

BEFORE CHRISTENDOM



Justin Martyr

LATE ONE HUNDREDS

THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS (HERETICAL)

The Gospel of Judas became a popular text recently in 2006 when National Geographic began running a series of articles and television shows about the long-lost “Gospel” that appears to have been written to rescue Judas from being viewed in a completely negative eye. The Gospel, owing much of its content to Gnostic ideology, paints Judas as a disciple who willingly takes the onerous task of betraying Jesus knowing that if Jesus does not die, humanity cannot be saved. On top of a more positive Judas, we get an especially anti-Christian (and anti-Jewish) allusion in the book that the demon who inhabits Judas may be no other than YHWH Himself (but in this telling, YHWH is not a good guy, but the evil creator of the world called Saklas).

The Gospel of Judas was likely written in the late 100’s AD by people claiming the particular “Sethian” Gnostic sect, and was likely written as a parody of Christian belief rather than an amalgam of it. Additionally, the Gospel of Judas is only found in incomplete fragments and it very difficult to read because of this.

And Judas said to Jesus, “What, then, will those races do?” Jesus said, “Truly I say to you (pl.), it is the stars that bring completion upon all these things. When Saklas completes the time that has been assigned to him, their star will come with the races, and what has been said will be brought to completion. Next, they will fornicate in my name and kill their children, and [. . .] the aeons, bringing their races that attend them to Saklas. And next [..]rael will come, bringing the twelve tribes of Israel from [. . .], and all the races will serve Saklas, [also] sinning in my name, and your (sg.) star will rule over the thirteenth aeon.” But next Jesus laughed. [Judas] said, “Teacher, why [are you laughing at us?”] [Jesus] answered [and said,] “I am laughing not at you (pl.), but at the error of the stars, because these six stars go astray with these five combatants, and they all will bedestroyed with their creations.” And Judas said to Jesus, “What will those who have been baptized in your name do?” Jesus said, “Truly I say [to you (sg.)], this baptism [. . . in] my name[. . .]will destroy the entire race of Adam, the earthly man. Tomorrow the one who bears mewill be tortured. Truly I [say] to you (pl.), no hand of a

mortal human being [will] sin against me. Truly [I] say to you, Judas, those who offer sacrifice to Saklas [. . .] god [. . .]

JUSTIN MARTYR

Justin Martyr may have been the most popular of the first of his kind, people who sought to defend the reasonableness of the faith, called “apologists” or “defenders”. During his time in the late 100’s AD, people were calling out what they felt were unreasonable or fanciful beliefs of Christians (Resurrection being a chief sticking point). Justin does this from the position of being a Greek convert to Christianity who is clearly knowledgeable about Greek religious practices.

A few different writings are attributed to Justin, but the clearest (and most reliable) of these is called “Discourse to the Greeks”. While Justin was indeed martyred in Rome, the name attributed to him likely has more to do with his clear witness (Greek: martyria) than with his death.

Do not suppose, ye Greeks, that my separation from your customs is unreasonable and unthinking; for I found in them nothing that is holy or acceptable to God. For the very compositions of your poets are monuments of madness and intemperance. For any one who becomes the scholar of your most eminent instructor, is more beset by difficulties than all men besides. For first they say that Agamemnon, abetting the extravagant lust of his brother, and his madness and unrestrained desire, readily gave even his daughter to be sacrificed, and troubled all Greece that he might rescue Helen, who had been ravished by the leprous shepherd....Henceforth, ye Greeks, come and partake of incomparable wisdom, and be instructed by the Divine Word, and acquaint yourselves with the King immortal; and do not recognise those men as heroes who slaughter whole nations.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

Clement of Alexandria was a late convert to Christianity who was likely a well traveled Assyrian who converted and was put to work in the city of Alexandria. Like Justin Martyr, Clement's work is largely pointed to his pagan contemporaries. He sets out to explain why Christianity is a better choice than the pagan Greek options that surround them, not only for reasons of the truth, but also some practical reasons – showing that Christianity is a better guide from Christian life than the fables and stories of the Greek pantheon.

Clement is a prolific writer who pens at least 8 different epistles that seem to be compendiums of his discipleship and teaching.

How, let me ask, have you believed vain fables and supposed animals to be charmed by music while Truth's shining face alone, as would seem appears to you disguised, and is looked on with incredulous eyes? And so Cithaeron, and Helicon, and the mountains of the Odrysi, and the initiatory rites of the Thracians, mysteries of deceit, are hallowed and celebrated in hymns. For me, I am pained at such calamities as form the subjects of tragedy, though but myths; but by you the records of miseries are turned into dramatic compositions.

But the dramas and the raving poets, now quite intoxicated, let us crown with ivy; and distracted outright as they are, in Bacchic fashion, with the satyrs, and the frenzied rabble, and the rest of the demon crew, let us confine to Cithaeron and Helicon, now antiquated.

But let us bring from above out of heaven, Truth, with Wisdom in all its brightness, and the sacred prophetic choir, down to the holy mount of God; and let Truth, darting her light to the most distant points, cast her rays all around on those that are involved in darkness, and deliver men from delusion, stretching out her very strong right hand, which is wisdom, for their salvation. And raising their eyes, and looking above, let them abandon Helicon and Cithaeron, and take up their abode in Sion. "For out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem, --the celestial Word, the true athlete crowned in the theatre of the whole universe.