawlessness, a figure of eschatological evil who will appear in the end times to perform wonders and declare himself God.<sup>76</sup> The phrase ‘son of destruction’ is interesting because in both cases it could be understood as either describing the destruction the agent of evil causes and the predestined destruction that awaits him after his role in the cosmic drama is complete. The NSRV favours the latter possibility, in both cases translating the phrase as ‘the one destined for destruction’.<sup>77</sup> But the phrase might be deliberately chosen because it evokes both senses.

As mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, Satan will deceive the followers of the lawless one with miracles, signs and wonders because they refused to believe in the true miracles and resurrection of Christ (2 Thess 2:9-10). In other words, they are punished for failing to believe in the real revelation by being made to believe in a false one. Furthermore, God himself participates in the deception and will actively cause them to believe in Satan’s signs (2 Thess 2:11-12). There are parallels here between the way that God will manipulate evildoers into committing further evil and the implicit way that Jesus makes use of Judas, already revealed in John’s Gospel as an evil man, to carry out the betrayal. As in Mark, Judas is an evil man who makes a glorious martyrdom possible.

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<sup>75</sup> This is generally regarded as a later addition to the text. See Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, p. 176.

<sup>76</sup> The possible identity of the man of lawlessness has been much disputed, with Caligula and Nero being two possible candidates. However, one must bear in mind that in the context of the letter, the author is trying to convince his listeners that the man of lawlessness has *not yet* appeared. As such, it makes the most sense to conceive of the man of lawlessness as not one single historical figure, but a composite of archetypally blasphemous rulers, from Antiochus IV to Caligula. See Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000), p. 431.

<sup>77</sup> See also Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 245.

John 13:23 is our first explicit introduction to the beloved disciple, who will ultimately be revealed as the source of the gospel's traditions (John 21:24). The identity of this enigmatic, unnamed figure has intrigued scholars for centuries. Until the nineteenth century, Eusebius' claim, based on the testimony of Irenaeus, that the disciple whom Jesus loved was in fact John the son of Zebedee went unchallenged.<sup>78</sup> This viewpoint is still current among some contemporary scholars, such as Keener, who also ascribes authorship of the gospel to John.<sup>79</sup> There is no conclusive link between John, son of Zebedee, and the beloved disciple in the gospel itself. The sons of Zebedee are mentioned just once in John's Gospel, in John 21:2, but not by name. They are part of the fishing expedition which Peter organises, an expedition for which the beloved disciple is present (21:7), so it is certainly possible that John is the beloved disciple. But also present are Thomas, Nathanael, and two anonymous disciples –all possible alternative candidates.<sup>80</sup>

James H. Charlesworth, on the other hand, builds an impressively detailed case for Thomas as the beloved disciple.<sup>81</sup> The essence of Charlesworth's argument is as follows: the beloved disciple is the only male follower of Jesus to witness his master's death in John's Gospel (John 19:25:37). He is specifically mentioned (19:35) as the witness to the fact that one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear. When the risen Jesus appears to the disciples in 20:19-29, Thomas refuses to believe that Jesus can have returned unless he may put his finger to the marks of the nails on Jesus' hands, and his hand to Jesus. According to Charlesworth's argument, since the beloved disciple was the only male witness of the piercing of Jesus' side (not standard procedure, as implied by 19:33), he is the only disciple present who would

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<sup>78</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, 6.25.

<sup>79</sup> Keener, *John*, pp. 81-104.

<sup>80</sup> Charlesworth also argues that relatively early martyr traditions regarding John, son of Zebedee, go against the implications of John 21:20-23. Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, p. 129.

<sup>81</sup> Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, pp. 225-86.

consider a wound in Jesus' side as proof of the Lord's return.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, the beloved disciple must be Thomas.

Charlesworth's argument is undeniably elegant and appealing, not least because it appeals to our sense of literary justice. If the beloved disciple is Thomas, he is no longer a Galahad-like figure with a perfect and unbreakable bond with Jesus but a character who struggles with flaws of his own. If we take Thomas' previous lines in 11:16 and 14:5 into account, these flaws may include a kind of melancholy pessimism that provides an interesting contrast with Peter's impetuous over-enthusiasm.

Unfortunately, Charlesworth's argument regarding the piercing observed by Thomas is not entirely convincing. In the first place, Jesus already showed the other disciples his side in 20:20, before his appearance to the group that included Thomas. This seems to undercut any significance to Thomas' knowledge of Jesus' wound. Secondly, it has been argued in the previous chapters that one of the features of texts originally based on oral traditions, such as the gospels, the Homeric epics, or the eleventh century Song of Roland, is that characters are frequently introduced by their most distinctive trait or action, even if this runs against the temporal logic of the narrative. By extension, at certain points in these narratives characters sometimes exhibit knowledge that they could not possibly have obtained by that point, such as when Charlemagne denounces Ganelon *before* Ganelon carries out his betrayal of Roland, since the audience is in any case aware of it.<sup>83</sup> With this in mind, Charlesworth's ingenious detective story logic seems misplaced.

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<sup>82</sup> Stronger proof than the holes in Jesus' hands, since all victims of crucifixion would have these, but only Jesus would have the wound in his side.

<sup>83</sup> Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, p. 57.

Many commentators have argued that the beloved disciple must have come from outside the Twelve altogether.<sup>84</sup> A bewildering range of possibilities for the beloved disciple's identity have been put forward, among them Paul, Jesus' brother James, and Apollos.<sup>85</sup> The option preferred by many, among them Mark G. Stibbe and Ben Witherington III, is that the beloved disciple is Lazarus. This makes sense of Lazarus' prominence in John. Jesus is also described as loving Lazarus, along with his sisters, in 11:5, making Lazarus the only other male follower Jesus is said to love in John's Gospel, and this would also account for the doubt as to whether the beloved disciple will ever die in John 21:23. On the whole, I agree with Dunderberg's conclusion that the real importance of the beloved disciple, for John, is his role as a witness and a counter-weight to Peter's authority, not his identity.<sup>86</sup> But one of the strangest suggestions that has been made for the beloved disciple's identity is also one of the most interesting, given the concerns of this thesis. This is the idea that the beloved disciple was none other than Judas.

This eccentric theory was put forward by C.S. Griffin in 1892.<sup>87</sup> Griffin argued that Judas was not just the disciple whom Jesus loved, but also the author of the fourth gospel, who carried out his betrayal of his master at Jesus' own explicit orders (John 13:27).<sup>88</sup> Griffin also adds an irresistible complication, in taking the reference to Judas' father Simon Iscariot in John 6:71 as a reference to Peter. Judas is both the beloved disciple and the son of Peter. An Oedipal tension now emerges in the rivalry between Peter and the beloved disciple (and perhaps Peter's

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<sup>84</sup> Brown, *Community*, p. 34.

<sup>85</sup> See Charlesworth's exhaustive list, *Beloved Disciple*, pp. 127-223.

<sup>86</sup> Ismo Dunderberg, *The Beloved Disciple in Conflict? Revisiting the Gospels of John and Thomas* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), pp. 147-48.

<sup>87</sup> C.S. Griffin, *Judas Iscariot: The Author of the Fourth Gospel, Which is Attributed to St. John* (Boston, MA: Scott-Parkin, 1892).

<sup>88</sup> This idea, of a noble Judas selflessly carrying out Jesus' orders even though he knows they will damn him for all time, are common in literary and speculative historical accounts of Judas. Borges' mock-academic essay "Three Versions of Judas" toys with the idea, and it could be described as the foundation of William Klassen's *Judas*, discussed in detail in Chapter 3. This reclamation of Judas' character is also widely taken as the basis of the Sethian Gnostic Gospel of Judas, although April D. DeConick (*Thirteenth Apostle*) persuasively argues that this is an overstatement and misinterpretation of Judas' role in the text.

denunciation of Judas in Acts 1:16-17). But as wild and unfounded as Griffin's theory is, it does draw our attention to a highly interesting feature of the portrayal of the disciples at John's version of the Last Supper, one which we will now discuss.

In John 13:21-30, the beloved disciple, Peter and Judas are for the first and last time all actively involved in one scene simultaneously. Jesus predicts his betrayal (John is unique in describing Jesus as 'troubled in spirit', ἐταράχθη τῷ πνεύματι, announcing the betrayal) and the disciples react as they do in the Synoptic accounts.<sup>89</sup> The beloved disciple is introduced as sitting next to Jesus, having superseded Peter and been given the place of honour, and so Peter signals him to ask Jesus whom the traitor is. Jesus identifies the traitor by passing Judas a piece of bread, then instructing him to go and do what he is going to do.

This scene is peculiar. As already pointed out, the disciples have no real reason to react the way they do to Jesus' announcement; they already know that there is a 'devil' among them. But this can be explained as a holdover from the Synoptic version of the Passion (or pre-existing tradition). But Jesus' means of identifying the traitor is also strange. Mark 14:20 identifies the traitor as 'one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me' (ὁ ἐμβαπτόμενος μετ' ἐμοῦ εἰς τὸ τρύβλιον) and Matthew follows suit (Luke leaves the reference to the bread and the bowl out). This makes sense. This emphasises the horrific, personal nature of Judas' betrayal without identifying a specific individual. All those present must have dipped their bread into the bowl at some point during the evening.

However, John changes the image to Jesus specifically handing the bread to Judas. This creates another logical problem. As Judas goes out, the disciples still do not realise that Judas is the

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<sup>89</sup> Klassen, *Judas*, p. 101.

traitor, even though Jesus has clearly identified him. Perhaps we are meant to envision Jesus addressing only the beloved disciple when he explains the sign that will identify the traitor, since emphasis is placed on the fact that he and Jesus were side by side, and perhaps we are meant to assume that the beloved disciple is not included in the general confusion regarding Judas' treachery. This still leaves the problem of why the beloved disciple does not say or do anything to prevent Judas' betrayal (does he understand it as Jesus' will?). There is also the question of where Judas was sitting, that Jesus could simply pass him the sop of bread. He must have been seated close to Jesus, which along with his position as a treasurer suggests an exceptionally high position within the Twelve, which is also one of the anonymous beloved disciple's defining traits.<sup>90</sup> Kermode, playfully referring to Griffin's theory, suggests that the exchange could be read as the beloved disciple inquiring of the traitor's identity from Jesus, and then receiving the sop of bread himself.<sup>91</sup>

Griffin notwithstanding, it seems highly unlikely that the author of the Fourth Gospel ever intended any conscious confusion between what would seem to be the best and the worst of Jesus' disciples. However, the fact that the two are never portrayed in clearly distinct ways at the Last Supper serves John's literary ends.<sup>92</sup> By blurring the lines between betrayer and beloved, he invites hearers to reflect on the fact that they themselves have the capacity to be both betrayer and beloved, and they may be mistaken as to which they are.<sup>93</sup> It should also be recalled that, based on 1 John 2:19, the Johannine community considered betrayal from within to be a genuine threat.<sup>94</sup> It is also important to understand, as Brown points out, that neither

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<sup>90</sup> Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, p. 176. This is also pointed out by S. Tarachow in "Judas, the beloved executioner", *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 29 (1960), pp.528-54.

<sup>91</sup> Kermode, *Genesis*, p. 92. There are interesting parallels with the Gospel of Judas, in which Jesus informs an apparently unwilling Judas of his destiny.

<sup>92</sup> Literary use is also made of this idea in Günter Grass' novel *The Tin Drum* in which the hero says of his friend and betrayer, 'I still don't know if I should call him Judas or John.'

<sup>93</sup> Beck, "Whom Jesus Loved", p. 227.

<sup>94</sup> Keener, *John*, p. 1076.

Peter nor the beloved disciples are the principle characters of this narrative, but merely supporting characters to Jesus.<sup>95</sup> As such, the primary role of everything they do is to illustrate qualities of Jesus: in this case, his total control of the situation regarding Judas' betrayal.

The moment Jesus gives Judas the piece of bread, a gesture of love and hospitality, 'Satan entered into him' (εἰσῆλθεν εἰς ἐκεῖνον ὁ Σατανᾶς), the gospel's only use of the name Satan.<sup>96</sup> This seems a strange, even shocking play on the Eucharist ceremony which the Synoptics have the Last Supper inaugurating.<sup>97</sup> However, it is appropriate to John's theology, as laid out in his prologue. John's characters distinguish themselves by their reaction to Jesus. The bread contains the body of Jesus for those in the light and Satan for those in the darkness. It is also this final gesture of affection that pushes Judas into his act of betrayal. He alone understands Jesus' command to Ὁ ποιεῖς ποιήσον τάχιον. It is misunderstood by the other disciples, in yet another example of Johannine incomprehension.<sup>98</sup> But Judas understands and accepts his role as a betrayer, not in order to complete Jesus' mission on earth, but because like those in John 1:11, he hates the light that Jesus is bringing into the world.<sup>99</sup> It is Jesus' gesture of love that brings him to the moment of final decision.<sup>100</sup> The tragedy of John's Gospel is that most of the people Jesus meets have no desire at all to be illuminated. Like Judas, they are determined to stay in the darkness, since it provides cover for their own sinful actions.

Jesus' order to Judas is misunderstood by the other disciples (John 13:29). Since he is the treasurer, it is assumed that he is sending him out to make preparations or perform some

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<sup>95</sup> Brown, *John*, p. 304.

<sup>96</sup> Kysar, *Maverick*, p. 79.

<sup>97</sup> John's Jesus has, of course, already spoken the words of the Eucharist ceremony in 6:52-59, long before the Last Supper.

<sup>98</sup> See Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 152.

<sup>99</sup> Farelly, *Disciples*, p. 113.

<sup>100</sup> Quast, *Peter*, p. 65.

charitable duty. This incomprehension apparently includes the beloved disciple, who makes no effort to intervene and stop Judas. Is it possible that we are to read him as misunderstanding Jesus' gesture?<sup>101</sup> Lincoln, noting the beloved disciple's strange passivity at this point, argues that he is intended to represent the disciples' Paraclete-inspired post-Easter insight.<sup>102</sup>

Like Mark, John does not go into the details of Judas' life after his betrayal but the terse, ominous quality of John 13:30 makes his ultimate fate clear: 'So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night' (ἦν δὲ νύξ).

The prediction of Peter's betrayal occurs in John 13:36-38 and is much the same as the Markan account, although John adds that Jesus tells Peter: ἀκολουθήσεις δὲ ὕστερον; that he will follow where Jesus is going.

Jesus refers to the Paraclete in John 14:12, the Holy Spirit who will visit the community after Jesus' departure. It is widely accepted that the beloved disciple can be plausibly considered a parallel for or a symbolic representation of the Paraclete, with his powers of perception representing the Paraclete's divine quality of truth (15:26).<sup>103</sup> As Thatcher has argued, John presents the Paraclete as the source of authentic historical information on Jesus –or rather, the ability to interpret such information correctly.<sup>104</sup> If the beloved disciple is understood as representing the Paraclete-based, charismatic style of leadership favoured by John's community, Peter might be understood as a representative of the hierarchical establishment

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<sup>101</sup> See Quast, *Peter*, p. 64.

<sup>102</sup> Lincoln, *John*, p. 386. As already discussed, Lincoln believes that the beloved disciple may be a character introduced in the final editing stage of the Fourth Gospel's composition, and there would be therefore plot difficulties in having him play any active role whatsoever.

<sup>103</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 123.

<sup>104</sup> Thatcher, *Gospel*, pp. 25-33.

against which they defined themselves.<sup>105</sup> But this viewpoint should not be taken too far. The Fourth Gospel does not portray Peter as a total and unforgivable apostate as it does Judas.<sup>106</sup> There is likewise a parallel between Judas, both possessed by Satan and in some sense the embodiment of Satan, and the beloved disciple's literary relationship with the Paraclete.<sup>107</sup>

### **Betrayal and Denial (John 17:1-18:1-29)**

John's Passion is the only version in which Judas' betrayal has a clear, practical purpose. John 18:2 implies that Judas is leading the soldiers and temple slaves to a meeting place favoured by Jesus that he also knows, providing insider information. At their last meeting, in John 18:1-12, Judas and Jesus do not exchange any words, nor does Judas bestow his infamous betrayer's kiss. John may have seen it as inconsistent with Jesus' dignity to be kissed by a demon-possessed traitor.<sup>108</sup> When the soldiers ask Jesus to identify himself and he does so, they back away and fall on to the ground. Reading the Gospel literally, this is a particularly peculiar footnote to the action. However, seen through John's prism of Old Testament imagery and references, of light and darkness symbolism, it makes perfect sense. Jesus has responded with the terrible Ἐγώ εἰμι.<sup>109</sup> He has spoken with God's voice. Unable to face the light of the living God among them, the soldiers fall to the ground to hide their eyes. And that is where the Gospel leaves Judas, noted as 'being with them' in 18:5 (Ἰούδας ὁ παραδιδούς αὐτὸν μετ' αὐτῶν). The exact same phrase, μετ' αὐτῶν, is used when Peter stands with the same people,

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<sup>105</sup> But see Johnston's argument that those empowered by the Paraclete represent the church in its entirety. George Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: CUP, 1970), p. 51.

<sup>106</sup> Brown, *Community*, p. 82.

<sup>107</sup> Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, p. 235.

<sup>108</sup> Keener, *John*, p. 1081.

<sup>109</sup> Kysar makes the case that the phrase 'I am' would be associated with divinity in both Jewish and Hellenistic traditions. See Kysar, *Maverick*, p. 59.

οἱ δοῦλοι καὶ οἱ ὑπηρέται, in the high priest's courtyard, creating another subtle parallel between the two disciples.<sup>110</sup>

John has cast Peter as the unnamed follower of Matthew 26:51 and Luke 22:50 who attacks one of the men trying to arrest Jesus (also identifying the slave in question as Malchus). This is a highly interesting variant on the Synoptic tradition. It is obviously an excellent match for Peter's characterisation as impulsive but devoted to Jesus but it also develops his character further.<sup>111</sup> Peter's zealous defence of Jesus is implicitly contrasted with Judas' betrayal, but Jesus rebukes Peter for trying to defend him.<sup>112</sup> This is made even clearer in 18:36, in which Jesus tells Pilate: 'If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews.' The strong implication is that Peter is not (yet) a true follower of Jesus, since he has tried to defend Jesus by force of arms.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, Peter's action has only negative consequences for his master, since Jesus' movement is now tainted by the association of violence. Peter finds himself almost immediately haunted by his action in 18:26-27, in which a relative of Malchus joins in Peter's interrogation, prompting his final, climactic denial.

Peter follows Jesus to the high priest's house with another unnamed disciple, one who somehow knows the high priest (18:15), who persuades the woman at the gate to allow Peter into the courtyard. As in the Synoptic tradition, Peter then denies knowing Jesus three times in 17:27, although John omits the final curse he utters.<sup>114</sup> It is unclear whether we are intended to

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<sup>110</sup> Farelly, *Disciples*, p. 99.

<sup>111</sup> See Brown, Donfried, and Reumann, *Peter*, p. 133.

<sup>112</sup> Keener, *John*, p. 1083.

<sup>113</sup> Perkins, *Peter*, p. 99. See also Arthur J. Droge, "The Status of Peter in the Fourth Gospel: A Note on John 18:10-11", *JBL* 109(2) (1990), pp. 307-311.

<sup>114</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, this curse may have been a reference to legal procedure in trials against Christians. Noting the large number of similarities between John's account and the Synoptics, Maurits Sabbe suggests that John must have been familiar with a Synoptic account. Maurits Sabbe, "The Denial of Peter in the Gospel of John", *Louvain Studies* 20 (2) (1995), pp. 219-240.

connect the beloved disciple with the disciple who knows the high priest, and commentators differ on the subject. It has once again been suggested that Judas may have been the other disciple, since he at least had some basis for a connection with the high priest.<sup>115</sup> However, Peter's cowardice during the denial is made all the more striking by this version since the other disciple has clearly already identified himself as a follower of Jesus, since Peter's interlocutor asks: 'You are not *also* one of this man's disciples, are you?', Μὴ καὶ σὺ ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν εἶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τούτου [emphasis mine]. The καὶ clearly refers to the other disciple. Since this follows the pattern, established in John 13:1-20, of Peter being negatively contrasted with an unnamed disciple, it seems most plausible to imagine that John either intended his hearers to positively identify the unnamed disciple here with the beloved disciple, or else at least to consider them both examples of the same type. In any case, the beloved disciple is present with Jesus during the latter's crucifixion in John 19:25, and is entrusted with Jesus' mother, a declaration often seen as possessing ecclesiastical significance.<sup>116</sup> The contrast with Peter is clear, as is the contrast between Peter and Jesus.<sup>117</sup> Jesus' Ἐγώ εἰμι is almost perfectly contrasted with Peter's response to his questioner: Οὐκ εἰμί.<sup>118</sup>

It should be noted that John adds a certain irony to the Synoptic version of the denial, given Peter's previous willingness to take arms in defence of Jesus. As Culpepper puts it: 'He would take on Malchus with a sword, but the servant girl and the hostile courtyard are too much for him.'<sup>119</sup> This is reminiscent of Schweizer's claim that Peter's denial in Mark was prompted not

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<sup>115</sup> Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, p. 176. See also Patrick Chatelion Counet, "Judas, the disciple who was known to the high priest: A deconstruction of the betrayal based on John 18:15", *HTS Theologisches Studien/Theological Studies*, 67 (1) (2011). Counet's 'deconstructive' reasoning is eccentric, and like Klassen and Maccoby he hypothesizes a heroic Judas who was smeared by the evangelists, above all John.

<sup>116</sup> Brown, Donfried, and Reumann, *Peter*, p. 136.

<sup>117</sup> Quast (*Peter*, pp. 98-99) argues that Peter and the beloved disciple are not intended to be contrasted, but simply differing theological aims in this scene. This seems hard to accept when it is read in the context of John's Passion as a whole, particularly John 20:4 and 21:21-22, which makes explicit comparisons between the two.

<sup>118</sup> Farelly, *Disciples*, p. 98.

<sup>119</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 119.

so much by failure of nerve as uncertainty and confusion –when he boasted that he follow wherever Jesus went, Peter envisioned something rather more inspiring and less prosaic than a bored, inquisitive servant girl.<sup>120</sup>

### **Resurrection (John 20:1-10)**

John 20:1-10 has Mary Magdalene bearing the news of Jesus' resurrection to Peter and the beloved disciple, who then race to the tomb. Once again, the beloved disciple is ahead of Peter and it is he who reaches the tomb first but it is Peter who enters and sees that it is empty. On one level, this clearly seems to reflect the evangelist's need to place his anonymous source above Peter, and perhaps symbolically place his community above the apostolic church represented by Peter.<sup>121</sup> Here, that tendency is coming into conflict with what seems to be a well-established tradition regarding Peter as the primary witness (or perhaps at least the primary male witness) of the Resurrection. This tradition would seem to be too well-known for the author to deny that it was Peter and not the beloved disciple who first saw the empty tomb, but he also describes this disciple as 'believing' when he saw the empty tomb, and makes no such claims for Peter.<sup>122</sup>

However, 20:1-10 could be read as more than John struggling against a tradition which he dislikes but cannot discard. There are already hints here (expanded on in the gospel's epilogue) that Peter and the beloved disciple's qualities may be complementary, with the division of significant actions between them in this scene. Although John is certainly emphatic regarding

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<sup>120</sup> Schweizer, *Mark*, p. 332.

<sup>121</sup> Brown, *Community*, p. 83.

<sup>122</sup> See Brown, Donfried, and Reumann, *Peter*, p. 137.

the beloved disciple's superior insight he does choose to close the scene on a note of jarring anti-climax, with both men simply going home without yet understanding, according to John 20:9.<sup>123</sup> Keener has pointed out that, in the common ancient literary practise of using contrasting parallel characters, the inferior character is not necessarily being criticised so much as the superior is being exalted.<sup>124</sup> Peter is a figure whom the evangelist places beneath the beloved disciple, but his treatment of him is still in some ways more respectful than that of Mark.

### Reconciliation (John 21)

John 21, often called the epilogue, is commonly seen as an addition to the original text of the gospel, given the apparent finality of John 20's final verses, 30-31: 'Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.'<sup>125</sup> But the manner in which the epilogue portrays

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<sup>123</sup> See Beck, "Whom Jesus Loved", p. 236.

<sup>124</sup> Keener, *John*, p. 1091. See also my discussion of the relationship between masters and disciple in ancient texts in the second chapter of this thesis.

<sup>125</sup> One could compare it with John 14:31, in which Jesus tells the disciples 'Rise, let us be on our way', then continues speaking, with the departure from the house of the Last Supper only taking place in 18:1. Bauckham and Paul S. Minear are among a minority of scholars in the present day maintaining John 21's place as an original part of the text of John's Gospel (Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, pp. 364-69; Minear., "The Original Function of John 21", *JBL* 102 (1983)), with Minear arguing that it is necessary to resolve the relationship between Peter and the beloved disciple. LaGrange believed that John 21 was part of the original text of the gospel, but that John 20:30-31 may have been misplaced (Marie-Joseph Lagrange, *L'Évangile selon Saint Jean* (Paris: Gabaldi, 1948), p. 522. John Marsh argued that the objective of John 21 was to show that Jesus' resurrection carried on beyond the Passover feast (*Saint John* (London: SCM, 1977), p. 658. Offering a kind of middle ground, Smalley has suggested that John 21 was indeed a later addition, but written by the same person (Stephen S. Smalley, "The Sign in John xxi", *NTS* 29 (1974)). On the other hand, most influential twentieth century commentaries have declared John 21 a later addition, among them Marcus Dods' *The Gospel of John* (2 vols.) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 2.867, Lightfoot, *John*, p. 339, Sanders and Mastin, *John*, pp. 441-42, Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), Brown, *John*, p. 107, and Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 53. Lincoln suggests that *all* references to the beloved disciple may have been added at the time of John 21's addition, a fascinating idea which would explain the beloved disciple's curious passivity and minimal effect on the action throughout the Passion. It also answers Minear's objection: the writer of John 21 is only resolving a problem (the conflict between Peter and the beloved disciple) which he himself has created.

Peter, the beloved disciple, and the triangular nature of their relationship with each other and Jesus is consistent with its portrayal in John's Passion narrative. Indeed it reads as a natural conclusion to the conflict between them.<sup>126</sup>

John 21 opens with seven of Jesus' disciples on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias.<sup>127</sup> Given the miraculous events of the previous chapter, Peter's opening line seems remarkably prosaic: 'I am going fishing' (Υπάγω ἀλιεύειν). Beck suggests that it should be contrasted with the beloved disciple's later line in 21:7, 'It is the Lord!', and that it is another way of placing the beloved disciple on a higher and more spiritual level than the earthbound Peter.<sup>128</sup> But this seems a strained reading. Nothing links the two lines of dialogue and Peter's declaration in fact receives an equally mundane reply from all of the other disciples: 'We will go with you' (Ἐρχόμεθα καὶ ἡμεῖς σὺν σοί.).

The question of why Peter decides to go fishing at this particular moment was addressed in Chapter 3. To briefly recap, Raymond Brown has argued that John is adapting a story that was originally about the first Resurrection appearance, witnessed by Peter who had returned to his old life as a fisherman after Jesus' crucifixion, and I find his argument persuasive.<sup>129</sup> John has already incorporated the later empty tomb tradition, so Peter's decision to go fishing no longer signifies a return to his former profession.

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<sup>126</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, Mark's abrupt ending leaves a desire on the part of the reader to 'fix' a number of problems left unresolved (see the evidence of not just the Synoptics, but also the large number of later MSS that add the Long or Intermediate Ending). Peter's unredeemed state after his denial is among them (as witness non-canonical texts such as the Acts of Peter). John 20 does not have this problem as such, since Jesus has been reunited with his disciples, but no personal encounter with Peter is described. In addition, the tension between Peter and the beloved disciple could be seen as an unresolved problem of another kind, perhaps taking its place among the things inspiring John 21. See the previous footnote.

<sup>127</sup> See Chapter 2, p. 10.

<sup>128</sup> Beck, "Whom Jesus Loved", p. 236.

<sup>129</sup> Brown, *John*, p. 2.1087. Brown also makes the case that the miraculous catch in Luke 5:1-11 contains trace of the original setting of the story as well.

Jesus hails the disciples from the beach at daybreak and directs them to perform a miraculous catch of fish, generally seen as a metaphor for the missionary successes of the church.<sup>130</sup> The beloved disciple is the first one to recognise Jesus, in John 21:7. Peter, on hearing this, plunges into the water.<sup>131</sup> Brown has argued that this scene also parallels an episode from the Synoptics, in this case Peter attempting to walk on water in Matthew 14:22-33.<sup>132</sup> D.H. Gee has suggested that this is actually a guilt-stricken Peter's attempt to *avoid* an encounter with the man whom he betrayed, by swimming away.<sup>133</sup> This argument is not convincing. All of Peter's other actions after this suggest his eagerness to regain Jesus' trust and make up for his failure.<sup>134</sup> In addition, an elegant parallel is formed with John 20:1-10. The beloved disciple, empowered by the Paraclete, is the first to recognise Jesus but Peter is the first to greet him, just as the beloved disciple was the first to reach the tomb but Peter was the first to enter. There is also one final contrast between the serene, passive love represented by the beloved disciple and Peter's own impulsive, violent, and mercurial love for his master.<sup>135</sup>

Jesus waits for his disciples by a charcoal fire (ἀνθρακιᾶν) in 21:9, immediately calling his denial to mind, since the same word was used for the fire by which Peter warmed himself with the soldiers and slaves in 18:18. Peter failed his master with a public denial of him; he can now redeem himself with an affirmation of his faith.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Brown, Donfried, and Reumann, *Peter*, p. 141.

<sup>131</sup> John, or the redactor, includes the following strange side-note: ὃν ἐπενδύτην διεζώσατο, ἦν γὰρ γυμνός. Why one would put on clothes rather than stripping them off before swimming is not clear, nor have John's commentators yet provided a satisfying answer.

<sup>132</sup> Brown, Donfried, and Reumann, *Peter*, pp. 79-81.

<sup>133</sup> D.H. Gee, "Why Did Peter Spring into the Sea? (John 21:17)" *JTS* 40 (1989), p. 488.

<sup>134</sup> There is also the fact, as Gibson points out, that the text clearly indicates that Peter swam *to* Jesus, followed by the disciples in the boat. Gibson, *Peter* p. 74.

<sup>135</sup> Quast, *Peter*, p. 154.

<sup>136</sup> Perkins, *Peter*, p. 99.

In 21:11, Peter demonstrates his eagerness to redeem himself through a display of physical prowess by dragging in the heavy net full of fish.<sup>137</sup> After breakfast in 21:15, Jesus asks if Peter loves him more than ‘these’. What τούτων refers to is not immediately clear. It might be taken as a reference to the other disciples present. Keener, however, argues that it is a reference to the fish that Peter gathered in; Jesus is telling Peter that he must love Jesus enough to give up his old previous life along with his previous career.<sup>138</sup> Peter must become a shepherd rather than a fisherman, hence Jesus’ command in 21:15-17, to ‘Feed my lambs’, ‘Tend my sheep’, and ‘Feed my sheep’. This is a call to a pastoral role for Peter, but also refers to his martyrdom, since the good shepherd must give up his life for the sheep. Jesus’ threefold repetition of the question undoes Peter’s temporary apostasy (and hurts Peter, in 21:17, with its stress on his shame and unreliability), but he must ultimately redeem himself through martyrdom.

Jesus in 21:18 then predicts Peter’s martyrdom: ‘Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.’ In 13:26, Jesus told Peter that he would follow Jesus where he went, now he makes his meaning clear.

There is a clear contrast between the present-day Peter, whose physical strength has just been demonstrated by the way he hauled the net full of fish, and the image of the frail elder Peter who must be led to his execution.<sup>139</sup> There is also much discussion on the rest of the prophecy, reflecting as it presumably must do some tradition of Peter’s martyrdom. The tradition of

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<sup>137</sup> Keener, *John*, p. 1231. Along with the dive into the sea in 21:7 and the attack on Malchus in 18:10, Peter is characterised as strong and physically fit in John’s Gospel, which provides an interesting contrast with his timidity in 17:27.

<sup>138</sup> Keener, *John*, p. 1236. This interpretation adds weight to the idea that this was originally the story of the first Resurrection appearance, made to Peter after he had resumed his old life as a fisherman, and not the third.

<sup>139</sup> Keener, *John*, p. 1237.

Peter's martyrdom in Rome had become fixed by the start of the third century, based on the testimony of Ignatius and Dionysus of Corinth.<sup>140</sup> Jesus' description of Peter stretching out his hands might be a reference to crucifixion, or just to a blinded or short-sighted Peter stretching out his hands to be guided. In a characteristically forceful essay, Timothy Barnes has argued that the NRSV wrongly translates ζώννυμι as reference to Peter's belt.<sup>141</sup> Instead, he believes it should be understood as a reference to all of Peter's clothes (which would also refer back to Peter clothing himself in John 21:7). Barnes argues that the prophecy is an allusion to the execution of Christians under Nero, during which some Christians were burned alive.<sup>142</sup>

Having learned his own fate, Peter then asks after the fate of the beloved disciple in 21:21.<sup>143</sup> We are reminded of the beloved disciple's first introduction and of his question about Judas, once again reinforcing the odd link between Judas and the beloved disciple. It is interesting that, for all John's interest in him, the beloved disciple is not described as having a one-on-one discussion with Jesus similar to Peter's, nor does he receive any explicit charge from Jesus during this scene. Indeed, all throughout the Passion narrative, the beloved disciple remains a curiously passive, aloof, and insubstantial figure, particularly in contrast to the physically active, demonstrative Peter. He speaks only twice throughout the gospel (13:25 and 21:7) and on the first of these occasions he simply repeats a question Peter asked him to ask. He seems more like an idea than a living character.

Jesus replies that the time of the beloved disciple's death is not Peter's concern (21:22) and the evangelist notes that some took this to mean that the beloved disciple would never die, but that

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<sup>140</sup> Smith, *Petrine Controversies*, p. 35.

<sup>141</sup> Timothy Barnes, "'Another Shall Gird Thee': Probative Evidence for the Death of Peter" in Bond and Hurtado, *Peter*, pp. 76-95.

<sup>142</sup> See Tacitus, *Annals*, 15:44.

<sup>143</sup> Note that Peter's character hasn't been completely altered by his forgiveness and some negative qualities, such as jealousy, may remain.

this was not the case, before revealing this disciple as the source of the gospel's information (21:24).

If Peter is a representative of the hierarchical church and the beloved disciple a vision of an alternative path, in which the only authority is supplied by the Paraclete, this epilogue offers a way for the two to coexist. John acknowledges that Peter has authority and a pastoral role to play and that he atoned for his denial with an honourable death, although even here there is a certain hint of ambiguity.<sup>144</sup> Jesus' prophecy has a strangely menacing quality to it, and its riddling nature subtly undermines any sense of the glorious martyrdom that Peter will achieve. In any case, it is stressed that it is not Jesus' will that the beloved disciple also die a martyr's death, thereby dismissing any possibility that the beloved disciple could be seen as inferior to Peter because he did not die for his faith. The Johannine community are not trying to undermine Peter so much as making a claim for equal or superior status for their own hero.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Brown, Donfried, and Reumann, *Peter*, pp. 143-7.

<sup>145</sup> See Oropeza, *Footsteps*, p. 164 and Quast, *Peter*, p. 156-21. Quast's argument is that this moment comes as John's community are realigning themselves with the apostolic church, represented by Peter. The narrative acknowledges Peter's claims as a witness, and therefore his authority, while at the same time preserving the sense of the beloved disciple as set apart by Jesus for a different role and responsibility; an attempt to preserve what is unique about their own church.

## Conclusion

Having looked at the characterisation of both Peter and Judas in the Gospel of John, it is possible to say a number of things about what kind of issues their portrayals may be intended to address.

Judas is, in the first place, introduced as a devil in John 6:70, a characterisation that goes further even than the negative one Judas receives in the Synoptics.<sup>146</sup> 6:64 makes clear that Jesus knows exactly who will hand him over, and chose his disciples with this in mind (John 13:18). This seems most clearly to address the logical criticisms of hostile individuals such as Celsus, who would demand to know why Jesus did not inspire greater loyalty in his disciples.<sup>147</sup> But in the light of 1 John 2:19 it seems that this characterisation of Judas as a devil and false believer from the start might also serve as a theological explanation for the existence of apostasy and schisms within John's community. This is a way of acknowledging the reality of these problems without damaging the Johannine community's sense of close-knit unity and mutual loyalty (see John 13:12-20).

As I have argued above, Judas' characterisation as a thief in John 12:1-8 might best be understood as John referring to a type familiar to himself and his audience, and referred to obliquely or directly in texts such as Paul's letters, Acts, the Didache, or Lucian's *Passing of Peregrinus*. This is the false prophet or teacher, the conman who takes advantage of the generosity and credulity of Christian community to impose on them for food, money, and lodging. This fits with John's earlier characterisation of Judas as a false believer, someone who

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<sup>146</sup> Luke 22:3 has Judas possessed by Satan, but does not suggest that he was a devil beforehand.

<sup>147</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 2:12.

has entered the movement for hidden, selfish motives rather than because he genuinely believed.

Finally, Judas is used to puncture some of the complacency that this proto-predestinarian theology might cause. In John 13:21-30, there is a slight blurring of identities between himself and the beloved disciple, with the favour that Jesus shows them and their physical proximity to him being stressed. This may be intended to cause John's hearers to reflect on their own status within the movement. Are they beloved or are they betrayers?

From his introduction in John 1:41, Peter's position is made secondary in various ways. Not he but his brother is the first to declare Jesus the Messiah, and not he but the beloved disciple reclines in the place of honour with Jesus in John 13:1-20, and it is the beloved disciple who reaches Jesus' tomb first in 20:4, and who identifies Jesus in 21:7. However, all of these things qualify rather than outright undermine Peter's authority. John does not deny the significance of Peter's place within Jesus' movement or his role in the post-crucifixion sightings of the risen Lord. It is more that he uses Peter's role in the Passion and the Resurrection to place the beloved disciple, the founder of his own community, above even Peter.

If Peter can be seen as representing the wider, hierarchical church against which John's beloved disciple community define themselves, John's Gospel may contain both subtle and unsubtle criticism of the church. Peter's understanding of power and leadership –that the role of a leader is to be served not to serve others (13:8) or that a leader must be defended with force of arms (18:10) can be read as John's criticism of how the apostolic church has conducted itself. Ultimately, however, the reconciliation between Jesus and Peter in John 21 is accompanied by an implicit reconciliation between Peter and the beloved disciple (21:22). It is acknowledged

that the two men, and the communities that claim descent from them, have different roles and different functions and that there is room for both of them in Jesus' plan.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> See Ernst Haenchen (trans. Robert W. Funk), *John* (2 vols.) (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), p. 2.238.

## Conclusion

We are now in a position to address the initial questions posed by this thesis, but first I will recap the conclusions reached by the preceding chapters.

In Chapter 1, on the literary context, I first of all discussed the topic of the oral medium and what difference it makes. I found that a story told orally is much more likely to possess certain features, such as clearly-defined and relatively simple characterisation and an assumption and reliance on existing knowledge on the audience's part. I went on to discuss recent challenges to the very idea of gospel 'communities', but ultimately to affirm that idea, on the basis that even texts theoretically written 'for all Christians' must have some more specific primary audience in mind. Finally, I touched on the question of genre and found biography to be the closest fit for the gospels – in particular, 'intellectual biography', meaning the lives of philosophers and holy men.

In Chapter 2, on the historical Peter and Judas, I argued that the strong evidence from the letters of Paul and elsewhere is that Peter was a pillar of the early church, a leader who received respect even from sometime ideological opponents such as Paul. The fact that accounts of his martyrdom were circulating as early as the writing of the Johannine Epilogue suggests that he was indeed ultimately put to death for his beliefs. There is some evidence to suggest that this death was, as tradition states, during the Neronian persecutions of the 60s but for the purposes of this thesis it does not matter. My argument is that the evangelists' audiences were aware of Peter's martyrdom and that this affected (and was intended to affect) everything concerning Peter's portrayal in the gospels, and in the subsequent chapters, I have based my reading of Peter's characterisation with this in mind.

I have argued that the historical evidence on Judas is slim and much about his betrayal and the motivations for it was unknown even to the first-generation Christians themselves. I have put forward what I believe to be a strong hypothesis: that Judas' role in betraying Jesus lay in informing the Temple authorities of his teacher's prophecies and threats against the Temple (and possibly that his motivation may have been at least in part genuine consternation at Jesus' words). But for the purposes of this thesis, the important thing is the early Christians' own confusion and discomfort over the mystery of Judas' actions.

I then demonstrated a general trend, beginning with Plato's Socratic dialogues and moving past the gospels' period into the Graeco-Roman biographies of the Severan and Antonine periods, towards portraying disciples (or figures who play that kind of role) according to the techniques of mimetic pedagogy and mimetic irony. This involves allowing the audience to identify with these characters when appropriate or helpful for pedagogic purposes, but also using techniques such as satire and historical irony to encourage the audience to distance themselves as well, or to be aware of historical factors that complicate or complement the portrait drawn. In addition, disciples also often perform a number of important literary functions, among them emphasising the bravery, wisdom, and ascetic strength of their master and acting as guarantors of the tradition in question.

In Chapter 3, on the Gospel of Mark, we saw these traits in action. My conclusion in Chapter 3, based partly on my findings in Chapter 1, is that Mark's audience would have been aware that Peter was martyred, and that this affects his portrayal. Based on internal evidence, my conclusion was that Mark's community had recently been rocked by a period of state repression and persecution (possibly the Neronian persecution of the 60s in which Peter may have lost his

life) and that they now face schisms within the church and bitter recrimination over the issue of who committed apostasy under pressure and who stayed firm, along with the question of who informed on Christians and why: a situation that would be echoed repeatedly in later years, in events such as the Donatist schism. Mark is using the story of Peter, a recent and exemplary martyr, and how even he lost his nerve and denied Jesus the first time, in order to encourage Christians in his community to offer apostates a second chance. He is also using the figure of Judas to encourage people not to dwell on the issue of anonymous informants but instead to reflect on the way that even their treachery is part of the divine plan.

My argument was that Mark's seemingly negative portrayal of Peter was in line with typical portrayals of disciples from comparable texts, and should be read as a device to exalt *Jesus*, not to denigrate Peter.

In Chapter 4, I argued that the changes Matthew makes to Peter's portrayal are in part because he is not just presenting Peter in relation to Jesus but also to Judas. Peter and Judas are now both instances of apostasy but Peter's reaction, weeping bitterly, is a positive model of repentance whereas Judas', suicide, is a negative.

In Chapter 5, I discussed the way that Luke had an opportunity to show something that the other gospels could only imply: Peter's transition from the coward who denied Jesus to the pillar of the church known to their audiences. I argued that Judas is also a key point in this transition – that Jesus effects it when he prays for Peter and not Judas. We see the results of this in Acts, Luke's companion volume. Peter becomes a teacher and wonder-worker in the tradition of his master, while Judas dies a horrific death, a death that becomes the first in a series of gruesome ends meted out to evildoers in Acts.

Finally, Chapter 6 looked at John's Gospel and his addition of the beloved disciple. My argument was that the beloved disciple represented the founder of John's community while Peter represented the apostolic church. John does not dispute Peter's authority as such (much as Porphyry could not deny that Amelius was considered Plotinus' foremost student), but he uses that accepted authority to emphasise the even greater status of the beloved disciple. Judas is a devil from the beginning – like the believers who broke with the community in 1 John, he was only ever pretending to be one of them for his own purposes. On the other hand, the point that apostasy and treachery can come from within is made from a certain ambiguity at the Last Supper, where it seems from a distance as though the beloved disciple might be taken for Judas or Judas for the beloved disciple.

I began this thesis because of my curiosity regarding Peter's denial and Judas' betrayal. My question was summed up as follows: what does it mean that these two glaring instances of failure are placed at the very heart of the Christian kerygma? I have provided a series of complementary answers throughout the thesis. Some of them are based on the literary techniques of the ancient world, the idea that Peter's cowardice and Judas' treachery only serve to emphasise Jesus' courage and selflessness, or that Peter's literal-mindedness and tendency to misunderstand Jesus serves valuable rhetorical purposes in allowing the evangelists more freedom to use Jesus to expound on certain lessons. Some of them are based on the hypothetical historical context – the idea, for instance, that Peter's martyrdom was a widely-known fact throughout the early Christian world or that Judas could be seen as a representative of a known type, an informer or charlatan preying on Christians.

At the beginning of this thesis, I also announced my intention of discussing the two characters together because I was interested in a simple question: why is Peter deemed capable of rehabilitation while Judas is not? Are there concrete differences in the characterisation of the two disciples that make this conclusion seem inevitable?

I argued that, in the Gospel of Mark, Mark is writing with an expectation that his audience will be aware of and respect Peter's status as the first witness to the risen Lord. The gospel ends almost teasingly, breaking off just before their meeting in Galilee, but Mark has made it clear through references scattered throughout the text that it will happen. The portrayal of Judas, on the other hand, does not appear to rely on any extra-textual knowledge on the part of the audience. A flat and one-dimensional character, he plays the role of informant that Mark requires of him, and then vanishes from the narrative. Peter's role exists beyond that.

Matthew, on the other hand, is interested in stressing the role of prophecy in all the events of the Passion. Although his community likely have an even greater respect for Peter than that of Mark, both Peter and Judas are little more than puppets of prophecy during the Passion. There may be some distinction between them in that Peter pleads for forgiveness while Judas enters into suicidal despair but it is clear that Matthew's real interest lies in the way that these two figures fulfil prophecies from the Hebrew Scriptures.

For Luke, the key difference between Peter and Judas is that Jesus prays for Peter, which he does not do for Judas. Jesus' prayer shields Peter and allows him to pass through the period of testing unscathed and emerge strengthened and able in turn to pray for and strengthen his brethren as a pillar of the church. Judas, by contrast, falls victim to Satan and later suffers

divine retribution. The question of why Jesus prays for the one and not the other is irrelevant: the emphasis is on Jesus' divine protective powers, not his motives.

Finally, John places Peter, Judas, and the beloved disciple in a triangle. Judas is shown to be completely cynical, self-serving, and hypocritical; Peter is sincere in his love for Jesus but initially too enthralled by ideas of worldly authority and personal status; the beloved disciple alone seems completely in tune with Jesus. They are all tested by the darkness of the Passion. Judas falls to it. Peter does for a time, but he is ultimately restored by the love he has for Jesus, and his redeeming death is predicted. The beloved disciple simply glides serenely over all.

In each case, the reason for Peter's redemption and Judas' failure tells us something significant about the evangelist's values and ideals. The way that they understood Peter's cowardice and Judas' betrayal is a way into their entire worldview, and the messages that they wished to impart to their audiences.

I hope that these proposals will be found illuminating and helpful, but I would never wish them to be understood as an attempt at delivering the last word on any of these topics. It seems to me that the key to the stories of Peter and Judas is humility, after all. It was precisely the uncertainty and ambiguity, the lack of clear-cut answers or neat and obvious morals, that drew me to this topic in the first place. That uncertainty cannot and should not ever be fully undone because, I believe, promoting uncertainty, unease, and consequential humility is part of the role that Peter and Judas play in the gospel narratives.

The story of the failures and lies of Peter and Judas certainly led the church to some embarrassment, as the attacks of Celsus and others make clear. But their inclusion should not

be seen as simply the evangelists bowing to historical facts. It seems clear that in different ways and for different reasons, the intertwined motifs of Peter's denial and Judas' betrayal, were central to the messages of all four gospels. Perhaps today, for a religion and the culture surrounding it that so often seems to trumpet its strength, confidence, and power, the pinch of humility which their stories provide, the sense of uncertainty with which they conclude, or fail to conclude, should still come as a powerful antidote to those who feel over-certain about their own courage and knowledge of the truth.

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