

THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS AND THE RAVENMOCKER:
AN INDIGENIZED READING OF THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS

By Justine Wilson

Introduction

April DeConick argues gnosticism is an orientation towards religion that is countercultural in nature. As countercultural, it speaks to those who feel on the outside of society, and where social constructions of morality and virtue do not speak to their personal needs or identity. As such, personal enlightenment brings them to a new understanding of transcendent meaning that feels relevant to their persons. Thus, gnosticism as countercultural is an inherently localized phenomena, but occurring in different manifestations across a broad spectrum.

This theory raises the question of what counts as countercultural in the ancient early church context. Is it really accurate to assert there is a dominant cultural manifestation of Christians and the early church by which others are responding and developing group identities in reaction? Is there really an early church that operates like a hegemon at this stage? Or are we imposing later theories of imperialism onto the early church period and situating gnosticism in subordinate position to a theoretical ecclesial metropolitan?

Karen King and Elaine Pagels argue for a more decentralized understanding of Christianity and the early church in the first few centuries, and that gnostic texts are exemplars of the variety of traditions circulating during the early church period. Rather than viewing gnosticism as itself a centralized, cohesive doctrinal ideology, King in particular argues there are varieties of religious

expression during the first two centuries of the common era that have come to be labelled gnostic, but rather represent a diversity of spiritual expression that functionally decenters what later became dominant ecclesial traditions.

For DeConick, King, and Pagels, the questions center around the status of gnostic texts and nomenclature, and how our understanding of those texts has been fairly or unfairly molded by ancient heresiologists prior to discovery of the actual texts at Nag Hammadi and elsewhere. As important as those questions are, they both begin by examining “gnostic” texts with orthodox ecclesial traditions as their primary interlocuter. This is both logical and necessary given the historical and geographical contexts of biblical and extracanonical literature. But what if we began with a different set of interlocuters? What if we created different conversation partners with texts that have often been labelled as “gnostic?” How would that alter the questions posed, the scope of scholarly inquiry, our hermeneutical approaches to “gnostic texts,” and our conceptualization of “gnosticism” as a whole?

In this paper, I propose analyzing a very specific non-canonical text, the Gospel of Judas, with Cherokee traditional teachings and placing them into conversation with Hebrew texts and ANE traditions. While it may seem counterintuitive to analyze a second century text from a third century Coptic codex by placing it into conversation with indigenous Native American traditions, I argue doing so recasts possible questions and interpretations of the text.

It is frequently noted that the questions we ask largely determine the possible answers we get. Utilizing different hermeneutical approaches can radically alter questions posed to a text and interpreter, and consequently result in very different answers arising. By placing Gospel of

Judas into conversation with indigenous texts and teachings, I hope to play with different textual juxtapositions and argue that the Gospel of Judas is potentially utilizing alternative narrativizing structures that neither attack nor affirm orthodox ecclesial traditions. For example, the Gospel of Judas is often read with a view towards how to interpret Judas—is he good or bad? Does the Gospel portray Judas as a villain, infamous for his act of betrayal and venality? Or is he really the unsung hero within Jesus narratives?

On the one hand, DeConick argues the translations commissioned by National Geographic and others mistranslate words and phrases in order to portray Judas as an antidote to oppressive orthodox Christianity represented by the canonical gospel narratives. On the other hand, Bart Ehrman, King, and others argue Judas is portrayed in exalted position to the other disciples, and represents one who is chosen by Jesus to receive esoteric teachings not divulged to others. In both cases, they presuppose a hermeneutic of narratological determinacy that may be more contemporary imposition than authorial design.

If, instead, we read Judas through indigenous logics of indeterminacy, we no longer ask whether Judas was hero or villain, but rather how is Judas being utilized within the narrative structure to deal with larger questions of use/abuse of power. I argue the Gospel of Judas is less concerned with determining the status of Judas, but instead interrogating practices of religious leadership that result in unspeakable abuse of adherents—especially those most socially vulnerable. So this paper seeks to create unexpected conversation partners that facilitate different conversations, and through that perhaps recast how we understand Gnostic texts—in this case, Gospel of Judas.

The Ravenmocker

Of all the Cherokee wizards or witches the most dreaded is the Raven Mocker, the one that robs the dying man of life. They are of either sex and there is no sure way to know one...At night, when some one is sick or dying in the settlement, the Raven Mocker goes to the place to take the life. He flies through the air in fiery shape, with arms outstretched like wings, and sparks trailing behind, and a rushing sound like the noise of a strong wind...When the Raven Mocker comes to the house he finds others of his kind waiting there, and unless there is a doctor on guard who knows how to drive them away they go inside, all invisible, and frighten and torment the sick man until they kill him...After the witches kill him they take out his heart and eat it, and so add to their own lives as many days or years as they have taken from his. No one in the room can see them, and there is no scar where they take out the heart, but yet there is no heart left in the body. Only one who has the right medicine can recognize a Raven Mocker, and if such a man stays in the room with the sick person these witches are afraid to come in, and retreat as soon as they see him, because when one of them is recognized in his right shape he must die within seven days. ¹

The meaning of the name Ravenmocker (Kho:lvnahye:liski) is self-explanatory: Kho:lvn means raven; Ahye:liski means 'one that mocks or imitates.' According to the legend, a person transforms himself into the likeness of a raven that flies, seeks, seizes, and plunders. In my own experience as a young boy, my parents referred to it simply as Kho:lvn...It preyed upon the sick by seeking them out and getting past those who kept watch over the sick, entering the body and eating the liver or the heart. Once he was allowed to get to the sick person and eat the liver, the person died. According to legend, Kho:lvn did this to prolong his own life.²

The story of the Ravenmocker goes back very far in Cherokee traditions. It is connected to stories of an early Cherokee clan that practiced spiritual powers, or medicine, in ways that were harmful and oppressive. The power this clan accumulated over time due to their practice of

¹ James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees*. (Nashville: Charles and Randy Elder-Booksellers Publishers, 1982). 401-02.

² Durban Feeling: Forward to Guess, Sequoyah *Kho:lvn (The Ravenmocker)* (Tahlequah: Self-published, 1994). n.p.

medicine created tremendous power differentials that destabilized Cherokee communities.

Sequoyah Guess, a sixth-generation descendant of the original Sequoyah who created the Cherokee syllabic writing system and taught over 80% of the tribe to read and write within a period of six months, relates the story of how the Ravenmocker came to be, and how it is connected to a lost Cherokee medicine clan:

Anikutani were the clan of the medicine people. And even back then, they were old and mysterious. It is whispered they were all-powerful, not only in the ways of medicine but they held great seats in the council chambers. Their word was almost law and not to abide by their counsel meant having to suffer their awful wrath. The medicine they knew was great also. Greater than any that has ever been and perhaps than will ever be.

I have been told they rivaled even the Father in Heaven, Yowa (Yehowa). And those that pass this story down, as I do to you, suspect that it was He that caused the Kutani to disappear from the face of the earth.

...It is said the Anikutani...could change their forms into anything they wished to become, or anyone. And because of these powers, the kutani became corrupt. Over the ages they took advantage of the fear and respect the other clans gave them.

Their clan included a young man named Nicotani. His heart was evil even from his mother's belly. He wanted most that which he couldn't have. As he grew older, his eyes looked upon the beautiful wife of the chief's son and coveted her. But he was not the only one to behave in such shameful ways. Others of his family followed Nicotani and revered him as next in line as head of the clan. They took his ways and made them their own. Even the coveting of another's wife was not below them. The power of fear they held over the Tsalagi (Cherokee) was so great that they felt they could do anything they wanted and feared nothing or no one.

The day came when the warriors had gone to battle and the children played their won version of the battle in the town of Kituwagi. The wives and daughters busied themselves in preparing the victory feast. They gathered wood for the fire. A small group of women went into the surrounding forest to find the much needed smokeless wood. It was there that the group of Kutani led by Nicotani came and took the women away against their will.

It wasn't until late that night when the warriors came back from the battle that they discovered only the children and old men were left. The women were not to be found. Sitting around the campfire, the warriors were told what had happened.

...They say it was the bravery of this one young man who would face the awesome power of the Anikutani to have his young bride back that caused the rest of the men to gather their courage and follow. And there in the old land, with the spring night sky above, our people fought their first civil war. And such a war there has never been or will ever be if the Father is with us.

The Kutani fought the warriors using their magic. Many, many brave men died that night in what has been only whispered as Tsagigathla. In English, there are no words. Some have called it 'the night of mixing blood' for it is said that the blood of warriors mixed with the blood of the Kutani and with the filth of demon blood. They say the blood from the battle flew everywhere. Some even landed on the moon and that is why it turns red sometimes. And it's on those nights we must listen closely for the Ravenmocker.

...The Kholvnahyeliski is a terrible thing. It is the legacy of the Kutani. Just as the last member of the Kutani lay dying in a pool of his own blood,...Nicotani raised his left hand and called down a raven from a nearby tree. With his dying breath the witch cursed the Tsalagi with the Ravenmocker.

It is said that the bird flew from Nicotani's hand and headed in the direction of the nearest Didahnuwisgi. A healer. That healer became secretive and became known as the first Didahnesesgi apart from the kutani clan. A witch. That one taught others and the first became so black hearted he became the first of the Anisvnoy Anedohi. The Nightwalkers. The fathers said the raven was teaching him how to do these things. They said Nicotani's spirit went into the raven as he died. And finally, the once goodly Healer became Kholvn Ahyeliski, the Ravenmocker. The most feared of all Tsalagi sorcerers. But there was a price to be paid. He became a fleasheater. Hearts and livers. Human hearts and livers. And as long as he kept killing and eating there was no end to his power.³

While it may not be obvious from the above narrative, in Cherokee traditions, the raven is typically a noble figure. It was the raven who first volunteered to bring light into the world by traveling to the end of the land and bringing back a spark of fire to warm the people (this endeavor was ultimately unsuccessful by raven, but still understood as an act of bravery and

³ Sequoyah Guess, *Kho:lvn (The Ravenmocker)* (Tahlequah: self-published, 1994), 5-8.

courage). Raven was chosen because he was most esteemed by the other animals in the council, according to tradition. So why are bad medicine practitioners called raven mockers? Because the raven is supposed to be a force for good. It has power and authority recognized by others. And that is how medicine wo/men are supposed to be—forces for good whose power and authority are recognized by the community. But a ravenmocker is one who appears to be trustworthy, but in fact does harm. In other words, a ravenmocker is one who takes the appearance of medicine wo/man or healer, but in fact practices bad medicine. It is evil disguised as goodness. It has the appearance of the reputable raven, but in only imitating it in looks and not in kind. In that way, it turns the raven into a mockery by taking those we should trust most and turning them into those to be most feared. These are the Ravenmockers.

Gospel of Judas

For the purposes of this paper, I want to focus on a particular passage in the Gospel of Judas.

THE DISCIPLES SEE THE TEMPLE AND DISCUSS IT

They [said, “We have seen] a great [house with a large] altar [in it, and] twelve men—they are the priests, we would say—and a name; and a crowd of people is waiting at that altar, [until] the priests [... and receive] the offerings. [But] we kept waiting.”

[Jesus said], “What are [the priests] like?”

They [said, “Some ...] two weeks; [some] sacrifice their own children, others their wives, in praise [and] humility with each other; some sleep with men; some are involved in [slaughter]; some commit a multitude of sins and deeds of lawlessness. And the men who stand [before] the altar invoke your [name], [39] and in all the deeds of their deficiency, the sacrifices are brought to completion [...].”

*After they said this, they were quiet, for they were troubled.*⁴

In this pericope, both Ehrman and King conclude the passage (and the one following it) are a denunciation of the orthodox church broadly, and the twelve disciples specifically. The twelve are likened to a corrupt priesthood portrayed in the above vision:

JESUS OFFERS AN ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE VISION OF THE TEMPLE

Jesus said to them, “Why are you troubled? Truly I say to you, all the priests who stand before that altar invoke my name. Again I say to you, my name has been written on this [...] of the generations of the stars through the human generations. [And they] have planted trees without fruit, in my name, in a shameful manner.”

Jesus said to them, “Those you have seen receiving the offerings at the altar—that is who you are. That is the god you serve, and you are those twelve men you have seen. The cattle you have seen brought for sacrifice are the many people you lead astray [40] before that altar. [...] will stand and make use of my name in this way, and generations of the pious will remain loyal to him. After hi another man will stand there from [the fornicators], and another [will] stand there from the slayers of children, and another from those who sleep with men, and those who abstain, and the rest of the people of pollution and lawlessness and error, and those who say, ‘We are like angels’; they are the stars that bring everything to its conclusion. For to the human generations it has been said, ‘Look, God has received your sacrifice from the hands of a priest’—that is, a minister of error. But it is the Lord, the Lord of the universe, who commands, ‘On the last day they will be put to shame.’”⁵

First, I want to focus on where it says the priests sacrificed their own children. Given the context, it would seem logical to conclude the ones engaging in sacrifice are the priests, and

⁴ Translated by

Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, in collaboration with François Gaudard

From *The Gospel of Judas*

Edited by Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst

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⁵ Ibid

they would be none other than the Jewish priesthood. Ehrman concludes that the initial vision is that of a corrupt Jewish priesthood, but the interpretation offered by Jesus is that the priests in the vision in fact represent the orthodox church who claim to worship the same God as Jews do. And since the Jewish God is portrayed as the promoter of immorality, those asserting they are within that religious genealogy are continuing that line of corruption.⁶

Looking more closely at the sacrifice of children, we read “[some] sacrifice their own children.” If the initial imagery is one of Jewish priesthood, where would this imagery of child sacrifice come from? In the Hebrew Bible, there are several references to child sacrifice. Perhaps the most famous is the Akedah where Abraham goes to sacrifice Isaac. But Abraham is ultimately prevented from performing the sacrifice. This is also before the time of a Jewish priesthood. So while the Akedah is one of the most prominent passages in Hebrew scriptures, I do not think it is an example that bears directly on mentions of child sacrifice in the Gospel of Judas.

We do find reference to child sacrifice in the Levitical code in the form of a prohibition:

²¹ You shall not give any of your offspring to sacrifice them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord. ²² You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. (Lev. 18:21-22)⁷

² Say further to the people of Israel: Any of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside in Israel, who give any of their offspring to Molech shall be put to death; the people of the land shall stone them to death. ³ I myself will set my face against them, and will cut them off from the people, because they have given of their offspring to Molech, defiling my sanctuary and profaning my holy name. ⁴ And if the people of the land should ever close their eyes to them, when they give of their offspring to Molech, and do not put them to death, ⁵ I myself will set my face against them and against their

⁶ Bart Ehrman, (Christianity Turned on its Head: The Alternative Vision of the Gospel of Judas) in The Gospel of Judas edited by Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, (2006). Washington DC: National Geographic Society, 113-115.

⁷ All biblical citations taken from NRSV

family, and will cut them off from among their people, them and all who follow them in prostituting themselves to Molech.(Lev 20:2-5)

This is mirrored in Deuteronomy:

¹⁰ No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through fire, (Deut 18:10)

Rhetorically one may conclude such a prohibition would only be made if there was a problem of child sacrifices being made to Molech, or at least a danger of such sacrifices being made. And indeed, we see several references to such sacrifices being carried out in other portions of scripture. To roughly categorize, there are sacrifices of children made that are the result of individual parents doing so in response to either a vow or hunger, and there are those being sacrificed as a part of sacrificial worship.

The first category would include passages like 2 Kings 6 which states:

*²⁴ Some time later King Ben-hadad of Aram mustered his entire army; he marched against Samaria and laid siege to it. ²⁵ As the siege continued, famine in Samaria became so great that a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and one-fourth of a kab of dove's dung for five shekels of silver. ²⁶ Now as the king of Israel was walking on the city wall, a woman cried out to him, "Help, my lord king!" ²⁷ He said, "No! Let the Lord help you. How can I help you? From the threshing floor or from the wine press?" ²⁸ But then the king asked her, "What is your complaint?" She answered, "**This woman said to me, 'Give up your son; we will eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.'** ²⁹ So we cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, 'Give up your son and we will eat him.' But she has hidden her son." (2 Kings 6:24-229)*

This passage mentions the deal two women made who were facing starvation due to military siege. In order to survive, they chose to sacrifice their children to nourish themselves, but only one mother actually sacrificed their child to the dismay of the other. Other references to possible child sacrifice are prophetic warnings of the severity of punishment they will

experience in the future: Leviticus 26:29; Deuteronomy 28:53-57; Jeremiah 19:9; Lamentations 2:20; 4:10; Ezekiel 5:10. But these serve as warnings rather than examples of child sacrifice” actually occurring. Also, the above passages could be interpreted to mean people will be driven to cannibalism of the dead rather than children actually being sacrificed.

There is one other passage that details an actual child sacrifice--Jephthah's daughter in Judges 11. While there are some rabbinic interpretations that imply perhaps Jephthah's daughter was devoted to the Lord in a way not requiring her death, the dominant reading of the text indicates after two months of mourning her virginity, Japheth did sacrifice his daughter as a burnt offering. This story involves cultic sacrifice rather than devouring children out of hunger and desperation. But it is clear that sacrifice is done in recognition of the Israelite God—not a foreign deity. This would seem to be different than what is referenced in Leviticus 18. That does not detract in any way from the horrific narrative. In some senses, the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter indicates a bridge to another type of child sacrifice that is recorded throughout Hebrew scriptures involving topheth.

In the New Testament, there are twelve references to Gehenna—eleven of which appear in the synoptic gospels with all but one appearing in Matthew and Mark. Gehenna in the New Testament is a transliteration of the Hebrew Gei Ben-Hinnom, or Gei Hinnom (Valley of Hinnom) for short. This is a valley surrounding the southwestern portions of Jerusalem. This valley became known for a subsection known as topheth. The places known as topheth were sites of child sacrifice by Israelites to the gods of Molech and Baal. Kings Ahaz and Manasseh are recorded as permitting and participating in foreign cultic worship that included child sacrifice. 2 Chronicles 28 describes Ahaz as:

but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even made cast images for the Baals;³ and he made offerings in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and made his sons pass through fire, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel.

When Hezekiah takes over after Ahaz, he destroys such worship until Manasseh comes to power and reinstates child sacrifice:

*² He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, following the abominable practices of the nations that the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. ³ For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he erected altars for Baal, made a sacred pole,^[a] as King Ahab of Israel had done, worshiped all the host of heaven, and served them. ⁴ He built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, "In Jerusalem I will put my name." ⁵ He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. ⁶ **He made his son pass through fire;** (2 Kings 21)*

In Rashi's commentary on Jeremiah, he says the etymology of topheth is from the Hebrew word toph, meaning drum. According to Rashi, topheth were so named because there was ritual drumming performed to drown out the cries of the children being sacrificed. Another possibility is that topheth comes from the Aramaic meaning fire-roasters.

In Jeremiah we read denunciations of such practices:

³⁰ For the people of Judah have done evil in my sight, says the Lord; they have set their abominations in the house that is called by my name, defiling it. ³¹ And they go on building the high place^[a] of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire—which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind. (Jer 7:30-31)

This description of Jeremiah has semblances to the account in the Gospel of Judas. While commentators seem to assume in the Gospel of Judas that the sacrifices being carried out are in the name of Jesus, it is not clear to me that is the case. Rather, it could be in the name of the Lord or some other such appellation that refers to Jewish deity as it clearly does in Jeremiah.

Both the passage from Jeremiah 7 and the Levitical prohibitions seem to closely parallel the Gospel of Judas in describing the sins of the priests in the disciples' vision. In both Leviticus and Gospel of Judas, child sacrifice is denounced, followed quickly by (presumably men) lying with males. The Coptic word Ⲣⲣⲟⲙⲉ is translated as men in every translation except for that of King who chooses male instead. I prefer the translation as male because it is both accurate, but also potentially signifying what is being referred to in the Gospel of Judas.

We read in 1 Kings 14 and 15 that male prostitution was throughout the land, and when King Asa did away with pagan worship, that included male prostitution.

¹¹ Asa did what was right in the sight of the Lord, as his father David had done. ¹² He put away the male temple prostitutes out of the land, and removed all the idols that his ancestors had made. (1 Kings 15: 11-12)

So perhaps instead of reading the vision of the twelve disciples as initially referring to the orthodox church, perhaps it is a reference to historical Jewish religious leadership. And if so, that would mean the priests are implicated in worship that includes things like child sacrifice and male prostitution. These are abominations according to Hebrew scriptures as it appears to be in the Gospel of Judas. But why? In the case of Hebrew scriptures, the worship of other deities is clearly prohibited and denounced. This is frequently understood as Judaism requiring fidelity to Hashem in lieu of all other rivals. The notion of God being a jealous God seems to reify emphasis on absolute fidelity being a requirement of Jewish worship. But arguably the subtext is worshipping other deities will necessarily involve practices that ultimately sacrifice the well-being of those marginalized for the benefit of those in power—particularly those occupying positions of religio-political power.

Carthaginian child sacrifice is variously attested to among ancient historians and polemicists. To what extent Israelite child sacrifice mirrored Carthaginian practices is speculative at best, but it is helpful to see how more thorough accounts of child sacrifice operated in the ancient context. In times of communal distress, either due to natural causes or military offensives, Carthaginians would offer up their children for sacrifice to curry favor with the deities. The most prized child was seen as being the most valuable sacrifice. There is no indication that children either volunteered or consented to this. But some parents did not want to sacrifice their children, so a marketplace of sacrificial children comprised of children from poor and powerless families was created so a wealthy family could substitute another child for their own. And the sacrificial process in some instances appears to have involved slowly roasting babies alive (hence the need for drums and fire-roasters). The horrific nature of these deaths is matched by the utter powerlessness of those chosen for such treatment.

We cannot presume Carthaginian child sacrifices were the same as those practiced in Judaea, but we can glean the incredible abuse of power by both political and religious leadership that would be necessitated by such sacrificial practices.

While Hebrew scriptures denounce child sacrifice and lying with males as part of pagan worship practices, an underlying condemnation arguably involves denouncing who is being sacrificed for whose benefit. And it typically is the least powerful being sacrificed to advance the well-being of those in power. In the Gospel of Judas, there are not obvious signs that engaging in worship of other religious traditions is frontally condemned. One could argue condemnation in the Gospel of Judas comes from pursuing false knowledge or incorrect practices, but that begs the question as to what is false or incorrect? I would argue that the Gospel of Judas is picking up on

the abuse of power evidenced in practices of child sacrifice and male prostitution, and denouncing that as being not from the true God—even when it comes from religious leadership, or perhaps especially when it comes from religious leadership.

Child Sex Abuse in Indigenous Communities

Peter "Packy" Kobuk has to walk past the old Catholic church to get almost anywhere. To fill a drum of heating oil. To take his children to school. To wash his clothes at the only laundromat in this Eskimo village of 370.

"I think about burning it down, but I have to block that out," says Kobuk, 46. "It all comes back to me right away each time I have to see it."

The decaying wood-frame building also haunts John Lockwood, a married father of nine. Its bell tower, which rises above the village's 90 plywood shacks and prefabricated houses, is one of the first landmarks he sees when returning home in a longboat from hunting seals in the Bering Sea.

"It brings back a lot," says Lockwood, whose weathered face reflects a life spent in the Alaska outdoors. "He did all those bad things to us little kids there, and no one did nothing to stop it."

Even after 30 years, the men can't shake their memories of the late Joseph Lundowski, a volunteer Catholic missionary who arrived in their village in 1968.

The devoutly Catholic village elders welcomed Lundowski warmly, as they did all men of the cloth. But the children soon grew to fear and despise him.

*Now grown, they said that over a seven-year period, **"Deacon Joe" molested nearly every boy in St. Michael and the neighboring settlement of Stebbins."***

The alleged victims, now in their 40s and 50s, say they secretly carried this burden until last year. Then, after watching the Catholic sexual abuse scandal unfold on satellite television, 28 men from the two villages decided to break their silence.

"We couldn't tell anyone [before] because no one would believe us," said Kobuk, one of the few St. Michael Eskimos who is still a Catholic. He wears a homemade rosary around his neck, the blue beads held together by string from a fishing net.

"He worked for God, and I was just an Eskimo child."

...The troubles of Lundowski's alleged victims stood out, even in the Eskimo villages of western Alaska, which have some of the highest rates of alcoholism and drug abuse, domestic violence and suicide in the world.⁸

As clergy sex abuse has become more documented, the impact of such abuse on indigenous communities is almost immeasurable. According to Richard Sipe, a former Benedictine monk, Alaskan Native villages were used as dumping grounds for pedophile priests to limit their harm to indigenous children. After Joseph Lundowski left, he was replaced by Father George Endal. During Endal's tenure, approximately 80% of the town's children are molested.⁹ Another priest, Father James Poole, serially abused both women and children. In one case, he impregnated a 16 year-old, procured an abortion for her, then instructed her to accuse her father of raping her for which the father was convicted and imprisoned.¹⁰

But the abuse of Native children extends far beyond remote Alaskan villages. It is part and parcel of the residential boarding schools indigenous children were subjected to throughout Canada, and is part of the legacy of some of the boarding school experiences of Native children in the US.

How could such abuse take place on such vast scales?

The Ravenmocker comes under the guise of what is good, but really intends evil. It preys on the most vulnerable, and kills without being seen or detected, eating the hearts out of its victims.

⁸ William Lobdell, (Missionary's Dark Legacy) LA Times: 11/19/2005

⁹ <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/the-silence/timeline/>

¹⁰ Emily Schwing, (These priests abused in Native villages for years. They retired on Gonzaga's campus) Northwest News Network, 12/17/2018

When spiritual leaders prey upon the young and vulnerable, they become Ravenmockers. They appear to be those you can trust the most, but it is only an imitation of goodness, a mockery of what a spiritual leader should be. Their betrayal of goodness in the pursuit of securing their own power and desires makes them the most feared and despised of all creatures.

Gospel of Judas and the Ravenmocker

The vision presented by the twelve disciples in the Gospel of Judas describes religious leadership gone astray. Rather than seeking the good of the people, it sacrifices and prostitutes the most vulnerable in order to secure its position and well-being [*some sacrifice their own children, others their wives, in praise [and] humility with each other; some sleep with men*]. People, entire generations are led astray by such leaders. They may invoke the name of God [*And the men who stand [before] the altar invoke your [name]*], but they do so in mockery, as mere imitation to achieve their ends at the expense of others. They are Ravenmockers. They prey upon children, women (wives), and vulnerable males.

But in the interpretation of the vision given by Jesus in the Gospel of Judas, it is not only the earlier Jewish priesthood and monarchy that engaged in traumatic abuse, it is now the new ecclesial leadership performing it in the form of the twelve. The disciples who had been subjected to abuse of power by Jewish religious leadership while Beit Shammai was in power over the Sanhedrin are now the purveyors of spiritual abuse themselves, according to Jesus [*The cattle you have seen brought for sacrifice are the many people you lead astray before that altar.*] Their ministry is in error despite their positions and titles. They, like previous Jewish

priests, “*stand there from the slayers of children, and another from those who sleep with men.*”

Using an indigenized reading, I interpret this to not simple lawlessness or sexual immorality, but abuse of children and marginalized persons by those they expect to care for them. Read this way, the passage is less about condemning a Jewish or Christian orthodoxy, but rather condemning the abuse of power by spiritual leaders who should occupy people’s trust, but then betray it for personal gratification and benefit. Is this meant to be *the* way in which we should read the Gospel of Judas? No. but an indigenized hermeneutic eschews determinant readings and interpretations for the indeterminate and contingent. There is no definitive interpretation of traditional Cherokee stories, but that is by design. Traditional native storytelling can be understood as deriving meaning that is contingent upon the audience and context of its narration. That is one reason why there are often several versions of a traditional story—they are molded to the needs of a particular community at a particular time. But as living traditions, they are reinterpreted in subsequent generations in ways meaningful to new audiences and contexts.

This narrative indeterminacy is perhaps a way to approach the Gospel of Judas. Rather than presuming this gospel is either deifying or vilifying Judas, perhaps it should instead be read as questioning uses and abuses of power in various generations that appear to be different, but share common threads. And perhaps the concept of the Ravenmocker is a potential way to frame portions of the Judas narrative in ways we otherwise might not consider.

So where does that leave us with Judas?

We repeatedly see Jesus take Judas aside and expound upon the mysteries of the universe and cosmic truths. In the view of Pagels, King, and Ehrman, this portrays an exalted Judas figure who alone was given access to spiritual knowledge that the twelve either rejected or could not comprehend. And the later actions of Judas are reread to be fulfillment of this divine purpose in which he plays a faithful, though much maligned part.

DeConick argues through a series of mistranslations, Judas has been incorrectly portrayed as a heroic figure when the text indicates he is closer to a demon (daimon). Thus, Judas never is transformed from an agent of venality. For DeConick, there is not much of a gap between the portrayal of Judas in the canonical gospels, and in the Gospel of Judas. Where Pagels, King, and Ehrman stress the Gospel of Judas is a departure reading of the role and legacy of Judas from the canonical tradition, DeConick believes there is continuity in the textual condemnation of Judas between canonical and extracanonical sources.

I want to propose there is a discontinuity of Judas' characterization between the Gospel of Judas and the New Testament. But that discontinuity doesn't lead to the exaltation of Judas in the Gospel of Judas. In the Gospel, we see Jesus repeatedly attempting to teach Judas higher, esoteric truths. Jesus rebukes Judas when he relates his vision of the dwelling of the holy ones. Over and over we see Judas struggle with Jesus' teachings and their potential implications. And then the conclusion of the Gospel ends with the following:

Their high priests murmured because [he] had gone into the guest room for his prayer. But some scribes were there watching carefully in order to arrest him during the prayer, for they were afraid of the people, since he was regarded by all as a prophet.

They approached Judas and said to him, "What are you doing here? You are Jesus' disciple."

Judas answered them as they wished. And he received some money and handed him over to them.

Ehrman, Pagels, and King argue Judas becomes part of the divine plan by handing over Jesus to the high priests. This was a task for which Judas did not relish, but was nonetheless called to do in order for Jesus to fulfill his mission. But perhaps there is another way to view this passage. Arguably the Gospel of Judas functions with the assumption that people are already familiar with the portrayal of Judas in the canonical texts. Much like the Protoevangelium of James assumes the birth narratives of Jesus in the New Testament and supplements that material with accounts not found there, so also the Gospel of Judas should likely be read as being a supplement to the canonical gospel accounts of Judas. Thus, it would be understood that the Gospel of Judas leaves off where other gospel accounts begin in narrating the betrayal of Jesus by Judas.

In the synoptic gospels, Judas is said to betray Jesus by taking the authorities with him to the garden where Jesus was with the disciples, and greet Jesus with a kiss. The kiss of Judas was to signal the authorities whom they should arrest without creating a stir. Also in all the synoptics, it claims that Judas did this for money (although only Matthew says it was for 30 pieces of silver). In each of these narratives, Judas comes under the guise of a friend, and betrays Jesus with a form of physical affection. While this does not appear in the Gospel of Judas, the Gospel ends in such a way as to presume a continuation of the narrative within the canonical tradition. And we know that Judas uses physical affection to betray Jesus. If the Gospel of Judas wanted

to excise the accounts in the canonical texts, presumably the narration would have continued recasting the events as people have come to learn them. But the text does not do that. That would indicate it does not deny the basic events being outlined, but rather wishes to reframe them within a larger, different context.

If so, then we cannot read Judas in the Gospel outside his method of betrayal of Jesus—use of physical affection (or even sexual expression). And he receives direct financial benefit from having done it. Hence, Judas becomes no different than the twelve, or the Jewish priests. Judas is given an opportunity to receive specialized teaching, but his struggle with the message ultimately results in him exercising the same abuse of power that the twelve and Jewish priesthood are accused of doing. Judas, like the others, weaponized sexual expression for personal gain. He betrayed Jesus when Jesus occupied a particularly perilous position in relation to the empowered establishment. Interestingly, while the fourth gospel does not contain the description of Judas betraying Jesus with a kiss, it does say the location of the betrayal was in the Kidron Valley. The Kidron Valley is geographically connected to the Valley of Hinnom. That imagery is only found in John, and evokes the image of child sacrifice. Thus, John has parallels to the Gospel of Judas' denunciation of child sacrifice while the synoptic narratives parallel images of men lying with males or male cultic prostitution, and does so by portraying unconsented physical/sexual contact in Judas' betrayal of Jesus with a kiss.

In short, Judas became a Ravenmocker at the end just as the twelve disciples did. When placed in a position of authority or power, all ended up abusing it against the most vulnerable. And perhaps that is why Jesus states no one from mortal birth is worthy to enter the house of Judas' vision. As mortals, we are continually corrupted by power and excuse its misuse against the

marginalized and dispossessed. Despite our best intentions, we can become Ravenmockers ourselves without ever realizing we are no longer forces for good, but rather pale imitators of goodness. As trickster figures operate in Native orature, they occupy neither the position of the hero nor villain, but rather defy community conventions in order to reveal sociopolitical dynamics at play that otherwise go unnoticed. In some circumstances, tricksters can function as purveyors of good. Often times they cause mischief, frustration, or suffering. But despite the troubles they cause, they tend to occupy prominent positions within a tribal community's oral traditions that resist easy categorizations. Just as the trickster shifts its role and meaning across narratives, so also does an indigenized hermeneutic function like a trickster—by performing a prophetic role of revealing structures, frameworks, and dynamics that resist being subsumed by a positivist approaches to narrative.

This paper is not meant to offer a definitive reading of the Gospel of Judas, nor determine how Judas should be understood based on the text. Rather, my goal was to show possibilities of interpretation that rely upon different conversation partners, and how they can affect how we both relate to and understand the Gospel of Judas. It also highlights how indigenized hermeneutics embraces indeterminacy in interpretation as constitutive of Native storytelling and narrativizing, and how they might be another way of approaching ancient texts. Perhaps one could even postulate such ways of reading may be reflective of how ancient communities engaged with sacred texts—through indeterminacy rather than the establishment of community doctrines. Finally, this indigenized reading of Gospel of Judas offers a way of interpreting extracanonical literature in ways that can be relevant to modern contexts and audiences. By exploring how these texts do more than simply speak to historical

reconstructions of the early church period, we may be able to make such texts more accessible to contemporary lay audiences and communities of faith.

Appendix

THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS

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From *The Gospel of Judas*

Edited by Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst

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INTRODUCTION: INCIPIT

The secret account of the revelation that Jesus spoke in conversation with Judas Iscariot during a week three days before he celebrated Passover.

THE EARTHLY MINISTRY OF JESUS

When Jesus appeared on earth, he performed miracles and great wonders for the salvation of humanity. And since some [walked] in the way of righteousness while others walked in their transgressions, the twelve disciples were called.

He began to speak with them about the mysteries beyond the world and what would take place at the end. Often he did not appear to his disciples as himself, but he was found among them as a child.

SCENE 1: *Jesus dialogues with his disciples: The prayer of thanksgiving or the eucharist*

One day he was with his disciples in Judea, and he found them gathered together and seated in pious observance. When he [approached] his disciples, [34] gathered together and seated and offering a prayer of thanksgiving over the bread, [he] laughed.

The disciples said to [him], “Master, why are you laughing at [our] prayer of thanksgiving? We have done what is right.”

He answered and said to them, “I am not laughing at you. <You> are not doing this because of your own will but because it is through this that your god [will be] praised.”

They said, “Master, you are [...] the son of our god.”

Jesus said to them, “How do you know me? Truly [I] say to you, no generation of the people that are among you will know me.”

THE DISCIPLES BECOME ANGRY

When his disciples heard this, they started getting angry and infuriated and began blaspheming against him in their hearts.

When Jesus observed their lack of [understanding, he said] to them, “Why has this agitation led you to anger? Your god who is within you and [...] [35] have provoked you to anger [within] your souls. [Let] any one of you who is [strong enough] among human beings bring out the perfect human and stand before my face.”

They all said, “We have the strength.”

But their spirits did not dare to stand before [him], except for Judas Iscariot. He was able to stand before him, but he could not look him in the eyes, and he turned his face away.

Judas [said] to him, “I know who you are and where you have come from. You are from the immortal realm of Barbelo. And I am not worthy to utter the name of the one who has sent you.”

JESUS SPEAKS TO JUDAS PRIVATELY

Knowing that Judas was reflecting upon something that was exalted, Jesus said to him, “Step away from the others and I shall tell you the mysteries of the kingdom. It is possible for you to reach it, but you will grieve a great deal. [36] For someone else will replace you, in order that the twelve [disciples] may again come to completion with their god.”

Judas said to him, “When will you tell me these things, and [when] will the great day of light dawn for the generation?”

But when he said this, Jesus left him.

SCENE 2: *Jesus appears to the disciples again*

The next morning, after this happened, Jesus [appeared] to his disciples again.

They said to him, “Master, where did you go and what did you do when you left us?”

Jesus said to them, “I went to another great and holy generation.”

His disciples said to him, “Lord, what is the great generation that is superior to us and holier than us, that is not now in these realms?”

When Jesus heard this, he laughed and said to them, “Why are you thinking in your hearts about the strong and holy generation? [37] Truly [I] say to you, no one born [of] this aeon will see that [generation], and no host of angels of the stars will rule over that generation, and no person of mortal birth can associate with it, because that generation does not come from [...] which has become [...]. The generation of people among [you] is from the generation of humanity [...] power, which [...] the] other powers [...] by [which] you rule.”

When [his] disciples heard this, they each were troubled in spirit. They could not say a word.

Another day Jesus came up to [them]. They said to [him], “Master, we have seen you in a [vision], for we have had great [dreams ...] night [...]”

[He said], “Why have [you ... when] <you> have gone into hiding?” [38]

THE DISCIPLES SEE THE TEMPLE AND DISCUSS IT

They [said, “We have seen] a great [house with a large] altar [in it, and] twelve men—they are the priests, we would say—and a name; and a crowd of people is waiting at that altar, [until] the priests [... and receive] the offerings. [But] we kept waiting.”

[Jesus said], “What are [the priests] like?”

They [said, “Some ...] two weeks; [some] sacrifice their own children, others their wives, in praise [and] humility with each other; some sleep with men; some are involved in [slaughter]; some commit a multitude of sins and deeds of lawlessness. And the men who stand [before] the altar invoke your [name], [39] and in all the deeds of their deficiency, the sacrifices are brought to completion [...].”

After they said this, they were quiet, for they were troubled.

JESUS OFFERS AN ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE VISION OF THE TEMPLE

Jesus said to them, “Why are you troubled? Truly I say to you, all the priests who stand before that altar invoke my name. Again I say to you, my name has been written on this [...] of the generations of the stars through the human generations. [And they] have planted trees without fruit, in my name, in a shameful manner.”

Jesus said to them, “Those you have seen receiving the offerings at the altar—that is who you are. That is the god you serve, and you are those twelve men you have seen. The cattle you have seen brought for sacrifice are the many people you lead astray [40] before that altar. [...] will stand and make use of my name in this way, and generations of the pious will remain loyal to him. After hi another man will stand there from [the fornicators], and another [will] stand there from the slayers of children, and another from those who sleep with men, and those who abstain, and the rest of the people of pollution and lawlessness and error, and those who say, ‘We are like angels’; they are the stars that bring everything to its conclusion. For to the human generations it has been said, ‘Look, God has received your sacrifice from the hands of a priest’—that is, a minister of error. But it is the Lord, the Lord of the universe, who commands, ‘On the last day they will be put to shame.’” [41]

Jesus said [to them], “Stop sac[rificing ...] which you have [...] over the altar, since they are over your stars and your angels and have already come to their conclusion there. So let them be [ensnared] before you, and let them go [—about 15 lines missing—] generations [...]. A baker cannot feed all creation [42] under [heaven]. And [...] to them [...] and [...] to us and [...].

Jesus said to them, “Stop struggling with me. Each of you has his own star, and every[body—about 17 lines missing—] [43] in [...] who has come [... spring] for the tree [...] of this aeon [...] for a time [...] but he has come to water God’s paradise, and the [generation] that will last, because [he] will not defile the [walk of life of] that generation, but [...] for all eternity.”

JUDAS ASKS JESUS ABOUT THAT GENERATION AND HUMAN GENERATIONS

Judas said to [him, “Rabb]i, what kind of fruit does this generation produce?”

Jesus said, “The souls of every human generation will die. When these people, however, have completed the time of the kingdom and the spirit leaves them, their bodies will die but their souls will be alive, and they will be taken up.”

Judas said, “And what will the rest of the human generations do?”

Jesus said, “It is impossible [44] to sow seed on [rock] and harvest its fruit. [This] is also the way [...] the [defiled] generation [...] and corruptible Sophia [...] the hand that has created mortal people, so that their souls go up to the eternal realms above. [Truly] I say to you, [...] angel [...] power will be able to see that [...] these to whom [...] holy generations [...].”

After Jesus said this, he departed.

SCENE 3: *Judas recounts a vision and Jesus responds*

Judas said, “Master, as you have listened to all of them, now also listen to me. For I have seen a great vision.”

When Jesus heard this, he laughed and said to him, “You thirteenth spirit, why do you try so hard? But speak up, and I shall bear with you.”

Judas said to him, “In the vision I saw myself as the twelve disciples were stoning me and [45] persecuting [me severely]. And I also came to the place where [...] after you. I saw [a house ...], and my eyes could not [comprehend] its size. Great people were surrounding it, and that house <had> a roof of greenery, and in the middle of the house was [a crowd—two lines missing—], saying, ‘Master, take me in along with these people.’”

[Jesus] answered and said, “Judas, your star has led you astray.” He continued, “No person of mortal birth is worthy to enter the house you have seen, for that place is reserved for the holy. Neither the sun nor the moon will rule there, nor the day, but the holy will abide there always, in the eternal realm with the holy angels. Look, I have explained to you the mysteries of the kingdom [46] and I have taught you about the error of the stars; and [...] send it [...] on the twelve aeons.”

JUDAS ASKS ABOUT HIS OWN FATE

Judas said, “Master, could it be that my seed is under the control of the rulers?”

Jesus answered and said to him, “Come, that I [—two lines missing—], but that you will grieve much when you see the kingdom and all its generation.”

When he heard this, Judas said to him, “What good is it that I have received it? For you have set me apart for that generation.”

Jesus answered and said, “You will become the thirteenth, and you will be cursed by the other generations—and you will come to rule over them. In the last days they will curse your ascent [47] to the holy [generation].”

JESUS TEACHES JUDAS ABOUT COSMOLOGY: THE SPIRIT AND THE SELF-GENERATED

Jesus said, “[Come], that I may teach you about [secrets] no person [has] ever seen. For there exists a great and boundless realm, whose extent no generation of angels has seen, [in which] there is [a] great invisible [Spirit],

which no eye of an angel has ever seen, no thought of the heart has ever comprehended, and it was never called by any name.

“And a luminous cloud appeared there. He said, ‘Let an angel come into being as my attendant.’

“A great angel, the enlightened divine Self-Generated, emerged from the cloud. Because of him, four other angels came into being from another cloud, and they became attendants for the angelic Self-Generated. The Self-Generated said, [48] ‘Let [...] come into being [...],’ and it came into being [...]. And he [created] the first luminary to reign over him. He said, ‘Let angels come into being to serve [him],’ and myriads without number came into being. He said, ‘[Let] an enlightened aeon come into being,’ and he came into being. He created the second luminary [to] reign over him, together with myriads of angels without number, to offer service. That is how he created the rest of the enlightened aeons. He made them reign over them, and he created for them myriads of angels without number, to assist them.

ADAMAS AND THE LUMINARIES

“Adamas was in the first luminous cloud that no angel has ever seen among all those called ‘God.’ He [49] [...] that [...] the image [...] and after the likeness of [this] angel. He made the incorruptible [generation] of Seth appear [...] the twelve [...] the twentyfour [...]. He made seventy-two luminaries appear in the incorruptible generation, in accordance with the will of the Spirit. The seventy-two luminaries themselves made three hundred sixty luminaries appear in the incorruptible generation, in accordance with the will of the Spirit, that their number should be five for each.

“The twelve aeons of the twelve luminaries constitute their father, with six heavens for each aeon, so that there are seventy-two heavens for the seventy-two luminaries, and for each [50] [of them five] firmaments, [for a total of] three hundred sixty [firmaments ...]. They were given authority and a [great] host of angels [without number], for glory and adoration, [and after that also] virgin spirits, for glory and [adoration] of all the aeons and the heavens and their firmaments.

THE COSMOS, CHAOS, AND THE UNDERWORLD

“The multitude of those immortals is called the cosmos— that is, perdition—by the Father and the seventy-two luminaries who are with the Self-Generated and his seventytwo aeons. In him the first human appeared with his incorruptible powers. And the aeon that appeared with his generation, the aeon in whom are the cloud of knowledge and the angel, is called [51] El. [...] aeon [...] after that [...] said, ‘Let twelve angels come into being [to] rule over chaos and the [underworld].’ And look, from the cloud there appeared an [angel] whose face flashed with fire and whose appearance was defiled with blood. His name was Nebro, which means ‘rebel’; others call him Yaldabaoth. Another angel, Saklas, also came from the cloud. So Nebro created six angels—as well as Saklas—to be assistants, and these produced twelve angels in the heavens, with each one receiving a portion in the heavens.

THE RULERS AND ANGELS

“The twelve rulers spoke with the twelve angels: ‘Let each of you [52] [...] and let them [...] generation [—one line lost—] angels’:

The first is [S]eth, who is called Christ.

The [second] is Harmathoth, who is [...].

The [third] is Galila.

The fourth is Yobel.

The fifth [is] Adonaios.

These are the five who ruled over the underworld, and first of all over chaos.

THE CREATION OF HUMANITY

“Then Saklas said to his angels, ‘Let us create a human being after the likeness and after the image.’ They fashioned Adam and his wife Eve, who is called, in the cloud, Zoe. For by this name all the generations seek the man, and each of them calls the woman by these names. Now, Sakla did not [53] com[mand ...] except [...] the gene[rations ...] this [...]. And the [ruler] said to Adam, ‘You shall live long, with your children.’”

JUDAS ASKS ABOUT THE DESTINY OF ADAM AND HUMANITY

Judas said to Jesus, “[What] is the long duration of time that the human being will live?”

Jesus said, “Why are you wondering about this, that Adam, with his generation, has lived his span of life in the place where he has received his kingdom, with longevity with his ruler?”

Judas said to Jesus, “Does the human spirit die?”

Jesus said, “This is why God ordered Michael to give the spirits of people to them as a loan, so that they might offer service, but the Great One ordered Gabriel to grant spirits to the great generation with no ruler over it—that is, the spirit and the soul. Therefore, the [rest] of the souls [54] [—one line missing—].

JESUS DISCUSSES THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED WITH JUDAS AND OTHERS

“[...] light [—nearly two lines missing—] around [...] let [...] spirit [that is] within you dwell in this [flesh] among the generations of angels. But God caused knowledge to be [given] to Adam and those with him, so that the kings of chaos and the underworld might not lord it over them.”

Judas said to Jesus, “So what will those generations do?”

Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, for all of them the stars bring matters to completion. When Saklas completes the span of time assigned for him, their first star will appear with the generations, and they will finish what they said they would do. Then they will fornicate in my name and slay their children [55] and they will [...] and [—about six and a half lines missing—] my name, and he will [...] your star over the [thir]teenth aeon.” After that Jesus [laughed].

[Judas said], “Master, [why are you laughing at us]?”

[Jesus] answered [and said], “I am not laughing [at you] but at the error of the stars, because these six stars wander about with these five combatants, and they all will be destroyed along with their creatures.”

JESUS SPEAKS OF THOSE WHO ARE BAPTIZED, AND JUDAS’S BETRAYAL

Judas said to Jesus, “Look, what will those who have been baptized in your name do?”

Jesus said, “Truly I say [to you], this baptism [56] [...] my name [—about nine lines missing—] to me. Truly [I] say to you, Judas, [those who] offer sacrifices to Saklas [...] God [—three lines missing—] everything that is evil.

“But you will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me.

*Already your horn has been raised, your
wrath has been kindled, your star has
shown brightly, and your heart has [...].
[57]*

“Truly [...] your last [...] become [—about two and a half lines missing—], grieve [—about two lines missing—] the ruler, since he will be destroyed. And then the image of the great generation of Adam will be exalted, for prior to heaven, earth, and the angels, that generation, which is from the eternal realms, exists. Look, you have been told everything. Lift up your eyes and look at the cloud and the light within it and the stars surrounding it. The star that leads the way is your star.”

Judas lifted up his eyes and saw the luminous cloud, and he entered it. Those standing on the ground heard a voice coming from the cloud, saying, [58] [...] great generation [...] ... image [...] [—about five lines missing—].

CONCLUSION: JUDAS BETRAYS JESUS

[...] Their high priests murmured because [he] had gone into the guest room for his prayer. But some scribes were there watching carefully in order to arrest him during the prayer, for they were afraid of the people, since he was regarded by all as a prophet.

They approached Judas and said to him, “What are you doing here? You are Jesus’ disciple.” Judas answered them as they wished. And he received some money and handed him over to them.

THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS