



Judas: The Most Hated Name in History

Peter Stanford

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In this fascinating historical and cultural biography, Peter Stanford deconstructs that most vilified of Bible characters: Judas Iscariot, who famously betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Beginning with the gospel accounts, Stanford explores two thousand years of cultural and theological history to investigate how the very name Judas came to be synonymous with betrayal and, ultimately, human evil. But as Stanford points out, there has long been a counter-current of thought that suggests that Judas might in fact have been victim of a terrible injustice: central to Jesus' mission was his death and resurrection, and for there to have been a death, there had to be a betrayal. This thankless role fell to Judas; should we in fact be grateful to him for his role in the divine drama of salvation? "You'll have to decide," as Bob Dylan sang in the sixties, "Whether Judas Iscariot had God on his side." An essential but doomed character in the Passion narrative, and thus the entire story of Christianity, Judas and the betrayal he symbolizes continue to play out in much larger cultural histories, speaking to our deepest fears about friendship, betrayal, and the problem of evil.

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