

THE JUDAS GOAT

The Substitution Theory of the Crucifixion



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The Judas Goat: The Substitution Theory of the Crucifixion

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One of the central tenets of the theory put forth in the book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln, is that Jesus did not really die on the cross, but that the crucifixion was a hoax perpetrated by Jesus and his closest disciples, in order to fulfill scriptures prophesizing the death of the Jewish Messiah. The hypothesis presented was that Jesus was crucified, but was given a toxin to make him appear dead, so that he could be taken down from the cross early. This was provided as an explanation for the sightings of Christ after his death (the so-called "Resurrection"). If this scenario had indeed occurred, it would have made it possible for Jesus to live on with his wife and his children (his royal heirs), and to participate personally in the establishment of the early Christian movement. A clue implying that this did in fact occur can be found in one of the Stations of the Cross at the Church of St. Mary Magdalene in Rennes-le-Chateau, France, in which Jesus is shown being carried into the tomb at night, contrary to scripture. According to the theory, this station actually depicts Jesus' still-living body being removed from the tomb by his fellow conspirators.



Station of the Cross at Rennes-le-Chateau showing Jesus taken from the cross at sundown. Photo by Tracy R. Twyman

Mentioned in passing by the authors of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* is another version of this theory, one long held by Muslims and heretical Christian sects throughout the centuries. This theory posits that it was not Jesus but a substitute that died on the Cross. Apocryphal scriptures bear witness to the adherence of this belief. In the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, one of the Nag Hammadi scrolls, it states:

"I did not succumb to them as they had planned... And I did not die in reality but in appearance, lest I be put to shame by them ...For my death which they think happened [happened] to them in their error and blindness, since they nailed their man unto their death ... It was another, their father, who drank the gall and the vinegar; it was not I. They struck me with the reed; it was another, Simon, who bore the cross on his shoulder. It was another upon whom they placed the crown of thorns ... And I was laughing at their ignorance."

The Koran states something similar:

"...they did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them."

Also, according to *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, other Muslim writers describe Jesus as "hiding in a niche in a wall and watching the crucifixion of a surrogate." The authors of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* do not go on to speculate about who that substitute may have been, and seem to prefer the idea that Jesus, while crucified, was taken down from the cross alive, rather than that there was a surrogate. But Muslim and heretical Christian traditions whole-heartedly embrace the substitution story, and name the sacrificial victim as none other than Judas Iscariot, the most expendable, presumably, of all of Jesus' apostles. Some of the groups who have held this belief include the Manicheans and the Basilides. In addition, in the sixteenth century, something purporting itself as *The Gospel of Barnabas* was published. Most scholars summarily dismiss it as a "forgery." However, it does testify to the unusual beliefs that certain Muslim sects and Christian heretics held regarding the crucifixion. In this version of the story, after Judas had made the decision to betray Jesus, God sent angels to take Jesus "out of the world ... in the third heaven." Meanwhile, he transformed Judas' appearance into a likeness of Jesus, just as the soldiers arrived to arrest him. It states:

"When the soldiers with Judas drew near to the place where Jesus was, Jesus heard the approach of many people, wherefore in fear he withdrew into the house. And the eleven were sleeping. Then God, seeing the danger of his servant, commanded Gabriel; Michael; Rafael; and Uriel, his ministers, to take Jesus out of the world. The holy angels came and took Jesus out by the window that looks toward the South. They bare him and placed him in the third heaven in the company of angels blessing God for evermore. Judas entered impetuously before all into the chamber whence Jesus had been taken up. And the disciples were sleeping. Whereupon the wonderful God acted wonderfully, insomuch that Judas was so changed in speech and in face to be like Jesus that we believed him to be Jesus. And he, having awakened us, was seeking where the Master was. Whereupon we marvelled, and answered: You, Lord, are our master; have you now forgotten us?"

And he, smiling, said: Now are you foolish, that know not me to be Judas Iscariot! And as he was saying this the soldiery entered, and laid their hands upon Judas, because he was in every way like to Jesus. We having heard Judas' saying, and seeing the multitude of soldiers, fled as beside ourselves. And John, who was wrapped in a linen cloth, awoke and fled, and when a soldier seized him by the linen cloth he left the linen cloth and fled naked. For God heard the prayer of Jesus, and saved the eleven from evil."



Barnabas, purported author of heretical gospel

Once everyone had been tricked into believing that Judas was Jesus, the substitute was made to suffer every pain and humiliation that has traditionally been attributed to Jesus. All the while Judas protested, and proclaimed his true identity, but he was thought to be mad, and that only increased the suffering inflicted upon him:

"The soldiers took Judas; and bound him, not without derision. For he truthfully denied that he was Jesus; and the soldiers, mocking him, said: Sir, fear not, for we are come to make you king of Israel, and we have bound you because we know that you do refuse the kingdom. Judas answered: Now have you lost your senses! You are come to take Jesus of Nazareth, with arms and lanterns as [against] a robber; and you have bound me that have guided you, to make me king!

Then the soldiers lost their patience, and with blows and kicks they began to flout Judas, and they led him with fury into Jerusalem. John and Peter followed the soldiers afar off; and they affirmed to him who writes that they saw all the examination that was made of Judas by the high priest, and by the council of the Pharisees, who were assembled to put Jesus to death. Whereupon Judas spoke many words of madness, insomuch that every one was filled with laughter, believing that he was really Jesus, and that for fear of death he was feigning madness. Whereupon the scribes bound his eyes with a bandage, and mocking him said: Jesus, prophet of the Nazarenes; (for so they called them who believed in Jesus), tell us, who was it that smote you? And they buffeted him and spat in his face.

When it was morning there assembled the great council of scribes and elders of the people; and the high priest with the Pharisees sought false witness against Judas, believing him to be Jesus: and they found not that which they sought. And why say I that the chief priests believed Judas to be Jesus? No all the disciples, with him who writes, believed it; and more, the poor Virgin mother of Jesus, with his kinsfolk and friends, believed it, insomuch that the sorrow of every one was incredible.

As God lives, he who writes forgot all that Jesus had said: how that he should be taken up from the world, and that he should suffer in a third person, and that he should not die until near the end of the world."

The Gospel of Barnabas seems to imply that the sacrifice of a substitute on behalf of Jesus was in fact the true fulfillment of scripture regarding the Messiah, as it states:

"Wherefore he went with the mother of Jesus and with John to the cross. The high priest caused Judas to be brought before him bound, and asked him of his disciples and his doctrine. Whereupon Judas, as though beside himself, answered nothing to the point. The high priest then adjured him by the living God of Israel that he would tell him the truth. Judas answered: 'I have told you that I am Judas Iscariot, who promised to give into your hands Jesus the Nazarene; and you, by what I know not, are beside yourselves, for you will have it by every means that I am Jesus.' The high priest answered: 'O perverse seducer, you have deceived all Israel, beginning from Galilee even to Jerusalem here, with your doctrine and false miracles: and now think you to flee the merited punishment that befits you by feigning to be mad?"

As God lives, 'you shall not escape it!' And having said this he commanded his servants to smite him with buffetings and kicks, so that his understanding might come back into his head. The derision which he then suffered at the hands of the high priest's servants is past belief. For they zealously devised new inventions to give pleasure to the council. So they attired him as a juggler, and so treated him with hands and feet that it would have moved the very Canaanites to compassion if they had beheld that sight. But the chief priests and Pharisees and elders of the people had their hearts so exasperated against Jesus that, believing Judas to be really Jesus, they took delight in seeing him so treated."

Later, it states that crucifixion had been specifically chosen by God as the proper method of death for Judas:

"God, who had decreed the issue, reserved Judas for the cross, in order that he might suffer that horrible death to which he had sold another. He did not suffer Judas to die under the scourges, notwithstanding that the soldiers scourged him so grievously that his body rained blood."

As Judas protested, he made it clear that he believed himself to be innocent of wrongdoing, and believed that it was Jesus who was an outlaw and a sinner. He told them that Jesus was a magician, and had transformed Judas into his own likeness by his demonic powers. Just before he died upon the cross, Judas cried out a plea that demonstrates his belief in his own innocence:

"So they led him to Mount Calvary, where they used to hang malefactors, and there they crucified him naked, for the greater ignominy. Judas truly did nothing else but cry out: God, why have you forsaken me, seeing the malefactor has escaped and I die unjustly? Truly I say that the voice, the face, and the person of Judas were so like to Jesus, that his disciples and believers entirely believed that he was Jesus; wherefore some departed from the doctrine of Jesus, believing that Jesus had been a false prophet, and that by the art of magic he had done the miracles which he did: for Jesus had said that he should not die till near the end of the world; for that at that time he should be taken away from the world."

So in this version of the story, the crucifixion did not accomplish the salvation of man from sin through the sacrifice of God's only son, but the substitution of that sacrifice. And instead of gaining believers for Jesus' cause, the crucifixion actually lead to an initial loss of faith amongst his followers although, in the years to come, the notion of Christ's sacrifice on the cross would gain the Catholic Church nearly global hegemony. After his death, it was Judas' body, not Jesus', which was stolen away from the tomb by Christ's closest disciples. This is the scene depicted in the Station of the Cross in the church at Rennes-le-Chateau. *The Gospel of Barnabas* continues:

"But they that stood firm in the doctrine of Jesus were so encompassed with sorrow, seeing him die who was entirely like to Jesus, that they remembered not what Jesus had said. And so in company with the mother of Jesus they went to Mount Calvary, and were not only present at the death of Judas, weeping continually, but by means of Nicodemus and Joseph of Abarimathia; they obtained from the governor the body of Judas to bury it. Whereupon, they took him down from the cross with such weeping as assuredly no one would believe, and buried him in the new sepulchre of Joseph; having wrapped him up in an hundred pounds of precious ointments."

It is easy to see why this "Gospel" was embraced by Islamic sects. In it Jesus is portrayed as a holy man, but as mortal, not the "Son of God", and the coming of the Prophet Muhammad is predicted:

"And though I have been innocent in the world, since men have called me God, and Son of God, God, in order that I be not mocked of the demons on the day of judgment, has willed that I be mocked of men in this world by the death of Judas; making all men to believe that I died upon the cross. And this mocking shall continue until the advent of Muhammad, the Messenger of God, who, when he shall come, shall reveal this deception to those who believe in God's Law."

One of the many criticisms made by Jewish scholars against the theology of Christianity is that the symbolism of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is an apparent confusion of two totally separate Judaic rituals. As Jesus purportedly died on Passover, and as he repeatedly is referred to in the New Testament as the "Paschal Lamb", it is easy to associate Jesus' sacrifice with the symbolism of Passover. Yet according to Louis Ginzberg's *The Legends of the Jews, Volume II*, the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb represents the covenant made between God and the Israelites, in which they agreed to abandon the idol worship the Egyptians had taught them in favor of the sole worship of God. As Ginzberg writes:

"Unto this purpose He commanded them to sacrifice the paschal lamb. Thus they were to show that they had given up the idolatry of the Egyptians, consisting in the worship of the Ram."

The metaphor implied by this is quite different from that of the sin-offering on the day of atonement (Yom Kippur), with which Jesus is also repeatedly connected in the Bible.¹ More specifically, two goats are sacrificed on Yom Kippur for this purpose. The ritual is first described in *Leviticus 16*:

"And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive

before the Lord, to make atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness ...Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil ...and sprinkle it upon the Mercy Seat...

...And Aaron shall lay both hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited..."



Sending out the Scapegoat by William James Webb

It is clear that, while still identifying himself with the Paschal Lamb, Jesus was drawing a connection between his death and the Yom Kippur ritual as well. It is ambiguous, however, whether he identified himself more with the sin-offering, or with the scapegoat. According to some theologians, he was both. As Suzetta Tucker writes on her website, "The Bestiary":

"These goats were symbolic of the two aspects of Christ's crucifixion. The slain goat prefigured the death of Christ upon the cross to make atonement for sins. The scapegoat represented His taking the guilt of the sins of the world upon His own head and carrying it

*away from His people into the wilderness of Hades."*²



***The Scapegoat* by William Holman Hunt**

So although there exists in the crucifixion story a blending of ancient Judaic symbolism, it is a blending of symbols that already bore many connections. One of the most obvious connections between the sacrifices of Yom Kippur and Passover can be found in the figure of Azazel, a demonic being to the Israelites (and a god to nearly *The Book of Enoch* as being the leader of the rebellious Watchers, the "fallen angels" of Judeo-Christianity. After his fall from Heaven, Azazel apparently became, in Judeo-Christian lore, judge of dead sinners in Hell, and it was to him that the scapegoats were sacrificed. Alternate translations of *Leviticus 16:8* state that God told Aaron to "place lots upon the two goats, one marked for the Lord, and the other marked for Azazel." Thus Azazel is identified as both the recipient of the sacrificed scapegoat, and the scapegoat himself.



The demon Azazel taking the Goat of Atonement as a sin offering

Indeed, Azazel was said to have been horned, and thus was identified with the goat. This deity is identical with that of Amon (or Ammon), the ram which was worshipped by the Egyptians, and which is symbolized by the Paschal Lamb. Amon, or Azazel, is also the "Goat of Mendes" upon which Baphomet, the idol worshipped by the Knights Templar, was based, as is the modern conception of Satan. In *The Satanic Bible*, Anton LaVey writes of "The Symbol of Baphomet" that:

"Through the Ages this symbol has been called by many different names. Among these are: The Goat of Mendes, The Goat of a Thousand Young, The Black Goat, The Judas Goat, and perhaps most appropriately, the Scapegoat."



The Symbol of Baphomet

It is noteworthy that the term "Judas Goat" refers to a technique used on livestock farms in which one animal is used as a decoy to lead all of the other animals to the slaughterhouse.



Levi's depiction of Baphomet with a flame shooting from the forehead

The scapegoat ritual is thought of as a uniquely Judaic ritual, and yet it is most likely that a similar ritual was practiced by the Israelites and neighboring tribes long before it was recorded in *Leviticus*. There is an interesting article which can be found on lost-civilizations.net, named "The Horse Sacrifice", which seems to link the scapegoat sacrifice to an even earlier ritual. This ritual was practiced in the ancient Indus Valley, and featured the dual sacrifice of a horse and a goat. According to the article, this ritual was a remnant of a rite originating in the lost continent of Atlantis, and it was performed when a king wished to declare himself the "Universal Monarch." Thus by performing the ritual, the king was declaring war on anyone who opposed his absolute rule.³ The two sacrifices, according to the article, represented the two mythological brothers whose feud over universal kingship led to the war that, the article claims, caused the downfall of Atlantis - the origin of the Cain and Abel archetype. Further layers of meaning link these two sacrifices to the risen and fallen Sun, or Atlantis sunken and arisen. The article states that some traditions regarded the two brothers as twins. In a subchapter called "The Origin of the Cross", it states:

"Both sacrificial victims of the ashvamedha the horse and the goat were killed, impaled and roasted. Then the worshippers ate communally their roasted meat and the broth prepared from their remains. Before their sacrifice, the victims were tied to the sacrificial pole, called skambha or stambha or, yet, stavara. The skambha (lit. 'prop,' 'pillar') was considered the

Pillar of Heaven, the axis or support of the skies. It was identified with Brahma and with Shiva, the two world-supporters, as well as with Purusha, the Primordial Sacrifice. The skambha had the shape of a cross or, also, of a Y, precisely that of the Cross or Rood. Like the Cross, it was equated both to the Pillar of Heaven and to the Tree of Life. Many authorities, such as F. Max Mueller, have pointed out the fact that the name of the Cross in the original Greek is stauros, and that this word derives from the Sanskrit stavara (pronounced 'stawara'), its Hindu archetype in the ashvamedha sacrifice.

Of course, all such coincidences are the result of diffusion, and we see how the Evangelic notion was derived from Hindu archetypes. This is further rendered plausible by the fact that, in the earliest iconographies, the crucified Christ had a horse's head..."⁴



Early Christian graffiti in Rome, showing the crucified Christ with a horse head

This brings us to yet another interesting piece of heretical Christian thought that has been widely circulated amongst esoteric circles: the idea that Jesus had a twin. The notion appears in the work of Leonardo da Vinci, who placed a second Jesus figure amongst the apostles in his *Last Supper*. Although it is well-known by religious scholars that Jesus had both brothers and sisters, only one figure in the Bible is thought to have possibly been Jesus' own twin: the apostle Thomas.

One of the most obvious clues pointing to this possibility is that the name "Thomas" itself means "Twin." Furthermore, this apostle was referred to more than once as "Thomas Didymus," or "Thomas called 'Didymus.'" The word "Didymus" also means "twin" in Greek.

Like many of the apostles, it is hard to get a clear picture of Thomas from reading the canonical gospels. But everything that is known of him is peculiar. The story of the raising of Lazarus has been thought by some scholars to be a veiled description of an initiation rite for a secret society. It appears that Jesus was the Grand Master of this secret society, and that the death and resurrection of Lazarus was part of his initiation into the cult. The tale told in *The Gospel of John* is more indicative of this than all the other accounts, and in this version, upon being told that Lazarus is dead, Thomas declares, strangely, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Later on in the story, as Jesus prepares his apostles for his own (supposed) death, Thomas says to him, "Lord, we know not wither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Jesus replies, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

Thomas' final appearance in the Gospels occurs after the resurrection. For some reason, Thomas was not among them when Jesus made his first resurrected appearance to the apostles. When told about the Lord's appearance,

Thomas does not believe it at first, until Jesus appears to him personally. It was this incident that earned this apostle the moniker "Doubting Thomas."

This is essentially all that the canonical gospels have to say about Thomas Didymus. But where the canonical story leaves off, the apocryphal story begins. These texts are very clear that indeed Thomas was Jesus' twin. In *The Acts of Thomas*, a young man's vision of Jesus is described:

"... he saw the Lord Jesus in the likeness of the Apostle Judas Thomas ... the Lord said to him: I am not Judas who is also Thomas. I am his brother."

Elsewhere in *The Acts of Thomas*, Thomas is described as, "Twin brother of Christ, apostle of the Most High, and fellow initiate into the hidden word of Christ, who dost receive his secret sayings..." This notion is reiterated once again in a Coptic text quoted in Baigent, et. al.'s *The Messianic Legacy* (sequel to *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*), where Jesus says, "Greetings Thomas [Twin], my second Messiah."

This idea of Thomas as a twin messiah appears to have been embraced by many of the early Christian groups. There was a Syrian sect called the "Christians of St. Thomas", and similar sects throughout the Middle and Far East. This is largely because Thomas is believed to have traveled throughout the East spreading the gospel after Jesus' death, and his supposed tomb can be found in India. Several of these sects believed that he was literally Jesus' twin brother. Many people were already receptive to this idea, because the archetype of twin gods or sons of God is one that can be found in the legends of many cultures throughout the world. In Edessa, Turkey, where *The Acts of Thomas* were written, the worship of the twin gods Momim and Aziz was replaced seamlessly by that of Thomas and Jesus.

In the *Dagobert's Revenge* article "Tammuz the Twin: The Beloved Disciple," author Thomas LaNeave picks up on the idea that Thomas, as Jesus' twin, acted as his *substitute* after his death. Noting that "Tammuz" means "twin-born," LaNeave relates the symbolism of St. Thomas the Twin to that of the Semitic sun-god Tammuz, whose tale of death and rebirth as the "twin-born son of the Sun" resembles in many ways the legend of Christ. LaNeave further notes that Passover, the date of Christ's Passion, takes place in the Jewish month of Tammuz. He comments upon the implication that in this case, "Passover" may have referred to the "passing over" of the royal messianic inheritance from Jesus to Thomas. He writes of the recurring theme of the "royal substitute" that can be found throughout the Bible, in which the divine royal inheritance is passed on to a substitute when the true heir cannot perform his royal function. The same "substitute" concept is employed when the death or sacrifice of one thing is substituted for the sacrifice of another, as in the scapegoat ritual, or as in the first Passover, when the blood of lambs was used as a substitute for the blood of the first-born of Israel, so that they would be "passed-over" when God's plague swept the land of Egypt.



Tammuz

So if Thomas was Jesus' royal substitute, one of the obvious questions that springs to mind is, "Could Thomas have been used as a substitute for Jesus on the cross?" The proposition becomes even more tantalizing when we learn from both *The Acts of Thomas* and the apocryphal *Gospel of Thomas* that this disciple's full name was "Judas Thomas." Indeed, a person by the name of "Jude," "Judas," or "Jude the Twin" is repeatedly named in the canonical gospels as being one of Christ's biological brothers, and it seems pretty clear that he and Thomas are the same. It also seems hardly coincidental that another Judas, labeled "Iscariot", is named by *The Gospel of Barnabas* as having been crucified in Jesus' place, and as having an identical likeness as Jesus, like a twin.

The Gospel of Thomas is one of the most treasured of the so-called "Gnostic" texts. Purely an initiation document, every line of this gospel is written in code, concealing the spiritual secrets of alchemy, with an emphasis on "making the two become one." This is interesting if considered in the light of the notion that Jesus had a twin, but that only one of them was remembered. Something very specific seems to be hinted at in these lines:

"Jesus said to His disciples, Compare me to someone and tell Me whom I am like. Simon Peter said to Him, You are like a righteous angel. Matthew said to Him, You are like a wise philosopher. Thomas said to Him, Master, my mouth is wholly incapable of saying whom You are like."

Perhaps Thomas' reply to Jesus' question, "tell me whom I am like," is a hint that it was Thomas himself whom he was like, because they were twins.

But could Christ have made his own twin brother die in his place? There is no doubt that Jesus did not really want to die on the cross. And from what we know of him, it would seem that he had every reason to live. The picture of Jesus which is emerging from contemporary scholarship is that of a wealthy man with a legitimate claim to both the royal throne and the high priesthood of Israel, who was married to a woman with her own royal qualifications, most likely with a royal heir either already born or in utero by the time of his supposed death. He had a strong and powerful family, friends and supporters all over Israel, many of them fanatical devotees. All evidence indicates that he knew his movement was destined for greatness. The backlash from Rome, and from

the elders of Jerusalem, undoubtedly boosted his morale, for he knew that he must have really been touching a nerve to be perceived as such a threat. He may have seen his arrest, trial, and execution as being inevitable, however, and may have foreseen the value of letting the opposition, as well as the fanatical public, believe that he had been executed. Thus he may have conceived of the "Passover Plot" written of in the best-selling book of the same title by Hugh Schonfield. Jesus would play the part of the dying and resurrected messiah fulfilling Old Testament Judaic prophecies while appealing to the mystical sensibilities of Greeks, Romans, and Hellenistic Jews, by blending his messianic mythos with that of the pagan sun-gods. But in order to stage a death and resurrection (barring the miraculous, of course), Jesus would have to use his twin brother, Judas Thomas. Furthermore, they would have to make a choice. One brother would have to die, while the other lived on, perpetuating the throne, the priesthood, and the messianic fantasy.

In the canonical gospels, as Jesus nears the moment of his arrest, he continually prays to God that "this cup may pass away from me" -- that he might be spared the cross. Thomas, on the other hand, declared in *The Gospel of John* his willingness to die with Lazarus. Might he not be even more excited about the idea of dying in the place of the Messiah in fact fulfilling one of the main roles of the Messiah himself? Could this explain Jesus' declaration in *The Gospel of Thomas*, stating that Thomas had "become intoxicated with the bubbling spring which I have measured out?" If Thomas had been enlisted to die in his place willingly, he would have been forbidden to tell the other disciples. Perhaps this is what is hinted at in *The Gospel of Thomas* where it says:

"And He took him and withdrew and told him three things. When Thomas returned to his companions, they asked him, What did Jesus say to you? Thomas said to them, If I tell you one of the things which he told me, you will pick up stones and throw them at me; a fire will come out of the stones and burn you up."

Is it possible that Judas Thomas, the messiah's supposed twin, is the same as Judas Iscariot, the man who supposedly died in his place? The story told in *The Gospel of Barnabas* is one of treachery and trickery, not of a willing human sacrifice dying for his cause. Perhaps Judas was under the impression that Jesus would be the one to die, and that it would be his job to play the resurrected Jesus after his death. Perhaps he believed that the death would be faked -- that he would be revived again after his body had hung on the cross, and had been placed in the tomb for show. Or perhaps both Judas and Jesus were secretly plotting to betray one another, and it was Jesus whose trickery won the day over that of his brother. Certainly there are many reasons why Jesus and Judas, like many mythological twin gods before them, might have had a long-standing sibling rivalry. For any child, sharing with a brother or sister, especially a twin, has always been a bit annoying. But imagine what it must be like for twins to be born into a royal, priestly, or even divine inheritance. According to Jewish custom, the twin who emerges from the womb first is the first-born heir, entitled to all the rights and privileges thereof. There is more than one story in Jewish legend in which such a scenario is related. Invariably, one twin pokes his arm out of the womb, and the midwife ties a string around the infant's wrist to mark him as the firstborn. But then the arm gets sucked back up into the womb, and the other twin's body pops out in full, making him the first-born. The child grows up expecting to be the heir, but all along the twin brother knows that he has been cheated, and plots revenge.

Even if such an instance had not occurred in the birth of Jesus and Judas, it is easy to see how Judas, consumed with jealousy and resentment, could have imagined that it had. Either way, the knowledge that the order in which the twins had emerged from the birth canal was the only thing that barred him from the kingship of Israel must have eaten away at Judas Thomas. Perhaps Jesus sensed that Judas was plotting to betray him, and concocted a way to neutralize his enemy with maximum benefit to the cause. There would even be a secret symbolism of

sacrifice known only to those who were in on the plot -- one having to do with the dual goat sacrifice of Yom Kippur. The twin (Judas) who hung upon the cross could act as the atoning sin sacrifice, providing the salvation of man from the punishment of sin. The one who fled into hiding to secretly spread the ministry of Christ to the "wilderness" outside Israel would act as the scapegoat, taking the weight of the people's sins onto himself and away from them, just as Jesus declares himself to be doing in the gospels. This may explain the many sightings of Jesus both in and outside of Israel after the crucifixion, as well as the sightings of Thomas, since Jesus may have used his brother's name in certain instances.

Many people will not believe that Judas Iscariot and Judas Thomas could possibly have been the same person. The general consensus is that they are not, and in fact, many lines in the gospels go to great lengths to maintain this. In *Matthew*, both a "Thomas" and a "Judas Iscariot" are listed among the twelve apostles, as is the case in *Mark*. *Luke* lists both "Thomas" and "Judas, the brother of James," *as well as* "Judas Iscariot, which was also the traitor."⁵ *John* does not definitively list the apostles, but he refers separately to "Thomas" and to "Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon." Also, during a discussion with his apostles in *John 14*, Thomas is quoted as saying, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" A few lines later in the chapter, it reads:

"Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?"

While it is possible that John wanted us to see this person as Judas Thomas, he was also quite clearly trying to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot.

But is this just a cover story? Biblical scholarship is full of disagreements about whether or not certain gospel characters described and/or named differently in separate instances are in fact the same. For instance, opinion is divided over whether or not Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany were the same. Such disagreements did not begin with modern scholarship, but are exhibited by the authors of the scriptures themselves. And if the scenario hypothesized in this article were in fact true, one would expect most if not all of these scriptures, both canonical and apocryphal, to be full of disinformation and carefully hidden clues regarding the subject (discernable only to the initiated). You would also expect opinions by even the first-hand witnesses of the crucifixion to be varied, as probably none but Jesus and Judas themselves knew the full story. It cannot be ruled out at all that Judas Thomas and Judas Iscariot were the same figure. Certainly Judas Iscariot seems to be one of the most misunderstood figures in the entire saga of Jesus.

Much of what we know of Judas comes from *The Gospel of John*, which is the only one to identify him as the treasurer for Christ's ministry, although it does not say what he did *before* he joined the ministry. And John's is the only gospel to identify Judas as the "son of Simon" -- the only indication we have of who his family was. "Iscariot," according to many scholars, supposedly means "of Kerioth", a town in the land of Judah. But others claim that "Iscariot" is a corruption of "Sicarius," a word identifying him as a member of the radical Zealot movement, which pushed for Israelite independence from Rome. It is thought that Christ and his family were involved in this same movement. It has also been noted that almost every mention in the gospels of Judas Iscariot is accompanied by a reference to his betrayal. Both *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* refer to him as "Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him." Every description of Judas in the New Testament is so overwhelmingly negative that Judas seems to embody a sort of Antichrist archetype. Indeed, even Jesus himself identified Judas as an incarnation of Satan. In *John 6:70*, Jesus is quoted as saying to his apostles, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" John continues: "He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon: for it was he that should betray him, being one of the twelve." The authors of *The Messianic Legacy* make further mention of this aspect

of Judas Iscariot as Christ's antithesis:

"Symbolically speaking, Judas is the evil brother, the dark side of which Jesus is the light. In Judaeo-Christian tradition, the antithesis between them is another manifestation of the conflict dating back to Cain and Abel ... If Jesus ... becomes synonymous with God, Judas -- dragging the Jews in general with him -- becomes the very embodiment of God's adversary."

But why did Judas betray Jesus? And if Judas hated Jesus so much from the very beginning, why did Jesus choose to keep him on as an apostle? The reason for Judas' betrayal becomes clear if we accept that he and Judas Thomas are the same, and that he is Jesus' twin brother -- a true contender for the messiahship in his own right. In *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *John*, there is an incident that precedes (and in *Matthew* and *Mark*, immediately precedes) Judas' betrayal. It is the anointment of Jesus with spikenard by a woman with an alabaster jar -- a woman identifiable with Mary Magdalene when all of the accounts are compared. This event has been long recognized by biblical scholars as a *royal* anointing of Christ as king and messiah, since spikenard was traditionally used for this purpose, and since Magdalene was not only the wife of Christ, but a scion of the tribe of Benjamin -- a tribe assigned the task of anointing Israel's kings. If Judas believed that he was the rightful messiah, or at least the rightful co-messiah, this act would have enraged him, as it constituted a complete denial of his rights in favor of Jesus as the sole king. The gospels describe exactly this. *John 12: 4-6* says:

"Then one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, he that was about to betray him, said: Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? Now he said this, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the purse, carried the things that were put therein."

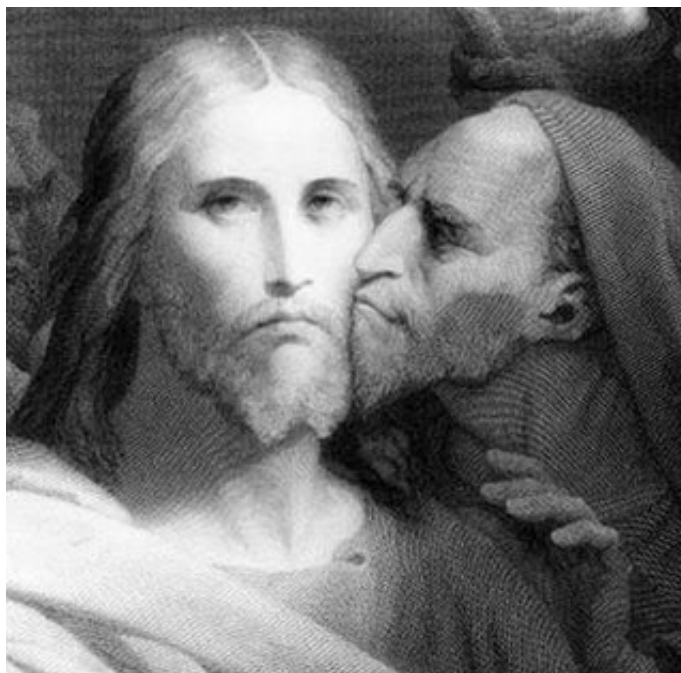
The other reason given for Judas' betrayal is more metaphysical. The gospels tell us that Judas was possessed by a demon! Moreover, they say that it was Jesus himself who infected Judas with that demon. This may be connected to a belief amongst Jesus' contemporaries that he and John the Baptist were both sorcerers, and that John had been in control of a demon, the control of which passed to Jesus upon John's death. He may have passed this demon on to Judas after programming it to have Judas "betray" him to the Sanhedrin. Jesus foretells his betrayal numerous times throughout the gospels, and finally, at the Last Supper, he actually identifies his betrayer. In *John* we read:

"When Jesus had said these things, he was troubled in spirit; and he testified, and said: Amen, amen I say to you, one of you shall betray me ... He it is to whom I shall reach bread dipped. And when he had dipped the bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the morsel, Satan entered into him. And Jesus said to him: That which thou dost, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew to what purpose he said this unto him. For some thought, because Judas had the purse, that Jesus said to him: Buy those things which we have need of for the festival day: or that he should give something to the poor."

The fact that Jesus predicts Judas' betrayal, and that Judas does not seem surprised at the accusation, is telling. So too is the fact that Jesus makes no attempt to stop him from doing this, but instead tells him to hurry up and get it over with. And later that night, when Judas arrives with the Roman guards to arrest him, Jesus is fully aware of what is about to befall him. He allows Judas to come up and identify him to the Romans by kissing him on the cheek, saying "Hail Rabbi." Jesus plays his part accordingly, replying, "Judas, betrayest thou the son of Man with a kiss?" More than that, Jesus is shown as actually rushing out with his disciples to meet Judas and the Roman guards. In *Matthew*, he wakes his sleeping apostles just before Judas' arrival and says, "Rise, let us be going:

behold, he is at hand that doth betray me." Thus, many scholars believe that the entire "betrayal" scenario was concocted, rehearsed, and enacted in collusion between Jesus and Judas. *The Messianic Legacy* states:

"It is not that Judas is actually betraying Jesus. On the contrary, he has been deliberately selected by Jesus, probably to his own chagrin, to discharge a distasteful duty so that the drama of the Passion may enact itself in accordance with Old Testament prophecy. When Jesus proffers the dipped morsel, he is in fact imposing a task upon Judas ... In short, the whole business has been carefully planned, even though the other disciples seem not to have been privy to the arrangement. Judas alone seems to have enjoyed Jesus' confidence in the matter."

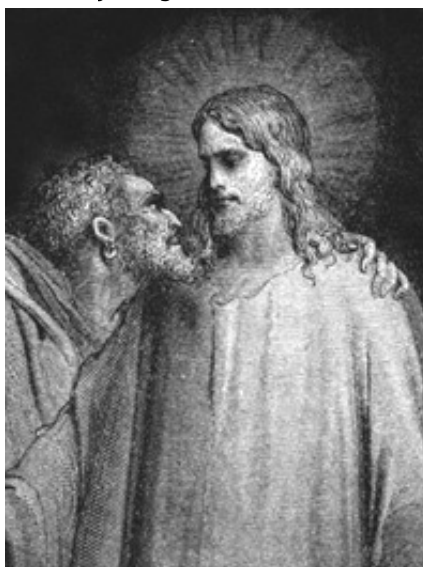


Judas kissing Jesus

Seen in this light, Judas appears as someone to be admired rather than demonized:

"Commentators on the New Testament have long recognized how vital, how indispensable, Judas is to the entire mission of Jesus. Without Judas, the drama of the Passion cannot be enacted. As a result, Judas must have been seen as something very different from the scurrilous villain of popular tradition. He emerges as precisely the opposite -- a noble and tragic figure, reluctantly consenting to play an unpleasant, painful, and obligatory role in a carefully pre-arranged script. As Jesus says of him: 'I have watched over them and not one is lost except the one who chose to be lost, and this was to fulfill the scriptures.'"

It is in this view that certain heretical Christian groups have seen Judas throughout the years. One such group, interestingly called "the Cainites," are said by chronicler St. Irenaeus to have possessed a *Gospel of Judas*, extolling the betrayer's virtues as a critical player in the redemption of mankind. This "gospel," if it ever really existed, has been lost. **(UPDATE: It was discovered and translated into English in 2006.)**



The Kiss of Judas by Gustave Dore

But the canonical gospels make it clear that Judas was not blessed, but cursed by Jesus for his actions -- quite literally. *Matthew 26:24* states: "The son of Man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the son of Man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born." Almost identical lines can be found in *Mark* and *Luke*. In *John 13:11* it says, "For he knew who should betray him; therefore he said, Ye are not all clean." Later, in *John 19:11*, as the manner of Jesus' death is being decided, Jesus says to Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." Clearly, even though Jesus may have seen Judas' betrayal coming, and may have concocted a master plan that included this betrayal as its lynch-pin, Jesus still hated Judas, and not only wished to see him dead, but to see him die in the worst way possible, and to be cursed because of it. For from the perspective of pre-Christian Judaism, to die upon a cross brought no salvation or redemption, but only malediction. Crucifixion is an old practice, and while the Romans perfected the art by erecting crosses, it had been practiced in ancient times by simply nailing the afflicted to a tree. In fact, mythological figures in both Norse and Greek legends have been martyred in this way, prefiguring the story of Christ. But in Judaic mythology, such a death was not seen as martyrdom. *Deuteronomy 21:22-23* states:

"And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree; His body shall not remain all night up on the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed by God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."

Knowing the scriptures as he did, it is unlikely that Jesus would have chosen this cursed manner of death for himself, even if he had been seeking martyrdom. He may, however, have reserved this manner of death for his greatest enemy, the betrayer. If this were the case, there would have had to have been co-conspirators in on it as well. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who both sat on the Sanhedrin, are two likely suspects. They could have arranged to have Judas arrested in secret just after Jesus' arrest, and done the switch at any point while they were incarcerated. Then Jesus would have been sent away, according to the arrangement, and Judas would die in his place.

The image of Judas Iscariot hanging from a tree has mutated into a peculiar icon familiar to all Western occultists. I am speaking of the tarot trump common to most decks called "The Hanged Man." It usually shows a court

jester figure hanging upside-down by one foot. Although this figure has been connected to that of the Grail hero Parzival by some who study the tarot, the Hanged Man was originally depicted holding a money bag in his hand, connecting him to Judas Iscariot.



The Hanged Man tarot card

However, it seems that this image has an even more ancient origin. It can be traced back to the Jewish legend of the Watchers: angels who purportedly descended from Heaven and mated with human women to breed a race of giants. This race was seen as an abomination by God, who did not approve of the miscegenation between angels and men. He also did not approve of them teaching their human descendants certain secrets, including sciences and sorcery. God thus decided to flood the Earth, to rid it of this hybrid race. He also decided to punish the angels who had fathered this race by imprisoning them within the center of the Earth.

Now the legends state that these Watchers had been led to sin by two angels in particular: Shemhazai and Azazel. And while Shemhazai seems to have taken the lead by persuading his fellow Watchers to marry human women, Azazel seems to have taken the lead in teaching secrets to mankind. And apparently, this was the greater sin, for Azazel became the scapegoat of the Watchers, receiving the bulk of the damnation that God placed upon them. God is quoted in *The Book of Enoch* as saying:

"All the earth has been corrupted by the teaching of the work of Azazyel. To him therefore ascribe the whole crime."

So Azazel took the blame on behalf of the Watchers for the sins that they all had committed. However, he is not said to have been particularly repentant. Shemhazai, however, repented greatly. As Louis Ginzberg's *The Legends of the Jews, Volume 1* tells us:

"Shemhazai then did penance. He suspended himself between heaven and earth, and in this position of a penitent sinner he hangs to this day. But Azazel persisted obdurately in his sin of leading mankind astray by means of sensual allurements. For this reason two he-goats were sacrificed in the Temple on the Day of Atonement, the one for God, that He pardon the sins

of Israel, the other for Azazel, that he bear the sins of Israel."



Shemhazai hanging upside-down, as depicted at Rosslyn, Chapel, Scotland. Photo by Tracy R. Twyman

So it does indeed seem that Shemhazai, Azazel's partner in crime, can be equated specifically with the goat of atonement sacrificed on Yom Kippur, just as Azazel can be equated with the scapegoat. And Shemhazai has been depicted in religious iconography, just like the Hanged Man, as hanging upside-down by a rope, in this case one that is suspended from Heaven.⁶ Thus the figure of Shemhazai and the goat of atonement can be connected to the image of Judas Iscariot.

Although it is a popular belief that Judas hanged himself after betraying Jesus, having been consumed with guilt, only one gospel, that of Matthew, specifically mentions this. *Mark* and *Luke* refer to the apostles as "the eleven" instead of "the twelve" after Jesus' execution, but that only indicates that Judas was no longer a member of their party, as one would expect. It does not necessarily mean that he was dead, much less that he had committed suicide. The only other scripture that verifies this story is found in the speech of St. Peter quoted in *Acts 1:16-20*:

"Men, brethren, the scripture must needs be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was the leader of them that apprehended Jesus: who was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. And he indeed hath possessed a field of the reward of iniquity, and being hanged, burst asunder in the midst: and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem: so that the same field was called in their tongue, Haceldama, that is to say, the field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms: Let their habitation become desolate, and let there be none to dwell therein. And his bishopric let another take."

This "field of blood" of which Peter speaks is discussed in *Matthew* as well, although the story varies significantly. But to understand this, we must first review the significance of the thirty pieces of silver. All of the

gospels agree that Judas sought out and received payment from the Sanhedrin in exchange for his betrayal, but only *Matthew* specifies the amount paid: thirty pieces of silver. But after Jesus' trial, Judas regrets his deeds:

"Then Judas, who betrayed him, seeing that he was condemned, repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and ancients, saying: I have sinned in betraying innocent blood. But they said: What is that to us? Look thou to it. And casting down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed: and went and hanged himself with an halter."

In the story told by St. Peter, it is implied that Judas bought the field with the thirty pieces of silver, and it became known as the "field of blood" because he died upon it. But in *Matthew*, the field is bought by the priests, after Judas had given the money back to them and hanged himself. In *Matthew 27: 6-10*, we read:

"And the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me."



5th century depiction of deaths of Judas and Jesus

So in this version, it is called the "field of blood" because it was purchased with the money that was paid for Jesus' life. Thus the field and the silver are forever linked as part of the same symbol and metaphor. But what could this metaphor be pointing to?

All the portrayals of Judas and his thirty pieces of silver show them being carried in a small purse. Thus, when Judas is shown in films and plays casting the silver onto the floor of the temple, he is invariably shown throwing the entire bag to the ground, Judas' association with a purse full of money is an integral part of his image. As I have already stated, *The Gospel of John* asserts that Judas was the purse-bearer of the apostles. The consistent

message about Judas' character is that of a greedy person obsessed more with money than with the kingdom of God.



Judas taking the 30 pieces of silver

With this in mind, new light can be shed on a mysterious bas relief that can be found at the back of the famous Church of Mary Magdalene at Rennes-le-Chateau, France. It depicts Jesus making his "Sermon on the Mount." But strangely, at the bottom of the hill he stands on is a little money bag, out of which an object, long presumed to be gold, protrudes. Nobody has ever satisfactorily explained the presence of this money bag on this bas relief. Most of those who have commented on it have claimed it to be a clue left by the church's abbot, Berenger Sauniere, regarding a buried treasure he supposedly found on the church grounds. But it would seem now that this must certainly be Judas' purse. And why is it placed in such a peculiar spot? Judas himself is not even depicted in the relief. But the church confessional is positioned directly under this mural, and a wooden crucifix is set on top, so that, when viewed from a few feet away, the crucifix and the money bag appear to stand right next to one another. Was Sauniere hinting at his belief that it was Judas, not Christ, who hung on the cross? If so, why is the purse shown at the bottom of a hill covered with flowers?



The Sermon on the Mount relief above the confessional at the church at Rennes-le-Chateau. Photo by Tracy R. Twyman

A prevailing theory about the treasure Berenger Sauniere supposedly found in or near his church is that is somehow constituted "incontrovertible proof" that Jesus did not die on the cross, and many think that this proof consists of Jesus' own remains, entombed not in Jerusalem, but in Southern France. Yet if Judas had died in Jerusalem in the place of Jesus, where was he buried? The most obvious answer is what *Acts* and *The Gospel of Matthew* seem to be hinting at: the potter's field, the "field of blood." After all, it is specifically stated in *Matthew* that this field was used for the "burial of strangers." In other words, it is a field of unmarked graves. If the secret of the crucifixion of Judas were to be kept, Judas' grave would have to go unmarked. Perhaps the hill covered with flowers in Sauniere's bas relief represents Judas' grave. If so, then by showing Jesus preaching atop this hill, he is showing that Christ's ministry is built upon the sacrifice of Judas. By placing this directly above the confessional, Sauniere may have been *confessing* his knowledge of this secret.

Yet in order to pull off the "Passover Plot" as I have envisioned it, the plotters would have to have first entombed Judas as though he were Jesus, in the tomb reserved for him by Joseph of Arimathea, who would have been in on the plot. Then they would have had to steal away the body in the middle of the night, and bury it in the potters field, thus hiding the evidence of their crime, while at the same time creating the illusion of the Resurrection. That this occurred is indicated by *The Gospel of Matthew 28:12-15*:

"And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."

The removal of Judas from the tomb may have been secretly depicted by Sauniere in one of his Stations of the Cross, as discussed earlier in this article.

In addition to hinting at his belief in the heresy of Judas' crucifixion, Sauniere also demonstrated his belief in twin Christs. At the front of the church, on either side of the altar, are statues of Mary and Joseph, each holding an identical Christ child, although one appears to have slightly darker hair than the other. A recurring theme in the church involves the multiple depiction of two twin angels, identical in look to the aforementioned twin Christ children, both emerging out of a seashell. And one of Sauniere's unsolved clues that he embedded in his redesign of the church grounds involves the repeated use of the number 22. Could this be indicating "two-two," "double-double," or "twin-twin" -- in other words, "Thomas Didymus?"



Station of the Cross at Rennes-le-Chateau showing Jesus taken from the cross at sundown. Photo by Tracy R. Twyman

If Saunier believed this proposed idea that Judas Iscariot was Jesus' twin, and that Jesus had tricked his rival brother into dying on the cross in his place, it would have shattered his Christian faith, but it could have also turned him in the direction of Gnostic Christianity and other, even more damnable forms of occultism. Such beliefs would have been regarded by his clerical peers as the highest heresy. This would explain why, after making his deathbed confession, Saunier was refused Final Uncction by a fellow priest.

So is the Christian cross really a "T" for "Thomas?" Certainly, the evidence presented in this essay provides sufficient grounds for speculating in that direction. It seems possible, if not probable, that heretical groups like the Cathars, Knights Templar, and the Priory of Sion may have embraced such ideas. Proving that these are the true historical facts is another matter, but considering that verifiable "facts" regarding the life of Jesus are pretty sparse, and that nothing about him has ever been proven, it hardly matters. But there is one more notable similarity between the characters of Thomas and Judas Iscariot as portrayed in the gospels: they are both described as having a weakness in the area of faith. Both are said to have "doubted" Jesus' messiah-hood, and in Thomas' case, as I have said, "Doubting" became part of his namesake. One scene in particular, recorded in *The Gospel of John*, has earned him this namesake.⁷

The incident, described briefly earlier in this essay, occurs in Chapter 20, after Jesus has been resurrected. For some unstated reason, Thomas was the only apostle (besides Judas, presumably), who was not present when the resurrected Jesus first appeared to them. When the other apostles tell him of what occurred, Thomas refuses to believe their story. As the text reads:

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the LORD. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came

Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered and said unto him, My LORD and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

Something about this entire narrative seems altogether fishy. I have said how John's gospel in no way makes mention of Judas' death, and indeed the only gospel to speak of Judas' suicide is that of *Matthew*. Most would assume that this detail is excluded because it is not worthy of mention. But why is it that in this scene, when Judas should be dead, or at the very least, no longer among the apostles, Thomas is referred to as "one of the twelve," instead of "the eleven?" All of the other gospels make it clear that at this point in the story, there are only eleven apostles. Is the author of John's gospel erring deliberately to draw our attention to something?

Perhaps the author is hinting (in secret code known only to initiates) that we, like Thomas, should not believe in the Christ who died on the cross. For why does Thomas find it necessary to see Jesus' crucifixion wounds in order to believe in the Resurrection? Presumably, if God had the power to bring him to life after three days of death, surely He could handle healing a few wounds. But if my hypothesis is correct, the author may be making a totally different comment. The character of "Thomas" is expressing his disbelief that the person they have seen "resurrected" is the same person who hanged on the cross. Of course not. The person who hanged on the cross was dead, and it was not Jesus! Who would know that better than Judas Thomas himself? After all, it was his hands that bore the print of the nails, and his side that had been pierced. Even though the author of John's gospel knew this, he could not say it, so he used the character of Thomas (who, according to my hypothesis, would have already been dead) as a literary device to impart a hidden grain of truth to this fictional account of the Resurrection. *The Gospel of John* is often described as a "Gnostic gospel," for it is clearly an initiation document meant for members of Jesus' inner circle. The truth about Judas is just one of the many secrets hidden within.

Appendix:

"Jesus said, 'Two will rest on a couch; one will die, one will live.'" - The Gospel of Thomas

The above essay was written during the week of Easter, 2004. Since then a great deal of information on this and related subjects has come to my attention. Two books in particular have become invaluable in my research. The first is *Journey of the Magi: Travels in Search of the Birth of Jesus*, by Paul William Roberts, published in 1995. This is a log of the author's travels throughout Iraq, Iran, and Syria tracking local legends regarding the magi who supposedly attended the birth of Jesus. In the process he encountered a group of Mandaeans: a Gnostic Johannite sect (that is, followers of John the Baptist). They told him that all Mandaeans believe that not only was Judas Thomas Jesus' twin, but that it was this Judas who was crucified in Jesus' place. Furthermore, they believe that Jesus afterwards took on the identity of his brother, calling himself Thomas, and that he was the true author of *The Gospel of Thomas*, as well as supposedly *The Gospel of John*. The travels throughout the East that have been attributed to Thomas were accomplished by Jesus as well. As Mr. Roberts writes:

"After Persia, he returned west, living near Damascus in Syria before finally being forced to travel beyond the reach of Roman forces. Nabatean priests and Magi had helped him,

arranging safe passage along the trade routes. Jesus had resided in Basra and Palmyra briefly before crossing through Mesopotamia, spending some months in Susa, then moving from Magian stronghold to Magian stronghold - places where any Essene Jew apparently would have been always welcome -- until he reached the Indus Valley. Here, Brahmans, who maintained close ties with the Western mystical orders, initiated him into their deepest mysteries before escorting him to the relative safety of India's southwestern coast - not the southeastern coast where others have speculated he ended up, near Madras."

Moreover, Roberts' Mandaean informants told him that both twins had been blessed by the magi at the nativity:

"Hearing about Jesus and a twin brother, I still had never stopped to think what this would do to the Nativity story ... [According to the Mandaeans the] Magi's astrological skills had ... allowed them to foresee the potential dangers ahead. They informed those Nazarean-Essenes with whom they were in regular contact, and then made sure that Mary and Joseph escaped to Egypt, where Jesus and Thomas were raised by Essene Magians while their parents returned to Israel ... There had been two Magi, after all: one for each child."

The other invaluable source of information I have found is Hyam Maccoby's *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil*. In it he discusses all symbolic elements of the image of Judas. He repeatedly returns to the idea of Judas as Jesus' dark half, or doppelganger: a Black Christ. As he writes:

"The Christian myth is about sacrifice. Jesus, the incarnate God, suffers death in order to redeem mankind, and to procure eternal life for those who accept him as their saviour. But this description of the myth is not quite accurate. There are really two sacrificial figures in the myth, one of whom loses his life, and the other his soul. These two figures, who may be called the White Christ and the Black Christ, are both essential to the Christian myth, as to many similar myths..."

Judas is not merely fulfilling an individual decision. He is fulfilling a prophecy. Yet no credit or happiness is allotted to him for doing what is fated and necessary. His reward for his share in the salvation of mankind is accursedness and damnation. He himself is a kind of sacrifice; he is the Black Christ who, through his destructive and self-destructive action, brings delivery to his fellow human beings ... [It is] a double sacrifice, since it requires both the death of Jesus and the damnation of Judas."

He also comments on the idea of sacrifice in the ancient world, indicating that the nature of sacrifice requires a scapegoat to take the blame for the sacrifice:

"... the community wants the sacrifice to occur, because otherwise there will be no salvation, but it shifts the responsibility to some evil figure. The death of the victim is mourned with every appearance of heartfelt grief, for the deeper the grief the more complete the dissociation of the community from the death which they desired. The means by which the death came about is disowned, either by banishing, ostracizing or humiliating the executioner, or even ... holding a trial of the knife with which the sacrifice was performed."

Maccoby's analysis of Judas' ceremonial role leads him to a fascinating conclusion: that the role played by Judas is a symbolic continuation of the role played by Cain when he murdered his brother Abel:

*"A disguised example of this is the biblical Cain, who killed his brother, yet received divine protection in his wanderings, and was the founder of a city and the ancestor of the founders of the arts (**Genesis 4:17-22**); what the Bible calls a murder, was, in the Kenite saga from which the Bible derives the story, a salvic sacrifice. The Jews too, despite the loathing inspired by their alleged cosmic crime, have also been regarded with a certain awe. Even at their lowest ebb of powerlessness, they have been viewed as the possessors of magical power. The legend of the Wandering Jew (which has sometimes coalesced with the legend of Judas Iscariot) expresses this Christian awe of the Sacred Executioner, condemned to suffer for the act that brought salvation to mankind. In the New Testament, Judas Iscariot does not, like Cain or the Wandering Jew, receive the dubious gift of prolonged life; he dies by suicide in one version, by heavenly destruction in another. But in some later versions of the story, his charisma is enhanced. He becomes a prince, and a formidable person, with an awesome destiny. However much the aim of the myth is to foster detestation, it can never be quite forgotten that he is after all the Black Christ, an agent of salvation."*

It does make sense to seek parallels between Cain's murder of Abel and Judas' murder of Jesus, or, as I have hypothesized, Jesus' murder of Judas. For one thing, there is the obvious parallel, in that in both instances, both the murderer and the victim are brothers. And if one considers the symbolism of the scapegoat ritual that seems to be present in the sacrifice of Judas and Jesus (in which one -- Judas -- is sacrificed to atone for sin, and the other -- Jesus -- must go into exile, to bear the sin), it is obvious that the same symbolism exists in the Cain and Abel story. Like the scapegoat, Cain was sent off in exile to "the land of Nod" to bear the weight of his sins. But his sin was the killing of Abel, which, like the slaying of the World Bull by Mithras, is seen by mythologists as representing a sacrifice that was necessary for the fertility of the land. At another point in the book, Maccoby continues this analysis, likening the death of Abel to the death of Judas described in *Acts*:

*"The graphic picture of Judas' blood and entrails spilling on to the raw earth of an open field evokes the story of Cain and Abel; Abel's blood was also spilled in a "field" (**Genesis 4:8**). God said to Cain, 'Thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now thou art cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.'" (**Genesis 4:10-11**). The Hebrew Bible's doctrine that the spilling of blood dries up the land is a late development in human history; behind it lies the opposite idea that precisely the spilling of blood in human sacrifice renders the land fertile. The image of the earth 'opening her mouth' to receive blood is very ancient; originally this was a hungry acceptance by the earth goddess of her due.*

The story of Cain and Abel, as we find it in the Hebrew Bible, is one of simple murder; but more than one scholar has argued that it is a transfigured account of human sacrifice, in which the earth was not accursed, but blessed, by Abel's blood."

This symbolic connection between Cain and Judas is interesting considering that it was the Gnostic group known as the Cainites that, out of all the heretical sects, held Judas in the highest regard. Irenaeus wrote of this sect that:

"[They] declare that Cain derived his being from the Power above, and acknowledge that Esau, Korah, the Sodomites, and all such persons, are related to themselves. On this account, they add, they have been assailed by the Creator, yet no one of them has suffered injury. For Sophia was in the habit of carrying off that which belonged to her from them to

herself. They declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things, and that he alone, knowing the truth as no others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal; by him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. They bring forward a fictitious history along these lines, which they call the Gospel of Judas."

A further interesting fact to add is that Judas' name as given by the gospels may have in fact included the word "Canaanite." This was an ancient tribe that, I have argued in previous articles, may have ultimately descended from Cain, but by the time of Jesus it apparently indicated a member of the fanatical Zealot movement. As Hyam Maccoby explains:

*"... the theory that Iscariot means Zealot appears in third- and fourth-century Coptic versions of the **Gospel of John**. Here the word 'not' is missing in the phrase 'not Iscariot', but instead of Iscariot we find the word Kananites. The complete designation of Jesus's interlocutor at this point in the Coptic versions is thus Judas the Canaanite. Now obviously neither Judas Iscariot nor any other disciple was a Canaanite, since this nation has ceased to exist many centuries before the time of Jesus. But easily confused with the name 'Canaanite' is the Hebrew word qan'ai, which means Zealot. The tendency of the Gospel writers to confuse this word with Canaanite is shown elsewhere. So what the Coptic versions alone have preserved is that Jesus's interlocutor in John 14 was in fact Judas Iscariot (the 'not' being omitted), and that an alternative name for him was Judas the Canaanite, i.e., Judas the Zealot...."*

Maccoby believes that Judas Iscariot is the same as "Jude, brother of James," who is sometimes listed among the twelve apostles, and who is the supposed author of *The Epistle of Jude*. He further believes that this "James" is the same as "James the brother of Jesus," and thus that Judas was in fact Jesus' brother. And since Jesus was the King of the Jews, Maccoby writes that this would have made Judas a prince, and a candidate for leadership in the Jerusalem Church -- the "church" (comprised largely of relatives of Jesus) that continued his "ministry," especially the Zealot royalist movement associated with it, after his death. Maccoby presents evidence that Judas follow Symeon the son of Cleopas as the leader of this church:

*"...what is particularly interesting, for our purposes, is that Symeon's successor as leader of the Jerusalem 'Church' was no other than 'Judas of James,' according to **Apostolic Constitutions 7:46**. The common view of later commentators, such as Ephraem, was that he was Judas, the brother of Jesus, the author of the Epistle of Jude. If this is true, then Judas was actually the third 'Bishop' (or more correctly Vice-Regent) of the Jerusalem 'Church'. Such an appointment is only what one would expect, given the royalist position of the group. What better candidate for leadership, pending the return of King Jesus, than his brother, Prince Judas Iscariot?"*

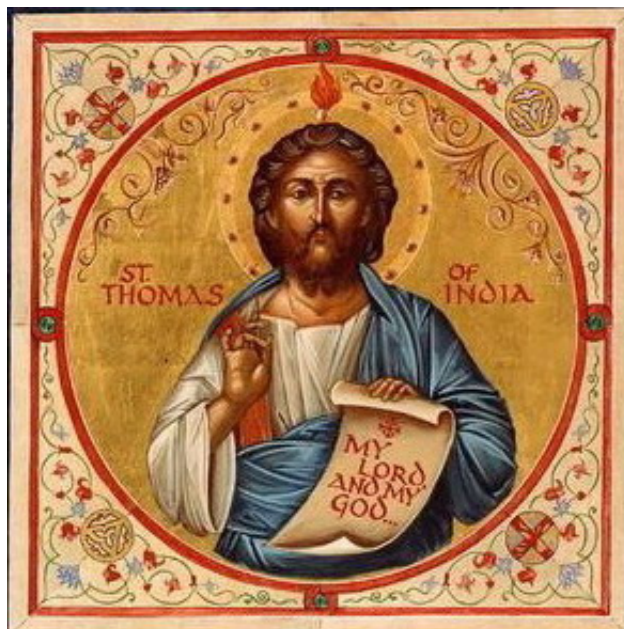


St. Jude, the brother of Jesus, who is frequently shown holding disc with head of Jesus upon it, and a flame issuing from his forehead, just as the goat-headed Baphomet was frequently depicted.

Maccoby has further argued, although with less enthusiasm, for the idea that Judas Iscariot and Judas Thomas were one in the same. Rather than seeing this as literally and historically true, he tends to regard it as having merely a symbolic significance, although one that accords with my hypothesis:

*"It might be argued that the apostle Thomas, known in East Syrian circles as Judas Thomas or Didymus Judas Thomas, is the same person as the apostle Jude, and that therefore the considerable literature, mostly legendary, about Thomas is part of the Judas-saga. Indeed, there were some ancient traditions (the **Book of Thomas** and *The Acts of Thomas*) identifying Thomas with Jude, and some modern scholars have argued in favour of these traditions and associated the authorship of the **Epistle of Jude** with Thomas. In particular, the legends about Thomas call him not only the brother but the twin-brother of Jesus. It seems, however, that though Thomas's real name was indeed probably Judas, he was not, historically, a brother of Jesus. His nickname 'Thomas' does mean 'twin' in Hebrew, but he was the twin of someone else, not Jesus, and he was known by this nickname for the specific purpose of distinguishing him from the other Judas, the apostle and brother of Jesus. In the lists of Jesus's brothers, Judas is either the youngest or second youngest of the four, and the Gospel narratives hardly leave room for the supposition that Jesus had a twin brother. On the other hand, from a mythological standpoint, it is interesting that the legend of Jesus's twin brother arose, and that it was associated with a disciple called Judas. In the East Syrian literature, the twin-motif appears somewhat lacking in depth, and may be a secondary development, serving a Gnostic purpose. There is substance in the suggestion ... that the legend was originally influenced by a Greek myth, especially that of the Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux. If so, it is altogether possible that the twin-motif arose at some stage of the development of the Judas-the-Betrayer myth. For the Betrayal stories in mythology often involve a pair of twins, one of whom betrays or murders the other, for a salvific purpose. Examples are the story of Romulus and Remus, Jacob and Esau. The twin-brother*

relationship expresses the identity of victim and slayer, found in an even more ideal form in stories of divine self-immolation, such as the self-hanging of Odin. I would suggest, therefore, that the notion that Jesus had a twin-brother called Judas arose first in the context of the Judas-as-Betrayer myth, but was erased from this by the needs of the Mary-as-Perpetual-Virgin myth (demanding that Jesus should have no brothers at all). It lingered, however, in Gnostic circles, attaches to Judas Thomas (Judas the Twin), as a symbol of the spiritual identity of every true Gnostic with Jesus."



St. Thomas the TWin, also shown with a flame upon his brow.

Indeed, Maccoby believes that all of the Judases mentioned in the Gospels are in fact the same character. He writes:

"... I suggest the best hypothesis is that there was originally only one Judas, namely Judas Iscariot, and that when he was chosen for the mythic role of traitor, the good traditions about the historical Judas were shifted to a second Judas, who was at first assigned some of the sobriquets of the original, but was gradually differentiated from him by being given different designations."

One of the motivations for demonizing Judas, Maccoby believes, is anti-Semitism. The early church, as well as Gnostic Christian sects, regarded the Jews as a cursed race -- the murderers of Jesus. The Gnostics had a further reason to hate the Jews: they were the chosen servants of Jehovah, the Demiurge, whom they regarded as evil, and (they believed) the Jews had killed Jesus because he intended to redeem mankind from "the curse of the Law" of Jehovah. The Church, as well as most Christian sects, agreed that Jesus had to create a "New Covenant," and to abolish, the old, Judaic covenant, including all of the Judaic laws. At the time of Jesus, the term "Jews" often referred to those occupying the area of "Judaea," exclusively, and did not include other areas of Israel, such as Galilee and Samaria. As Jesus and most of his followers were initially, they were not thought of as "Jews," although they may be considered so today. Thus the early Christians were able to conceptualize Jesus as being both the King of the Jews and at the same time not a Jew.

Judas, if by his name alone, embodies the archetype of the Jewish race. Thus he was cast in the role of the

Betrayer. But ironically, by executing Jesus, both Judas and the Jews are enabling the sacrifice that will purportedly abolish their own covenant with Jehovah. Thus the role of both Judas and the Jews in the sacrifice of Jesus had to be obfuscated in the scriptures.

Maccoby successfully demonstrates that Judas has been identified with the Jews, and with the Jews' murder of Jesus, throughout the history of anti-Semitism in Europe. There is certainly one obvious correlation between the portrayal of Judas Iscariot and prevailing Jewish stereotypes: Judas is shown as being predominantly occupied with financial concerns. He objects to the use of spikenard to anoint Jesus because of the cost, revealing a penny-pinching nature. In fact the sum for which he betrays Jesus is relatively small, demonstrating his pettiness. Maccoby highlights other earmarks of the Judas/Jewish stereotype:

"An additional feature of Judas in the Passion Plays was his red hair. This was not part of the general Jewish stereotype, but an identifying mark of Judas himself, which he shared with Herod ... It may be that redness, as the colour of blood, was reserved for those taking the leading murderous parts -- Judas for his acceptance of blood-money and his association with the Field of Blood, and Herod because of his massacre of the Innocents ...

In addition to the features of the Jewish stereotype, Judas was given special characteristics of his own. Chief among these were his red hair and his yellow gown ... Since [red] was also the colour of Satan's hair in the Passion Plays and in art, the triple identification, Judas/Jews/Devil, was reinforced by his coloration. The yellow gown, on the other hand, is cognate to the yellow badge which Jews were compelled to wear, and which was a regular feature of their portrayal in art...

Indeed, the tradition of a red-haired Betrayer goes back to prehistoric times. Set, the brother, betrayer and murderer of Osiris, had red hair ..."

Overall, it seems to me that these radical ideas -- the concept of Judas Thomas as Jesus' twin or "second Messiah;" the idea of Judas Iscariot being crucified in the place of Jesus; and the idea that both Judases are indeed the same person -- these are less useful as factual interpretations of the story of Jesus than they are as explorations of the symbolism of his story. They are an extension of the Scapegoat and Passover symbolism implicit in Christ's sacrifice, and an extension of the imagery of Judas as the Black Christ. And if Judas is seen as a sympathetic figure, as some romantic writers have chosen to portray him, the idea of him actually being Jesus' twin is all the more poetic. But if Judas dies on the cross instead of Jesus, the romance might be destroyed, for then Judas would not be martyred by damning his own soul to Hell for the sake of God's plan, and Jesus would not be martyred on the cross, thus accomplishing the stoning sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Yet this begs the question: if they were twins, were they both the sons of God, and thus, would the sacrifice of either one have sufficed?

The popularity of this and other "crucifixion substitution" theories demonstrates our ongoing desire to do away with the most difficult aspect of the orthodox Christ story. The idea that Jesus "died for our sins" is distasteful to us. It seems inherently unfair that God would sacrifice his own son, and in such a cruel way, especially since he was such a reportedly good-hearted and blameless man. If God were forgiving enough to allow all repented sin to be atoned, why should he require the death of his own son as a "payment?" After all, there are numerous examples in the Old Testament, and Jesus told several people that they were forgiven of their sins long before he was sacrificed. Many of us would prefer to believe that Jesus was sent merely to teach and to guide us towards a salvation through God that already existed. Thus the idea that one who was truly guilty, and the one who would

have sent Jesus to the cross, was actually himself crucified instead. This is a comforting thought, perhaps, but it destroys the image of Jesus as all-loving, all-forgiving and all-sacrificing. The Jesus we know from the canonized gospels gladly took on undeserved punishment for the sake of us all, and would never have allowed another man to die in his place, no matter how lowly his deeds.

However, the history of heresy is built on such alternate interpretations of scripture, wherein hidden meanings that seem to be in between the lines of these scriptures are taken to their utmost logical (or illogical) conclusions, creating a shadow mythos based on a body of such heretical traditions, passed down through the generations as they pass through many permutations. As time goes on each heresy or alternate viewpoint weaves its way into the fabric of underground legend, and into literature, with sometimes only an echo of the original heretical tradition actually remaining. Thus, while I feel sure that the "Judas Goat" hypothesis presented here was a notion once held by heretics, only bits and pieces of it can now be found scattered throughout various legends. However, as I demonstrated earlier in this article, I am increasingly convinced that this idea formed a part of Berenger Saunier's heretical belief system, and thus, perhaps, that of the Priory of Sion. Further evidence in this regard was recently discovered in Andre Douzet's book, *Saunier's Model and the Secret of Rennes-le-Chateau*. This book is about a three-dimensional relief map of Rennes-le-Chateau that Berenger Saunier commissioned to be made just before his death. Unfortunately he died before he got a chance to pick it up from the mapmaker. Apparently this map was not discovered until the author purchased it at an auction and realized the significance of it. But what was really unusual about the map was that Saunier had landmarks on the map labeled with names that apply to known sites in Jerusalem, not Rennes-le-Chateau, France.

It is believed that Saunier had this map made because he intended to pass it on to someone else before he died, or to have it discovered by them afterwards. Obviously he was trying to communicate some secret that he knew about Rennes-le-Chateau. A simple explanation is that he was trying to say that Rennes-le-Chateau was a holy site containing a sacred tomb, and was, like Jerusalem, the "center of the world." But its possible that he was specifically trying to indicate his belief that the tomb of Christ (or perhaps of his supposed substitute Judas) was located there in Southern France? One of the landmarks he specifically named on the map was labeled "the Tomb of Christ." If Saunier believed that he had discovered by some means that the Crucified One (be he Judas or Jesus) was buried at Rennes-le-Chateau, he may have been specifically recreating the landscape and imagery of Jerusalem to indicate the presence of a tomb traditionally thought to be in Jerusalem. The landmarks that Saunier had labeled on his map were "Golgotha", the "Garden of Gethsemane," the "Tomb of Christ," and the "Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea" -- all locations significant in the story of Christ's arrest, crucifixion and burial. So it follows that he was trying to communicate some secret regarding these events, and somehow likening the location in which they took place to Rennes-le-Chateau. Now we know that Jesus was not arrested or crucified at Rennes-le-Chateau, but it is persistently thought that he might be buried there. But Saunier could not erect something right on top of the burial spot indicating what it was if he wanted it to remain inviolate but still communicate his message. He could, however, erect something on the grounds indicating where Golgotha and the Garden of Gethsemane would be in relation to the tomb of Christ if a map of Jerusalem were superimposed upon Rennes-le-Chateau. If a person were supplied with this map, they would then be able to find the clues on the ground representing Golgotha and Gethsemane, and thus would be able to locate the tomb.

As I was looking at this map again recently, I noticed something very interesting. In the gospels it was Joseph of Arimathea who offered his own tomb, which he had originally built with the intention of having himself buried in it, for the body of Jesus. Why then is there both a tomb of Joseph or Arimathea *and* a tomb of Christ on the map? Even if we were to suppose that Joseph of Arimathea was buried next to Jesus later on, why would Saunier mark that on the map? Everything else on the map pertains to Jesus' arrest, crucifixion, and burial. This would

seem to be extraneous, unless you consider that Sauniere may be indicating the idea of twin Christs (a la the "Judas Goat" theory), and that both were eventually buried side by side, perhaps at Rennes-le-Chateau.

As I continued flipping through Douzet's book, I noticed that he had made a similar observation:

"As far as the Catholic faith and Christianity in general [is concerned], there never was a 'tomb of Jesus Christ.' The only tomb was that of Joseph of Arimathea, intended to be used only by himself, but in the end used to keep the body of the Saviour, from where it would rise.

But on the model there is a 'tomb of Joseph of Arimathea' and another tomb, that of Jesus! With that single act, this model has attained an altogether different aspect: heretical, iconoclastic, and difficult to understand."

Douzet does not go on to speculate what heresy Sauniere was advocating specifically. But I think with the "Judas Goat" theory we may be able to answer that question! Indeed, though this theory may not be what we ourselves wish to believe about Jesus, it may be a useful tool for understanding the heretical beliefs of many influential people throughout history, and for understanding some of the mysterious clues that they have left behind. Hopefully, then, the information presented in this essay will be valuable to scholars in the future.

Endnotes:

¹ In *The Gospel of John*, 1:29, John the Baptist points also at Jesus and declares, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

² <http://ww2.netnitco.net/users/legend01/goat.htm>

³ This links up with similar words recorded by Sumeriologist L.A. Waddell regarding the ancient Indus Valley.

⁴ This is true, and it may bring new meaning to the line in the coded parchment found at Rennes-le-Chateau, which reads: "by the cross and this horse of God..."

⁵ James is yet another person identified in the gospels as one of Jesus' biological brothers, so this Judas probably would have been as well.

⁶ There is a stone depiction of this image in Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland.

⁷ It is interesting that the words "doubt" and "double" are related, as "doubt" essentially means to "second-guess."