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## THE TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS: A MODEST PROPOSAL

**ABSTRACT.** I model an attempt by radical parties to topple a modus vivendi between a ruling government and a moderate opposition group. Cooperation between the regime and the moderate opposition is possible if each player prefers mutual cooperation to mutual confrontation. If each player also prefers mutual confrontation to cooperating while the other defects then radical parties have a chance at breaking up this accord. Radical parties can succeed in bringing the government and opposition to mutual confrontation if they can agree on power-sharing arrangements after regime change. This paper also resolves central questions surrounding the trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. I use an institutional approach to infer player preferences from historical and biblical sources and then use game theory to model the interactions between participants in these events. In so doing, I clarify aspects of the Gospel narrative that have puzzled readers for the past 2000 years.

**KEY WORDS:** Biblical narrative, Cooperation, Modus vivendi, Radical opposition

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The events surrounding the trial and crucifixion of Christ are the very foundation stone of the Christian faith. They have undergone repeated reinterpretation since the composition of the four Gospels in the first century AD. Nevertheless, gaps within the narratives as well as discrepancies among the four versions or between the Gospels and other available sources, have left large questions unanswered: Why does Judas betray Jesus and why, once successful, does he then commit suicide? Why are the priests, Pilate and Herod all reluctant to try Jesus? Why does a crucifixion take place even though Pilate, and at times even Jesus, seem eager to avoid it? These questions are important not only because they lend insight into the origins of a momentous religious movement but also because they



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shed light on the origins of Christian anti-Semitism. Because most interpretations focus on the motivations of individuals rather than on institutional decision-making, they have accepted irrational motivations and stereotypical characterizations of the participants. Instead, the games used in this paper present the events as the outcome of rational decisions by institutions. The actions of Judas Iscariot specifically, which receive little explanation in the Gospel texts, are elucidated as attempts by a radical opposition movement, the Zealots, to drive a potential Messiah towards political and military action against a foreign regime.

These events have not been modeled previously. Brams (2003) has modeled a variety of biblical scenarios but has restricted himself to the Hebrew Bible.<sup>1</sup> In the introduction to his analysis of strategic interactions in the Bible, Brams explains the utility of game theory for penetrating complex decision-making situations:

Because its application requires the careful unraveling of a tangle of character motivations and their effects, [game theory] imposes a discipline on the study of these situations that is usually lacking in more traditional literary-historical-theological analyses of the Bible. These analyses often suffer, in my opinion, from their unrestrained arbitrariness in finding linkages, seeing parallels, and generally trying to tie things together – somehow – with valiant leaps of the imagination. An assemblage of random insights, unconnected by any structured view of the world that might be called a framework or theory, does not provide a parsimonious or compelling intellectual organization of the Bible. Understanding requires organization, and organization is given by a theory.<sup>2</sup>

Brams (1994) and O'Neill (1991) have argued that game theory can provide a parsimonious framework for analyzing literature and stories, just as familiar texts can be useful in highlighting game theoretic issues. Game theory can explain the rationality of characters' choices by enhancing the links between motives and action that make up the plot, even if the characters are fictional and their actions extraordinary. The resulting analysis can offer a coherent strategic interpretation of the work examined or compare the relative plausibility of existing interpretations. No less significantly, by revealing what information was available to participants and how they chose to use it, game theory can bring to light the profound tragedy underlying an interaction.

Several students of the trial and crucifixion have focused on rational decision-making in their analyses. Prominent thinkers from

Goethe through Kautsky have conceived of Jesus in political terms.<sup>3</sup> Haley (1971) offers an analysis of the “power tactics” of Jesus Christ at key junctions in his career, whereas Schonfield (1967) casts Jesus as a goal-driven calculator who aims at the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies and engineers events to suit his purposes. “When we have grasped what considerations governed the activities of Jesus and compelled him to scheme to bring about a particular sequence of events,” writes Schonfield, “it becomes easier to assess the relative worth of traditions. Of set purpose he embarked on a program calculated to fulfil what he believed the prophecies demanded of the Messiah. He was obsessed with this necessity. Its requirements shaped his every move and engaged his constant vigilance.”<sup>4</sup> I depart from this individualist viewpoint by focusing not on the personal interests of Jesus but rather on the interests of the emerging Christian movement. In this respect my approach is in agreement with Paul Winter’s analysis of the trial of Jesus: “It is not individual enmities which come to light here, but antagonism of group against group.”<sup>5</sup>

An institutional analysis is a promising approach for shedding light on the last days of Jesus Christ, for both empirical and normative reasons. First, as I show below, attempts to explain disparities in the Gospel account from an individualist perspective have generated inconsistencies and left gaps. Second, the available sources strongly indicate that Jesus, the High Priest and Pilate were representatives and leaders of larger groups and that these groups shared certain common goals and preferences. Below I diverge from the strict text of the Gospels and, relying on historical evidence, depict Judas too as representing the interests of a group, namely the Zealot movement. Third, an analysis of these four individuals as representatives or leaders of groups can go beyond the psychological and personal motivations stated explicitly in the text and bring to light broader motivations. These hidden motivations could clarify ambiguities in the Gospel text as well as shed light on the political reality of a historical era. Generalizeable motivations can be applied in a broad range of comparable situations, a clear advantage over reductivist analyses.

Conclusions from this study can be applied to an array of situations in which radical parties are trying to disrupt an understanding

between a ruling government and a moderate opposition group, especially if party preferences resemble the structure of a stag hunt. In a situation of this sort each of the two players prefers mutual cooperation to mutual defection, but each also prefers mutual defection to cooperating alone. If the two players, the ruling government and the moderate opposition group, start the game at the Pareto optimal equilibrium of mutual cooperation then no party has an incentive to defect from this status quo.

A shift to the alternative equilibrium, the Pareto sub-optimal outcome of mutual aggression, can occur only if both actors move simultaneously. Inducing this simultaneous move is the goal of radical elements within the government and radical elements within the opposition. These two players resent the status quo but must rely on each other to induce change, even though they do not have full information about one another's preferences. The game below shows that in order to succeed these radical elements must overcome strong incentives for defection from their pact. They do so by sending encouraging signals about their identities and preferences, and thus their intentions, to one another. If each believes in its ability to subsume the other under its leadership once the ruling regime has been overthrown then they will succeed in cooperating and demolishing the *modus vivendi*. It follows that governments can fortify a concord with the opposition by making public the degree to which the goals of various radical movements are incommensurable.

This paper proceeds as follows: I begin with a background to the trial and crucifixion and highlight the puzzles that readers have faced so far. I proceed to discuss the available sources and how the preferences of the four groups can be inferred from these sources. I then set up a game in four stages, based on the preferences and moves available to the four groups and comment on the complexities of these games. Finally, I offer answers to several of the puzzles we face when reading the accounts of the Gospels, as well as some general implications regarding regime stability in the face of radical opposition.

## 2. THE TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST – UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Christian theologians have argued that Judas Iscariot is the only sinner languishing in hell without any hope of redemption at the time of the Second Coming.<sup>6</sup> He is damned for all eternity for having betrayed the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, to his executors. God may forgive any man his sins, except for Judas. In Dante's *Inferno* he languishes in the lowest circle of hell, trapped in the mouth of Satan – fitting company to this arch-traitor. His role in the death of Christ on the cross, as retold in Christian tradition throughout the ages, has had an immeasurable impact on the image of Jews in European communities throughout the Middle Ages. His evident hatred of Jesus, his greed for money, his betrayal and consequent suicide brand him as the ultimate figure of evil in the New Testament. No one, aside from the apostle Peter and Jesus himself, has as much space dedicated to him in the Gospels. Yet we know little about his motivations and have difficulty explaining the sequence of events as they took place after the Last Supper and leading up to the crucifixion.

The motivations of other actors – Pharisees, Pilate, even Jesus himself – remain veiled in the Gospel sections treating the betrayal and trial of Jesus.<sup>7</sup> Gaps within the narratives as well as discrepancies among the four versions of the story, or between the Gospels and other available sources, leave the following questions unanswered:

1. Why did Judas betray Jesus? The Gospels offer two unsatisfactory explanations - the first, that “the devil entered into him”, is at best descriptive and at worst tautological. The second motive, greed, is equally unsatisfactory since the sum is merely symbolic. Thirty pieces of silver fulfills a prophetic requirement but does not amount to a considerable sum of money. The sum involved would have sufficed for ransoming a slave, by one account, or constituted one tenth of the value of a jar of ointment, by another account. In either case this amounts to a modest sum.<sup>8</sup>
2. Judas and the religious establishment make for a most unlikely team. Why did the priests need Judas' help? The Gospels offer two explanations: Jesus was difficult to locate and had to be arrested in secret, so as not to arouse a public reaction. Both

explanations are contradicted later in the text: Jesus expresses surprise at his clandestine arrest in light of the familiarity of his whereabouts.<sup>9</sup> The crowds, in turn, seem supportive of the arrest and execution of Jesus.

3. Why does money change hands between the priests and Judas? Why is a public burial ground bought with this sum (in one version by Judas himself) after Judas tries to return it to the priests?
4. If Judas betrays Jesus out of greed or pure evil, why does he commit suicide? If he committed suicide out of remorse, why does he do so just when the priests pass Jesus to the Romans, and not earlier or after the crucifixion?
5. What is the reasoning behind the strange dialogue between Jesus and the priests: Why does Jesus refuse to assert his Messianic authority by means of a miracle?
6. Why do the priests declare him a blasphemer, in spite of their failure to bring false evidence to bear against him, yet never condemn him?
7. Why do the priests hand Jesus over to the Romans? The Gospel's suggestion that the priests had no right to execute the death sentence contradicts other passages in the Gospels, as well as ample historical evidence.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the Jewish courts had the authority to execute criminals in four different ways: stoning, burning, slaying (stabbing) and strangling.<sup>11</sup>
8. What is the reasoning behind the strange dialogue between Jesus and Pilate: Why is Jesus reluctant to announce his mission? Why is Pilate in great pains to avoid executing Jesus?
9. Most importantly, why is crucifixion the outcome of this interaction. It seems that Pilate, and even Jesus at times, wish to avoid this outcome. Judas commits suicide, apparently in remorse. How is it that only the priests accomplish their goal?

The game below offers a possible answer to these questions.

### 3. AVAILABLE SOURCES

Mentions of Jesus and his trial in first century texts are extremely rare. Aside from the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, we have

a single sentence in Tacitus' "Annals of Imperial Rome"; two minor references to Jesus in "Antiquities of the Jews" by the Jewish-Roman historian Josephus Flavius; and a mention of Pilate in the "Legatio ad Gaium" by the Jewish-Egyptian philosopher and historian Philo of Alexandria.<sup>12</sup> Additional background information can be found in Josephus' "The Jewish War" whereas the Mishnah supplies information on the Sanhedrin, the court of 71 that tried Jesus.

The Gospels are subjective versions of the events and are therefore problematic as factual resources. They were probably written within 50 years of the crucifixion, most likely in the order Mark (A.D. 65–70), Matthew (A.D. 70–80), Luke (A.D. 75–85) and John (A.D. 100). They display significant discrepancies on the very issues pertinent to this paper: Judas' motivation for the betrayal, Jesus' response to the arrest and interrogations, the position of the priesthood and Pilate towards Jesus and Judas' response to the events following the betrayal. Overall, the information at hand makes it difficult to draw hard conclusions as to the preferences, motives and available moves of the parties involved in the trial and crucifixion. The Gospels do not offer, and never intended to offer, precise historical detail, but a religious message.<sup>13</sup> Michael Grant advises:

The extraction from the Gospels of evidence about the life and career of Jesus is a singularly difficult, delicate process. Students of the New Testament, it has been suggested, would be well advised to study other, pagan fields of ancient history first - because they are easier.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. INFERRING PREFERENCES

In order to minimize circular reasoning and counteract the inherent bias of the texts, I infer preferences from a variety of sources, rather than accepting the motivations and goals as stated explicitly in accounts of the trial and crucifixion. The Gospels portray the events as driven by four individuals: Jesus, Pilate, Judas and the High Priest. Instead, adopting an organizational approach, I model the events as an interaction between four interest groups or institutions: the young Christian movement led by Jesus (J), the Roman government in Judea (R), the radical Jewish political movement, also known as Zealots (Z), and the religious establishment represented by the

priests (P). Given the institutional motivations of these groups and their previous interactions we can infer preferences and interests.

#### 4.1. *The Young Christian Movement - J*

We must assume that the growing religious movement surrounding Jesus desired, as does any ideological organization, to prosper in size and authority.<sup>15</sup> Given the success and reputation of Jesus and his miracles, the movement seemed on a safe path to success. There was no need to fear a Roman response as long as it manifested no political goals - the Romans were as respectful of this religious movement as they were of its many competitors. In a period of foreign occupation, prophets and miracle workers such as Jesus were common. They were confronted by the authorities only if they caused civil unrest. Any attempt by Jesus to launch a political campaign to overthrow the Roman government would have been dealt with summarily.<sup>16</sup> Given the choice between confronting the Romans and maintaining the status quo, the movement would clearly opt for the latter. The ideal of coexistence between the two institutions is most prominently suggested in Jesus' demand to "render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's"<sup>17</sup> and in the doctrine of the two swords.

If, however Rome should attempt to eradicate the movement, Jesus and his followers would prefer to fight for the cause rather than allow the organization to be stamped out. This is implied in "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword,"<sup>18</sup> as well as those segments suggesting the eventual victory of the kingdom of God over the kingdom of man. At times the texts suggest that the leader of this movement, Jesus himself, wishes to avoid the painful implications of succumbing to Rome. Crucifixion was the slowest and most painful death available in the Roman legal code. In the minutes before his betrayal his "complete humanity" comes to the fore as he pleads to "remove this cup" from him.<sup>19</sup> His pain and bewilderment during the crucifixion are expressed in his final words in the original Hebrew: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani." (My God, why hast thou forsaken me?)<sup>20</sup> In sum, the Christian movement prefers peaceful coexistence with Rome over mutual confrontation, but should Rome opt for conflict it would struggle to survive rather than succumb.

#### 4.2. *The Roman Government – R*

The administration of Judea was in the hands of a procurator. He was chiefly a fiscal agent of Rome, as his title suggests, and his main goal was increased revenue.<sup>21</sup> In its rule over Judea, Rome exhibited extraordinary tolerance. Roman rulers respected and even protected the rights of Jews to practice their religion, as well as their rights to legislate, try and enforce all religious and most civil matters. Roman procurators had supreme military and judicial authority within their provinces, but this was exercised in Judea only in extraordinary cases.<sup>22</sup>

The procurator Pontius Pilate had learned from his own experience to respect the religious rights of the Jews in Judea. An attempted transgression of the status quo by Pilate, so we are told by Philo, had led to a confrontation with the Jewish masses and an eventual withdrawal of the offending order.<sup>23</sup> Yet Pilate was also known to act ruthlessly against potential revolutionary leaders.<sup>24</sup> Given the nature of Christ's activities, he had as little reason to fear the Christian movement as he had any other of the many splinter groups that were appearing throughout Judea in these troubled times. This stance would have to be reversed if political claims or violent activities could be attributed to Jesus and his followers.

To summarize, the preferences of the Roman government of Judea are reminiscent of the preferences of the Christian movement. Player R prefers mutual cooperation with player J over all other outcomes, but should player J initiate conflict player R will be forced to respond in kind.

#### 4.3. *The Religious Establishment - P*

The Pharisees and Sadducees, which held the priestly positions, strictly observed the Jewish legal code. They opposed those religious movement that embraced Hellenism or Roman paganism, but they were equally opposed to any spirit of religious enthusiasm. Their highest priority was to maintain their position on the basis of a strict reading of Mosaic law.<sup>25</sup> Before the Roman occupation, they often clashed with reigning Jewish monarchs over interference in matters related to the Temple and the sacrifice. When these monarchs usurped the title of High Priest, direct clashes ensued – the Pharisees insisted on a stark separation of religion and state. They

were strongly opposed to the Jewish nationalist movement, which sought to reunite these two realms under the leadership of a Messiah.

They did not, on the other hand, oppose Roman rule, since the Romans were respectful of Temple rites and deferred judgement in most civil and religious matters to the religious courts. By virtue of Roman support they received and were able to maintain both wealth and civil authority.<sup>26</sup> The Sanhedrin, the Jewish legislature and judiciary, was granted legislative and executive rights beyond those common in most non-autonomous communities of the Roman empire. It could pass and execute laws even over Roman citizens within its jurisdiction. Only death sentences for civil crimes required confirmation by the Roman procurator. The Romans went beyond tolerating Jewish worship: they protected the Temple and imposed the death sentence on those who entered its hallowed grounds, even when they were Roman citizens. No worship of the emperor was demanded of the priests who, in return, willingly sacrificed in his honor twice a day. Distinguished Romans were permitted to offer gifts to the temple and even sacrifice there.<sup>27</sup>

The accelerating success of Jesus and his following challenged the authority of this group. The religious establishment was similarly threatened by the radical Jewish movements who were continuously searching for a military and political Messiah to topple the foreign Roman rule and the corrupt priestly rule.<sup>28</sup> Yet given the limitations on the executive powers of the religious establishment and the modest political claims of Jesus and his followers, any attempt by the religious establishment to end the young Christian movement by itself entailed risks: a religious trial might establish the true Messianic identity of Jesus and lead to the downfall of the priesthood. The religious authorities could not, on the other hand, accept the status quo, given the charismatic power exhibited by Jesus, at first in Galilee and now on their very doorstep, in Jerusalem. Jesus' entry into the city and his exclamations on the manner in which the Temple was run signaled that the priests needed to act decisively.<sup>29</sup> In order to avoid a religious trial, the priests had to find a way to bring Jesus before Pilate as a political criminal:

Although the exact details of how the chief priests, their associates and Pilate interacted are not possible to establish conclusively, the general pattern is discernible. Jews in high public standing in the Jerusalem community combined to oppose Jesus. Most prominent were 'the chief priests' whose leading spokesman

appears to have been the serving high priest. These people organized the arrest of Jesus. The subsequent questioning of Jesus was probably not intended to establish his guilt or innocence. What was at issue was either how these people were to proceed against Jesus, or simply their desire to confirm their original intentions. These Jews then sought the assistance of Pilate to put an end to Jesus' activities.<sup>30</sup>

This background clarifies why the priests needed the assistance of the radical Jewish opposition in order to deliver Jesus to Pilate. The challenge facing the Sanhedrin was to find a way to arrest Jesus as a political activist contemplating an armed uprising, rather than accuse him of blasphemy and have to try him themselves.<sup>31</sup> Seen in this light, the *manner* of arrest, involving some form of armed confrontation, was more important than the circumstances of arrest. Judas was needed to initiate the proceedings against Jesus by orchestrating an armed confrontation against Jesus and the disciples.

In summary, the religious establishment wanted to eliminate the Christian movement by trying its leader in their courts and executing him for blasphemy. Yet they feared the possibility of Jesus revealing a true messianic identity since this would mean the end of traditional priesthood, their worst possible outcome. The higher the priests' confidence in Christ's messianic identity, the more likely they were to forgo their first preference of trying him themselves and opt instead for a trial by the Roman authorities. This was less preferable than trying Jesus themselves, since they could not be certain of success, but still preferable to the prevailing status quo.

#### 4.4. *The Radical Jewish Political Movement – Z*

The identity and motivations of Judas have intrigued researchers, starting with the early Church Fathers. These have produced several curious theories to explain his background the incentives for his actions.<sup>32</sup> At the basis of these theories is some interpretation or other of Judas' surname "Iscariot" and his introduction as "son of Simon", possible Simon the Zealot, another disciple. Given the scarcity of information in the Gospels, the most convincing among these theories places Judas among the Sicarii, a violent faction within the radical Jewish political movement, the Zealots, who specialized in political assassination by means of short daggers (*sicae*).<sup>33</sup>

Josephus describes this movement in detail as a group that showed unwillingness to await Messianic redemption but preferred

to hasten its realization by means of conflict with the enemy. They resented Roman taxation and their resentment increased with the efficiency of Roman rule.<sup>34</sup> Their secondary opponents were the priests who collaborated with the Roman governor and assisted in the collection of taxes. Several members of the emerging Christian movement may well have been Zealots: we learn in the scene of Jesus' arrest that some of the disciples were armed and were wont to use their weapons whereas one disciple, Simon Zelotes, is explicitly identified as a Zealot.<sup>35</sup>

If Judas was in fact a member of this group, as his surname and lineage might suggest, his act of leading Jesus to the religious establishment may not have been a betrayal or an act of collaboration with the priests, but a political move designed to bring the priests under the authority of Jesus. Some evidence suggests that the Sicarii adopted a completely different interpretation of Judaism and became a "deviant sect", clashing with the religious establishment not only on political issues but on the very rule of law and conduct of the Jewish calendar.<sup>36</sup> However, if Jesus could prove his divine mission to the high priest, all of Israel would unite behind him against the foreign conqueror. Judas was thus acting in response to Jesus' reluctance to assume a political role. A political, even military, role leading to independence is precisely what was demanded of a Jewish Messiah.<sup>37</sup> The Slavonic version of Josephus describes the following reaction of the Jews to Jesus' miracle working:

When they saw his ability to do whatever he wished by a word, they told him that they wanted him to enter the City, destroy the Roman troops, and make himself king; but he took no notice.<sup>38</sup>

A closer analysis of the terminology used in the Greek version of the text, specifically the Greek verb *paradidomei*, suggests that Judas did not "betray" Jesus but merely "handed him over" for a trial, a trial designed to test and establish his Messianic identity.<sup>39</sup> Jewish texts consistently demand that the Messiah be not merely a miracle worker but a political and military leader. The prevalent view of a Messiah at the time was a figure who would lead a political movement for independence.<sup>40</sup> Throughout Roman rule over Judea such leaders gathered a following and arose in rebellion against Rome, most prominently Judas of Galilee, Eleasar Ben Yair (of Masada fame) and Bar Kokhba. In Jesus' stead the crowds demanded that

Pilate release Barabbas, described as one of “them who had made insurrection... who had committed murder in the insurrection,”<sup>41</sup> in all likelihood a leader who had proved more successful than Jesus in physically confronting the Romans.

The notion of a Christian Messiah, one who’s kingdom is “not of this earth”, who refuses to engage in physical violence and willingly submits to torture and crucifixion, was alien to Jesus’ Jewish followers. The medieval scholar Maimonides, the greatest Jewish authority on Messianism, stated the Jewish position on the role of the Messiah:

The sole difference between the present and the Messianic days is the delivery from servitude to foreign powers ... If there arise a king from the House of David who... prevails upon Israel to walk in the way of the Torah and to repair its breaches, and fights the battles of the Lord, it may be assumed that he is the Messiah... But if he does not meet with full success, or is slain, it is obvious the he is not the Messiah promised in the Torah.”<sup>42</sup>

If Judas believed in the divine mission of Christ, as he must have after observing his acts for so many years, he also believed that this leadership would manifest itself not by means of a death on the cross but by means of a military uprising.<sup>43</sup> To lead such an uprising Jesus would have to convince the religious establishment of his calling without falling into Roman hands. This demanded a deal between Judas and the priests – an agreement to conduct a religious trial and avoid a political trial. As I will show, given the incentives of the parties involved and the sequential nature of this game, this agreement was broken by the priests.

In sum, the Zealots wished to confront Rome under the leadership of a true Messiah. Confronting Rome under a false Messiah would be a disaster and would mean the end of the Zealot movement. A religious trial could determine whether Jesus possessed charismatic powers or was a mere impostor, a false Messiah and blasphemer. Depending on the ruling of the religious authorities, the Zealots would then follow Jesus into battle or seek a new leader, both outcomes preferable to the status quo.

Diagram I  $0 < a < b < 1$

Jesus versus Pilate R

		C	D
J	C	(1,1)	(0,b)
	D	(b,0)	(a,a)

(The first payoff in each pair is Jesus', the second is Rome's)

*Figure 1.*

## 5. THE GAME

### 5.1. *Stage 1: Jesus versus Pilate*

Given these preferences, we can model the events described in the scriptures as a game with four stages. The first stage is a coordination game between the Roman government (R) and the emerging Christian movement (J). It is a stag hunt, a game with two pure strategy equilibria of which one is pareto optimal and the other pareto sub-optimal. The players move simultaneously, with each player choosing either to cooperate or to defect. Each party stands to gain from cooperating but the costs of cooperating alone while the other defects are significant, so that players prefer to defect from cooperation if they believe that their opponents are likely to do so too.

In the case of this Roman–Christian relationship this game structure entails the following logic: Although peaceful coexistence is the most desirable outcome for both Romans and Christians, each

party stands to lose from pursuing a peaceful path while the other chooses conflict. Given uncertainties and mistrust between the two movements, they might both choose conflict, even though mutual conflict is the less desirable equilibrium.

In this first stage both players make a simultaneous move: each chooses one of two moves. The Christian movement (player J) chooses between loyalty and revolt. The Roman government (player R) chooses between toleration and suppression. Payoffs are ranked  $0 < a < b < 1$ . The game has four possible outcomes with the following payoffs for the players (The first payoff in each set represents the Roman payoff, the second is the payoff for the Christian movement):

CC: Mutual cooperation. This is the Pareto-optimal equilibrium in this game with payoffs (1, 1). The Christian movement could continue to gather a loyal following and gain acceptance within the Jewish community.

DC: A successful Christian revolt against Rome, matched by Roman passivity, with payoffs (0, b). This would be the worst possible outcome from a Roman point of view.

CD: A successful unilateral Roman move to eradicate the Christian movement, matched by Christian passivity, with payoffs (b, 0). This would be the worst possible outcome for the young Christian movement.

DD: Mutual confrontation – the Christian movement forcibly resists a Roman attempt at eradication, with payoffs (a, a). While this scenario would be preferable to voluntary submission by R or J, it would most likely end in the death of the Christian leader. For both Jesus and his movement, crucifixion is a Pareto sub-optimal outcome.

Both players clearly prefer the status quo (CC) over one-sided confrontation (CD or DC). Both also prefer mutual confrontation (DD) to one-sided submission (DC or CD). The two Nash equilibria that result are status quo and mutual confrontation (i.e., crucifixion). Although both players prefer the status quo over mutual confrontation, both outcomes are Nash equilibria in the sense that they are both situations in which both players are playing their best move given what the other player is playing, and there is no incentive for either party to defect from their move. It is only in the interest of one party to defect if it does so simultaneously with the other party.

This is precisely what the Zealots (Z) and the religious establishment (P) will attempt to achieve. Player P cannot move R to DD without Z moving J to DD at the same time. However, should Jesus and Pilate find themselves facing each other in a public trial, the *modus vivendi* between them will fall apart.

### 5.2. *Stage 2: The arrest*

The second stage details the attempts by the extreme organizations within R and J to replace the status quo between R and J by mutual confrontation. The radical Jewish movements seeks to do so in order to overthrow the Roman regime; the religious establishment wishes to do so in order to eradicate the Christian movement. Key in this game is Judas' desire to confront Jesus with the religious establishment yet the priests' desire to avoid confronting a true Messiah in a religious trial. The resulting game is a signaling game of incomplete information, meaning that the beliefs and goals of one player are not known to the other player. The first player makes a move and the second player makes deductions about the first player's preferences (and consequently his identity) based on that move.

In this game, the priests (R) seek to determine the identity of Judas (Z) based on the manner of Judas' betrayal. The priests wish to learn about the identity and preferences of Judas in order to answer the question that troubles them most: is Jesus the true Messiah? The priests would try Jesus only if they believed that he is not the Messiah, since a true Messiah might reveal his identity indisputably in court (by means of a miracle, for example) and thus signal an end to the religious authority of the priesthood. Thus the priests pay attention to the manner of Judas' betrayal because they want to avoid trying a true Messiah. They interpret Judas' actions as follows: if Judas betrays Jesus for money, then Judas must be acting out of greed and is therefore a disloyal disciple to a false Messiah; if, however, Judas betrays Jesus without demanding money, then Judas is out to test his master, a true Messiah. Thus Judas "signals" his own knowledge and goals by choosing between three courses of action: remaining loyal to Jesus, betraying him for money or betraying him for no money.

Nature determines whether Jesus is the Messiah (M) or not ( $-M$ ). In other words, before Z makes the first move, P believes with probab-

Diagram II  
The Arrest

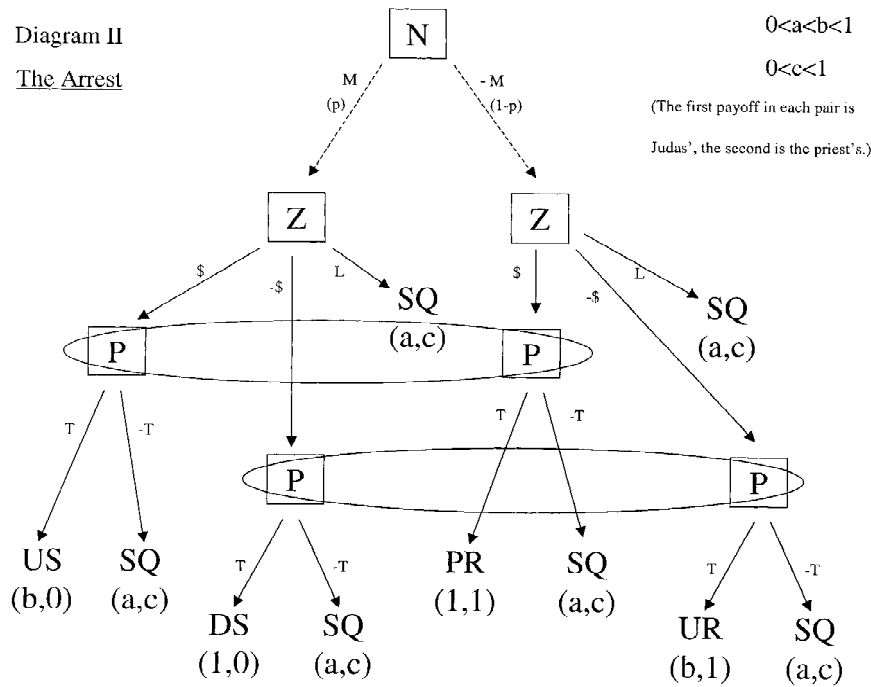


Figure 2.

ility  $p$  that Jesus is the Messiah, and with probability  $1-p$  that he is not.

Judas (Z) makes one of three moves, based on his belief in the identity of Jesus and thus his motivation for loyalty or betrayal.

L: Z remains loyal to Jesus, does nothing, and the status quo (SQ) prevails.

-\$: Z hands Jesus over to the priests but does not accept or demand money.

\$: Z betrays Jesus for a symbolic sum of money.

If Z has chosen to act, P observes this move and respond in one of two ways:

-T: P chooses not to try Jesus, with outcome SQ.

T: P does try Jesus. This will lead to four possible outcomes (US, DS, UR, PR) depending on whether Judas accepted money and on whether or not Jesus is the Messiah.

The payoffs are ranked  $0 < a < b < 1$  for player Z and  $0 < c < d < 1$  for player P. The outcomes have the following payoffs (the first payoff in each set is the payoff for Z, the second payoff is the payoff for P):

SQ (a,c) – the Christian movement continues to prosper and no confrontation with Rome ensues, to the disappointment of both Z and P.

US: Undignified success for the Zealot movement (b,0) – Jesus is betrayed, tried and, since he is the Messiah, officially recognized. This would mean an end to the current priesthood but success as far as the Zealots are concerned.

DS: Dignified success for the Zealot movement (1,0) – similar to undignified success but without Judas being tainted as traitor since no money has changed hands.

PR: Profitable Zealot reorientation (1,1) – Jesus is betrayed, tried and, since he is not the Messiah, executed for blasphemy. The Zealots must search for a new leader but have avoided the danger of being led into battle by a non-Messiah.

UR: Unprofitable Zealot reorientation (b,1) - similar to profitable reorientation but Judas does not gain thirty pieces of silver.

There are several equilibria in the game. In other words, there are several rational combinations of strategies that the players could pursue, irrespective of the information they uncover during the game. The most robust of these equilibria is also the equilibrium which corresponds best with our evidence about players' beliefs and motives. It results from the following strategy combination: Judas demands money for handing over Jesus, no matter what he knows about his identity, and the priests respond with a trial if money was demanded and status quo if no money was demanded. Judas' move blurs the difference between a greedy and a loyal disciple by making it impossible to infer whether he is one or the other. A greedy disciple would demand money out of greed, whereas a loyal disciple would demand money to avoid sending a clear signal. This is known as a pooling equilibrium because Judas' true knowledge is not revealed by his move. The thirty pieces of silver thus fulfill a double role: they reduce the priestly belief in the Messianic identity of Jesus sufficiently to initiate a trial and they are tantamount to a pact between

the two movements, the Zealots and the priests, to test the leadership potential of Jesus. This stage of the game ends with a trial, to the apparent satisfaction of Judas and to the potential consternation of the priests, who are about to discover the true identity of Jesus.

My analysis diverges from the prevalent interpretation of the Gospel story on three points. First, I reject the notion of the priesthood as inherently corrupt.<sup>44</sup> The priesthood would not, and – as is evident from the pedantic proceedings of the subsequent trial – could not, execute Jesus if he proved his Messianic mission, just as they would not recognize him as the Messiah if he failed to do so. Trying Jesus thus entails some risk for the priests. The higher their initial beliefs in Jesus' Messianic identity, i.e., the higher  $p$ , the more likely they are to opt for the status quo.

Second, I do not assume that Judas is inherently evil or greedy. Instead, I posit two possibilities, as determined by nature's move at the outset of the game. I assume that Judas knows whether Jesus is or is not the Messiah, having followed him in recent years as a disciple and observed his activities, and values loyalty accordingly. A conscious follower of the true Messiah would be foolish to betray him for a small sum of money. A greedy follower of a false Messiah would be foolish to forgo payment for betrayal. By demanding money for initiating the game Judas can signal or blur his own goals and the identity of Jesus. As opposed to a voluntary handing over of Jesus for a trial that would determine his Messianic qualification, the demand for money labels the act a betrayal, the perpetrator a traitor and Jesus, evidently, a false Messiah.

Most importantly, as stated in the introduction to this paper, I diverge from a literal reading of the Gospel text by conceiving of Judas as acting out of institutional interests, beyond immediate personal interests. Greed and loyalty aside, the main purpose of his actions was to assure the Zealots of a strong leader in their impending confrontation with the Romans. Judas' payoffs thus reflect indifference as to the outcome of the trial, be it a validation of Jesus' Messianic identity which establishes his leadership of the Zealots or refutation of his identity which would lead the Zealots to seek a new leader. Personal issues, such as profit or stigma attached to betrayal, merely skew these preferences one way or another.

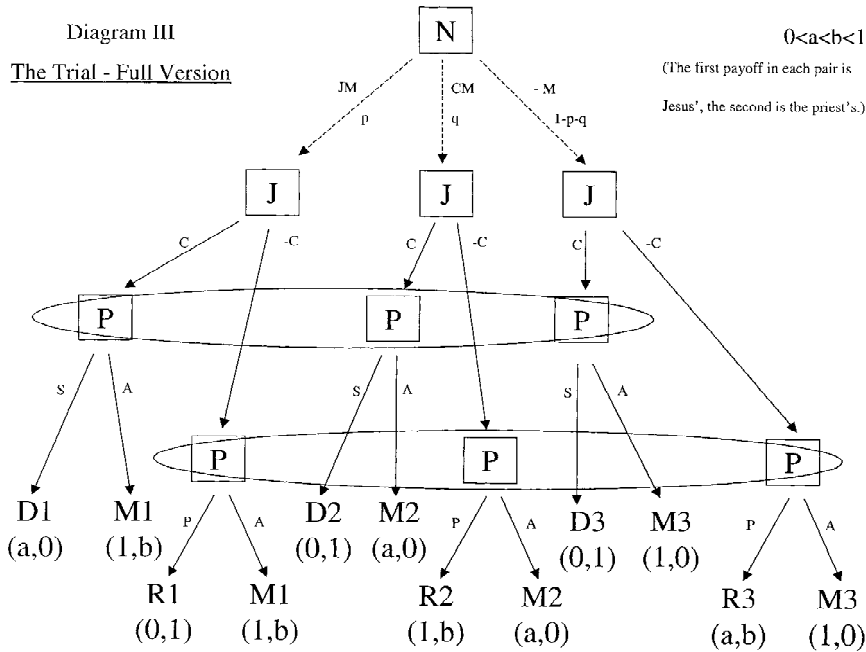


Figure 3.

5.3. Stage 3: The trial

This is a second signaling game, this time between Jesus and the Priests. This game hinges on the theological disagreement between Jesus on one hand, and Judas and the priests on the other hand, as to the characteristics of Messianic leadership. As we saw in the Gospels, Josephus and Maimonides, above, traditional Jewish interpretations of the Messiah figure as held by the priests and the Zealots differed from the Christian interpretation by assigning a politically active, even martial, role to the Messiah. Contrary to this view of the Messiah as revolutionary leader, the young Christian movement stressed non-violence and submission to existing authority, while emphasizing the other-worldly nature of their strivings.

As the game begins, the priests suspect that Jesus is one of three types: a Jewish Messiah (JM) with probability  $p$ , a Christian Messiah (CM) with probability  $q$ , or no Messiah at all (-M) with probability  $1-p-q$ .

Jesus makes one of two moves:

C: He confronts the Priests with evidence of his mission and demands to be recognized as the Messiah.

–C: He is non-confrontational in order to avoid a verdict altogether.

The priests observe this move and respond:

If he is confrontational, they either:

S: Stone him to for blasphemy and he dies (D), or

A: Accept his leadership, recognizing that he is the true Messiah (M).

If he is non-confrontational, they either:

P: Pass responsibility for his fate on to the Roman authorities (R), or

A: Accept his leadership, recognizing that he is the true Messiah (M).

Note that the priests can only stone Jesus if he makes claims to being the Messiah (i.e., – if he is confrontational) and they can only pass him on to the Roman authorities if he does not. Because each of three Jesus types chooses one of two moves, and the priests respond with one of two moves, there are 12 possible outcomes for this game. However, irrespective of whether Jesus was confrontational or not, payoffs for outcome M are the same (for each Jesus type but not across Jesus types). Therefore, there are only nine distinct payoff pairs for this game. Preferences are ranked  $0 < a < 1$  for player J and  $0 < b < 1$  for player P (the first payoff in each pair is the payoff for J, the second payoff is the payoff for P):

D1. The priests execute the Jewish Messiah (a,0)

D2. The priests execute a Christian Messiah (0,1)

D3. The priests execute a non-Messiah (0,1)

M1. The priests correctly recognize Jesus as a Jewish Messiah (1,b)

M2. The priests recognize a Christian Messiah as a Jewish Messiah (a,0)

M3. The priests recognize a non-Messiah as the Jewish Messiah (1,0)

R1. The priests have no evidence to recognize or execute the Jewish Messiah. They exploit this opportunity to lead him into a confrontation with the Roman Authorities (0,1)

R2. The priests hand a Christian Messiah to the Roman authorities (1,b)

R3. The priests hand a non-Messiah to the Roman authorities (a,b)

In assigning preferences over the outcomes of this game I made several simplifying assumptions: that the trial reveals the true identity of Jesus with probability 1; that Jesus' beliefs about his own identity are correct with probability 1; and that the middle values for payoffs (a and b) are the same for all types, e.g.: the value of stoning (a) for a Jewish Messiah (JM) equals the value of being declared a Messiah for a Christian Messiah (CM) equals the value of being handed over to the Romans for a false Messiah (-M). Similarly, the value of (b) is constant across all Jesus types. These simplifying assumptions allow for comparisons between the three states and permit conclusions about equilibria outcomes.

The principal difference between the three Messiah types is their preference ranking over the three possible outcomes of the game. A Jewish Messiah wishes to confront the priests, even at the risk of a martyr's death by stoning. A Christian Messiah wishes to be non-confrontational, avoid being declared a Messiah (a move tantamount to confronting Rome in the first stage) and try to work things out with Pilate. A false Messiah would like to be recognized as Messiah but prefers the uncertainty of being handed to the Romans over death by stoning.

This game has one subgame perfect, robust (with respect to  $p$ ), trembling-hand equilibrium.<sup>45</sup> Unlike Judas' pooling strategy in the previous game, the three Jesus types separate in this strategy, meaning that each type would choose a different move: type JM is confrontational, CM is non-confrontational and -M is confrontational. Priests respond with P for confrontation and A for non-confrontation. This equilibrium conforms to the observed outcome as related in the Gospels. Whereas a confrontational claimant to Messiahship would have been recognized as Messiah by the priests, Jesus' non-confrontational stance leads the priests to conclude that he is not a (Jewish) Messiah. Since he has not committed blasphemy, they hand him over to the Romans.

Why does Jesus not confront the Priests with overwhelming evidence of his Messianic identity? One answer, given directly by the Gospel according to John, confirms the payoff structure of this third game: Jesus preferred being handed over to the Romans because this would fulfill his earlier predictions of being delivered to the

Gentiles and being “lifted up” – i.e. crucified.<sup>46</sup> This explanation, although rational from the point of view of an actor who can foretell the future and realizes that he cannot escape his own destiny, begs the question, to some extent. A more rationalist answer lies in the contrast between Jewish and Christian views of Messianism. Jesus exemplifies a new kind of spiritual leadership, unknown to his Jewish audience. The moves by nature that determined M or not M in the previous game exemplified the Zealot belief in the Messianic identity of Jesus, a belief in a Jewish Messiah that would prove his calling to the court, unite Israel and confront the foreign occupation.

By the end of this game, however, it is not at all clear whether the first move by Nature determines Jesus’ identity as a Jewish or Christian Messiah. As far as the priests are concerned, Jesus’ non-confrontational stance is evidence against his being a Messiah. From a Jewish point of view, the behavior of Jesus before, during and after the trial indicates that he is not the Messiah – more precisely – that he is not a Messiah by Jewish definitions prevalent in the first century. Our ex-post understanding of his doctrine, however, sheds no such light on his identity. From a Christian point of view, Jesus’ behavior becomes the very type of Messianic behavior in the face of adversity. From a game theoretical point of view the two outcomes are identical.

Judas may or may not have been present at the trial. If he does observe the outcome of the trial, it should be entirely unexpected given his previous beliefs.<sup>47</sup> Judas is unfamiliar with the Christian-Messiah type and expects a particular version of this third game family in which  $q$  is set to zero. Both equilibria in this version of stage 3 are pooling equilibria in which all Jesus-types act confrontational and priests respond by declaring Jesus to be the true Messiah.<sup>48</sup> Given his belief that  $q = 0$  and a high belief in the Messianic identity of Jesus, Judas would expect Jesus to emerge from this game as an acknowledged Messiah. There are only two possible outcomes in this game, as Judas sees it: Death by stoning for a false Messiah or vindication for a true Messiah. *Handing over Jesus to the Romans is not a possible equilibrium outcome, given the trial as perceived by Judas.* Since Jesus was neither declared Messiah nor executed for failing to assert his Messianic identity, something must have gone horribly wrong. Realizing that the priests

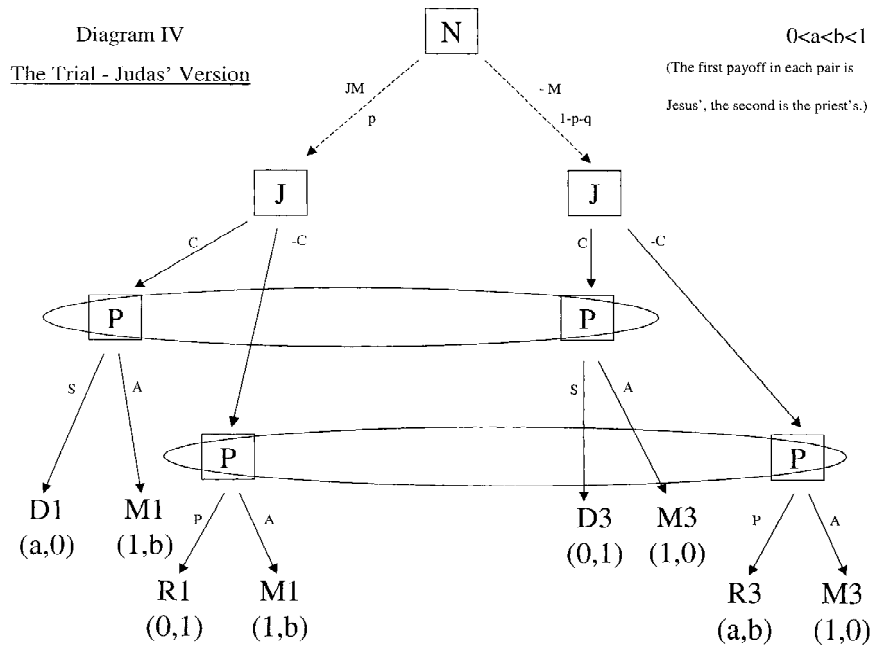


Figure 4.

renege on their agreement to test Jesus themselves, Judas attempts to withdraw, unsuccessfully, from the deal struck earlier.<sup>49</sup>

Jesus is being handed over to a foreign authority. This means that Judas is no longer merely a disloyal disciple. He is something far worse – a *moser*, a halakic category designating one who turns over another Jew to gentile authorities. The penalty for this form of treason is death by hanging, a sentence which Judas proceeds to execute upon himself.<sup>50</sup>

5.4. Stage 4: Return to the first game – Jesus and Pilate

The Zealots and the Priests have succeeded, through uneasy collaboration, in bringing the young Christian movement and the Roman government into confrontation. The Gospel passages describe the trial of Jesus before Pilate in a manner that conforms to two players attempting to withdraw simultaneously from a Pareto sub-optimal equilibrium. Jesus is presented to Pilate as an insurgent who, by claiming to be King of the Jews, has launched an attack against Rome's authority. As argued above, Pilate's only rational move to this perceived provocation is to respond in kind. J and R find

themselves at mutual defection (DD). This is a Pareto sub-optimal outcome, yet the presence of the priests urging Pilate on and the cries of the crowd outside the palace prevent J and R from moving simultaneously towards the Pareto optimal outcome of mutual cooperation.

Both actors attempt in vain to rectify this situation. Jesus attempts to do so by refusing time and again to answer provocative questions that might brand him a political dissident; Pilate attempts to do so by refusing to try Jesus, by attempting to return him to the priests for trial, by passing him onto Herod for trial and by offering the crowd a chance to ransom Jesus. All attempts having failed, Pilate consents to crucifixion, the standard death penalty for sedition. It is clear from the text that Jesus does not hold Rome responsible for this verdict. It is equally clear that Rome has no direct accusation against the Christian movement. Pilate can even be described as sympathetic to the Christian leader, refusing to bear the responsibility for the trial or its outcome by washing his hands in innocence.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The game presented above fills gaps in the Gospel accounts of the trial of Jesus and offers answers to questions raised in Section two of this paper. I have argued that Judas betrays Jesus not out of individualist interests but as a representative of a radical movement, the Sicarii, which adopted Jesus as their Messiah. This movement expected, as did parallel movements in this period, that Jesus would lead his followers to political and military victory over the foreign rulers of Judea. Judas' decision to deliver Jesus into the hands of the religious courts stemmed from his desire to accelerate the pace of events given Jesus' reluctance to forcefully claim his rightful position.

As far as Judas is concerned, the game is lost as soon as Jesus is handed over to the Romans. The models above indicate that Judas would not have initiated the game had he grasped Jesus' interpretation of Messianism. Had Judas known in stage 2 that a non-confrontational Jesus was at all compatible with a Messianic Jesus, he would clearly have opted for the status quo rather than betray his master. Judas could not have understood Jesus' posture, given

his own religious bias, just as he could not have predicted that his self-imposed execution by hanging would prove unnecessary three days later. His master's death was temporary; the betrayal, trial and crucifixion a means towards the salvation of man.

Why does Jesus not assert his Messianic identity in his questioning before the priests? Doing so would have amounted to an unprovoked attack on Rome's political authority in Judea. His interests at this stage of the game are to be passed into Roman hands as quickly as possible, rather than score victory over the priests. Given the choice among succumbing to the priests, overwhelming them by means of a miracle or assuming an ambiguous stance, he chooses the latter. The priests, in turn, prefer a trial by Rome over a conclusive religious judgement. Although the Sanhedrin do have the right to execute for blasphemy and may well have been absolutely sure of his guilt, they do not have the evidence necessary for executing Jesus. Jesus refuses to commit blasphemy in their presence by asserting his messianic authority and the court fails to produce two independent witnesses who will testify that Jesus has committed blasphemy in the past, as required by Jewish law for the purposes of a death sentence. His behavior forces the priests to choose between an unwarranted declaration of Jesus as Messiah and an equally unwarranted execution by stoning. Instead, they choose to hand the accused over to another court on a different charge.<sup>51</sup>

The timbre of the dialogue with Pilate is remarkable. Here both sides show extreme hesitation. Pilate repeats his questions over and over in order to give Jesus an opportunity to withdraw. "His conduct, as described in the Gospels, shows an undignified feebleness and vacillation which one would not expect of a man who had already held down one of the worst trouble-spots in the empire for a number of years, and was destined to keep the post for a further considerable period."<sup>52</sup> Pilate refuses to condemn Jesus several times and, according one version, even passes him to Herod, who promptly returns Jesus to Pilate. This is their mutual attempt to reverse the game and return, simultaneously, to mutual cooperation. Their preference structure, past moves and the presence of the priests as provoking agents make such a move impossible. Jesus is led off to crucifixion and Pilate washes his hands in innocence. It is indeed neither Pilate's nor Jesus' direct responsibility that a Pareto sub-optimal outcome

has been reached. Although they are the most powerful players their preference structure offered opportunities for collaboration between mutual opponents. A combination of interactive preferences and partially veiled beliefs led to an outcome that none but the priests are content with.

The interactions between the four institutions examined here also entail broad lessons about the behavior of radical factions and opposition movements. A ruling government and a moderate opposition group can reach accord if neither side has a dominant strategy to challenge the status quo, irrespective of the other player's move. When the relationship between the ruling government and the opposition assumes the shape of a stag hunt, mutual cooperation is preferred to mutual defection but mutual defection is preferred to unilateral cooperation. In such a case neither party has an incentive to defect if the status-quo prevails at the outset of the game.

In such a situation, discontent elements within the establishment and radical elements within the opposition have an incentive to cooperate in order to topple the status quo. Only by propelling their respective partners into a confrontation at the same time can they hope to induce change. However, since they have different capabilities and preferences this cooperation takes the form of a sequential game, creating an opportunity for shirking.

As stages two and three of the game demonstrate, when the opportunity to shirk arises, the player who plays the final move has an incentive to defect and the player who plays the first move therefore has an incentive not to play. Because both parties are subversive they cannot officially contract or use third party enforcement to oversee their agreement. Both parties may share the goal of toppling the status quo but their long-term political interests could not be more different. Cooperation will only take place if either player believes that, once the status quo has been overturned, power will remain in his hands. In other words, each player must have strong beliefs that it will subsume the other under its leadership after the revolution.

A word needs to be said about the aftermath of the events examined above. It is important to note that, while the outcome is sub-optimal for all but one of the players involved, the events that followed the crucifixion of Christ and his death on the cross, according to Christian beliefs, achieve not only a mutual return to

cooperation in the interaction between the Christian movement and the Roman government, a renewed opportunity for the Zealot movement, but also a sub-optimal outcome for the priesthood. The resurrection completely reverses the outcome of the three games. Christ returns to lead his movement and his resurrection is harnessed as a key event in the theology of the group. This peaceful victory allows for a continued harmony between Christians and Rome for some time. Christians participated in none of the Jewish wars against the Romans. Only when the movement begins to openly challenge Roman authority does Rome respond with force.<sup>53</sup>

The Zealots are given new opportunities to lead insurrections. The resurrection confirmed the leadership of Christ to some Zealots within the Christian movement and allowed others to choose alternative Messiahs for purposes of an armed revolt. It is through such revolts that the Jewish wars against the Romans were instigated, as detailed in the works of Josephus: “What, more than all else incited them to the war was an ambiguous oracle, likewise found in the sacred scriptures to the effect that at the time one from their country would become ruler of the world.”<sup>54</sup> Under the Messianic leadership of Judah of Galilee in 66 AD, and under the Messianic leadership of Bar-Kokhva in 115 and 132 AD, the Zealots and Sicarri faced Rome and even scored several decisive victories. The overall outcome however, just as Jesus had prophesied it, was the destruction of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple in it, less than 40 years after the crucifixion. Thus the priests are the long-term losers of a series of interactions in which, it seemed initially, they were the only beneficiaries. In this sense, crucifixion was a favorable outcome that permitted both Jewish and Christian believers to choose between following Jesus as the true Messiah or expecting the arrival of a different Messiah. It is, however, difficult to generalize from this final conclusion since it suggests that payoffs can be shaped ex-post by actors capable of resurrection.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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pensible in writing this paper. All responsibility for errors remains, of course, my own.

#### NOTES

1. A listing of game theoretic analyses of literary texts can be found in O'Neill (1991). See also Barry O'Neill, "Deception and Trickery in the Book of Genesis" (Talk for the Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Economics, June 2000); Lowry and Gordon (1998); O'Neill (1982) and Brams (1994).
2. Brams (2003), p. 7
3. Brown, p. 679
4. Schonfield, p. 131; Along similar lines see Watson, p. 159.
5. Winter, p. 113
6. One notable exception is the 14th century Dominican preacher Vinzenz Ferrer. See Klassen, pp. 4–8.
7. The relevant sections are Mark 14–15, Matthew 26–27, Luke 22–23, John 13:2, John 18, Acts 1.
8. The prophecy in Zechariah 11:12 is puzzling and probably taken out of context by the Gospel authors. See Brown, pp. 1401–4.
9. Matthew 26:55, Mark 14:48, Luke 22:52
10. Bornkamm, pp. 163–4; Winter, p. 10; Burkill (1956), pp. 80–96; Burkill (1958), pp. 1–18; Brown, pp. 368–371.
11. Winter, p. 70 and Winter, pp. 100–112, with reference to Mishnah Sanhedrin vii:1.
12. Tacitus, *Annals of Imperial Rome*, Book XIV; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XVII, Ch III, Sc 3 and Book XX, Ch IX, Sc 1; Philo of Alexandria, *Embassy to Gaius*, segments 212, 301 and 307. Suetonius, Pliny the Younger and Lucian mention Christ, but all wrote 50–100 years after the events and contribute no additional knowledge about his life or deeds (Mould, p. 486; McLaren, pp. 34–8, 41 and 45).
13. Winter, p. 2, McLaren, pp. 90, 97.
14. Grant, p. 197.
15. For a list of texts discussing the revolutionary politics of Jesus and his disciples see Brown, pp. 679–693.
16. Winter, p. 140.
17. Matt 22:21; Mark 12:17.
18. Matt 10:34.
19. Matt 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42. See description in Bornkamm, p. 162.
20. Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34.
21. Mould, p. 466.
22. Schuerer, p. 186.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 198–9.

24. Feldman and Hata, p. 48.
25. Schuerer, p. 75.
26. Mould, p. 471.
27. Schuerer, pp. 193–5.
28. Bornkamm, p. 159.
29. McLaren, p. 98.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
31. Schonfield, p. 122.
32. The most comprehensive sources on the identity and motivation of Judas are Klassen (1996) and Appendix V in Brown (1994). The latter includes and extensive bibliography on the subject.
33. Schuerer, 229–230, Klassen, p.32.
34. Mould, p. 471.
35. Matthew 10:4, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:15, Acts 1:13.
36. Feldman and Hata, p. 28.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
38. These passages in the Slavonic text of Josephus are absent from the Greek originals. Watson, p.129, quoting from Geoffrey A. Williamson, *Josephus: The Jewish War*, Harmondsworth, 1959, p. 404.
39. Klassen, throughout and Brown, pp. 211–213 and 1399–1404.
40. Feldman and Hata, p. 48; Watson, p. 35.
41. Mark 15:6. Luke 23:19.
42. Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Book 14, uncensored version of chapter 11. A direct reference to the false messianism of Jesus and Muhammad follows.
43. Grant, p. 156; Watson, p. 14.
44. See discussion in Brown, pp. 391–397. Winter, p. 146, agrees and notes the Sanhedrin's responsibility for maintaining the public peace.
45. Trembling-hand equilibria in a game are those Nash equilibria that are not weakly dominated. See for example van Damme (1991). In this game there is only one such equilibrium. It is robust for  $p+q > 2/3$ , that is, for low likelihood of a false Messiah who could use this strategy to mask his identity. In a less robust equilibrium JM, CM and –M pool at confrontation. Priests respond with M for confrontation and M for non-confrontation. This second equilibrium holds for  $p > 2/3$ .
46. Compare John 18:32 with the predictions in John 12:32–33 and Mark 10:33.
47. Brown, pp. 638–640.
48. In one equilibrium priests respond with M irrespective of J's previous move; In the second equilibrium the priests respond with M to a confrontational move and with R to a non-confrontational move. Either way, the outcome is M and not R. These equilibria hold for  $p > 2/3$ , which adequately describes Judas' beliefs in Jesus' Messianic identity.

49. Watson, throughout and pp. 38–40, hints that there may indeed have been foul play involved in the priests' refusal to try Jesus, their attempt to use false evidence against him and the unexplained tearing of garments. He concludes that an early condemnation of Jesus was reversed the following day by dissenting members of the Sanhedrin.
50. Brown, p. 1400.
51. Watson, pp. 170–1 compares this move with the trial of Al Capone: "If you can't get him for murder, try tax evasion."
52. Grant, pp. 162–3.
53. Feldman and Hata, p. 54.
54. Josephus, VI, V, 4.

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