

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## Marcion: Anti-Jewish Christian Extremist or Forerunner of Theological Pluralism?

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The struggle over the body of Christ between the church Marcion founded and those who regarded his alternative Christianity as heretical can be framed from the historian of religions' standpoint as a struggle over how the church would envision and enact its relation to the Judaic religious tradition and its inheritance. Marcion's solution to 'the problem of Judaism' — a Christian problem, of course, but none the less pressing — was to deny all relation, to sever all ties; catholic tradition opted for a more ambiguous relation to Judaism, one characterized by both claiming and disclaiming. Or at least this has been the standard way of framing Marcion within a scheme of Christian anti-Judaisms, where he is at one extreme, the catholic having a middle position, and Torah observing Christians on the other extreme. Among the issues reconsidered in the quest to think about Marcion since Harnack or even without Harnack,<sup>2</sup> this consensus about Marcion vis-a-vis Judaism has been subject of a number of notable assaults in the last quarter century. On this issue Harnack had simply retailed an earlier conclusion of scholarship, one expressed by F. C. Baur as early as 1853: that Marcionitism was "the manifestation in

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<sup>2</sup> For the *status questionis* of Marcion post-Harnack, we have the comprehensive bibliographic essay by Michel Tardieu, "Marcion depuis Harnack" in Barnard Lauret's French translation of Harnack, *Marcion: L'évangile du Dieu étranger* (Paris: Cerf, 2005), 419–561. See also the excellent contributions of Gerhard May on this topic, "Marcion ohne Harnack," in Gerhard May and Katharina Greschat (eds.), *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 1–7. May had previously published a study on the question in English, "Marcion in Contemporary Views: Results and Open Questions, *Second Century* 6 (1987–88), 129–51. May's various papers on Marcion have been reprinted in his *Marcion: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (eds. Katharine Greschat and Martin Meiser; Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2005).

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the ancient church in which Paulinism developed the greatest energy of its anti-Jewish tendency.”<sup>3</sup> Some scholars have gone so far as to raise the question as to whether Marcion’s theology and church, had it won the day, might have been less anti-Jewish than Christianity largely turned out to be. But such hypotheticals, I believe, escape what level of certainty historical knowledge can afford us; raising questions, however, about comparative Christian anti-Judaisms is a worthy enterprise, particularly since research into this aspect of church history — and our knowledge of Judaism in the Roman period — has advanced not insignificantly since Harnack.

Harnack for his part maintained that Marcion was “the sharpest adversary of Judaism” and thought his church had been built upon “a resentment toward Judaism and its religion.”<sup>4</sup> Walter Bauer, in his lengthy and searching 1923 review of Harnack’s *Marcion*,<sup>5</sup> had no second thoughts on this matter and affirmed that the ship-owner (*nauclerus*)<sup>6</sup> from Pontus set out from “a pronounced aversion to Judaism, a harshly antisemitic outlook” which combined with his loathing for material creation produced “an enmity against the God of the Jews.”<sup>7</sup> Hans Jonas, contrary to Harnack, presents Marcion as representative of gnosticism, characterizing Marcion as having a “pitiless contempt of the creator and his work.”<sup>8</sup> Against this consensus, a number of scholars have recently raised the possibility that although Marcion may have deprecated all things Old Testamental so far as Christianity was concerned, such a position may have entailed no prejudice against

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<sup>3</sup> Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Das Christentum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte* (Tübingen: Fues, 1853), 74.

<sup>4</sup> Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel*, 15; *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 21–22.

<sup>5</sup> Adolph von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1921; 1<sup>st</sup> edition). Here I cite the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of 1924, reprinted in 1960 by Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt: *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom Fremden Gott / Neue Studien zu Marcion*. The second half of this work consists of appendices with page numbers beginning again and marked with an asterisk; there follow *Neue Studien zu Marcion*, originally published in 1923 as *Texte und Untersuchungen*, 44/4 (a 28-page engagement with reviews of the first edition). The first part of Harnack’s work (in the slightly revised 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) has been translated in English by J. E. Steely and L. D. Bierma in 1990 (published by Labyrinth Press) as *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God*. This translation has been reprinted by Wipf & Stock (2007).

<sup>6</sup> This appellation is repeated used by Tertullian (*Praescr.* 30.1; *Marc.* 1.18.4; 3.6.3; 4.9.2; 5.1.2). A *nauclerus* “can be an owner or a joint owner of a ship, or he may only be someone commissioned by the owner” (Gerhard May, *Marcion in Contemporary Views: Results and Open Questions, Second Century 6* (1987–88), 129–51; here, 130). See May’s full discussion in “Der ‘Schiffsreeeder’ Markion”, *StPatr* (1989), 142–54 (repr. in May, *Markion*).

<sup>7</sup> “ein ausgeprägter Widerwille gegen das Judentum, eine streng antisemitische Einstellung des inneren Menschen,” Walter Bauer, review of Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.), in *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* 185 (1923), 1–14 (here, 7).

<sup>8</sup> *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of An Alien God and The Beginnings of Christianity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 254. Jonas’ had written similarly in the earlier German version of this book (1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1934) of “die marcionistische Welt- und Schöpferverachtung” (*Gnosis und spätantike Geist: Die mythologische Gnosis* [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954], 155).

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the legitimacy of Torah as the basis for the religion of Jews. Along such lines Marcion would be a pioneer—as John Marshall has urged in an article published last year in *The Journal of Early Christian Studies*—of the so-called “two-covenant” or *Sonderweg* (more literally, ‘separate ways’) solution which reads Paul’s critique of the Law as applying only to attempts to harness it as a means for the salvation of *gentiles*.<sup>9</sup> Thus reconsidering Marcion’s position on Jews and Judaism need not fly in the face of the mass of evidence from Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and others which has Marcion engaged in a sustained attack upon the Creator God and his Law.

Here I would like to call into question the validity of these recent scholarly claims which have which attempted to dismantle or mitigate the traditional portrait of Marcion as sharply anti-Jewish. Following the suggestion of David Balás that “Marcion’s ‘point of departure’ was deeply influenced by his and his fellow Christians’ relationship with Judaism” (and that the Bar Kochba war of 134–136 played a role in heightening the motivation for further Christian distancing from Judaism),<sup>10</sup> I hope to show that a more probable account of Marcion’s alternative version of Christianity must suppose that a major component of its success (and continued viability) will have been the complete severance of Christianity from Judaism presented as the purest form of the gospel. What was most innovative of Marcion—the total break with Judaism exemplified by his doctrine of Christ’s hitherto unknown Father and his ‘New Testament’ that both reflected and substantiated his anti-Old Testamentalism<sup>11</sup>—what was most innovative about Marcion, I will argue, is best explained as arising from the same socio-historical milieu that produced the forms of anti-Judaism dominating the witnesses to Christianity in the first half of the second century. This thesis is hardly original, but I think it worth reasserting here in light of the move to rethink Marcion on this issue. Just because Marcion’s Christianity does not correspond to the typical pattern of anti-Judaism in this period—which Marshall has fittingly dubbed “appropriative supersessionism”<sup>12</sup>—does not give us sufficient grounds for supposing Marcionitism to have been the kinder, gentler Christian anti-Judaism posited by recent scholars I will examine in what follows. Particularly weak, I hope to show, is the central piece of evidence adduced in support of

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<sup>9</sup> John W. Marshall, “Misunderstanding the New Paul: Marcion’s Transformation of the *Sonderzeit* Paul,” *J ECS* 20 (2012), 1–29. *Sonderweg* expresses the reading of Paul pioneer by Lloyd Gaston, John Gager, and Stanly Stowers. Marshall himself prefers the term *Sonderzeit*, in that it “emphasizes the eschatological thinking in Paul’s letters (*ibid.* 5). Marshall’s article merits fuller discussion than permitted in this paper.

<sup>10</sup> David Balás, “Marcion Revisited: A ‘Post-Harnack’ Perspective,” in Eugene March (ed.), *Texts and Testaments: Critical Essays on the Bible and Early Church Fathers* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1980), 95–108. Robert M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 27–38.

<sup>11</sup> I resort to this term to describe the phenomena in a way that could be endorsed by those whose views I am arguing against here.

<sup>12</sup> “Misunderstanding the New Paul: Marcion’s Transformation of the *Sonderzeit* Paul,” *J ECS* 20 (2012), 1–29, here, 16.

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the revisionist claims for Marcion's putative respect for Jews and Judaism: his use of the Old Testament as a reliable witness and his literal mode of interpreting it.

I will begin by drawing your attention to a speculative utterance Harnack made in his response to the reviews of the first edition of his Marcion book. How, he asked, can one account for the fact that Marcion appears to have had no interest in pagan mythology, philosophy, mysticism, or gnosis, quite the contrary of what we see in gnosticism? "An explanation offers itself which I have for a long time entertained in silence, since I cannot prove it: Marcion—or rather, his family—came from Judaism ...."<sup>13</sup> As admittedly non-probative grounds for this suggestion Harnack offered a number of circumstances: that the earliest conversions to Christianity were from Judaism; that Marcion's account of the messiah of Jewish expectation dovetail with that of Jews; that his Christianity arose from the aforementioned resentment against Judaism and its religion; that Marcion, like Paul, probably had a deep religious experience pushing him even farther away from his own people. I recount Harnack's musings here not only to highlight the groundless nature of this speculation as to Marcion's ethnic identity but also to indicate the pitfalls of seeking biographical explanations for Marcion through inferences which exceed the slim data (some quite disputable in nature) furnished by such evidence as survives.<sup>14</sup>

Stephen Wilson's 1986 contribution "Marcion and the Jews" has attended better to the limitations of the data. Wilson found it "important to state the obvious: Marcion's teaching in general contains a profound denigration of Judaism," but added the qualification that there is "little to suggest that Marcion was deliberately anti-Jewish."<sup>15</sup> Wilson follows others scholars in observing that "Marcion's dispute was not with the Jews as such but rather with (as he saw them) judaizing Catholic Christians."<sup>16</sup> His

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<sup>13</sup> Harnack, *Neue Studien zu Markion*, 15.

<sup>14</sup> Accordingly I will not engage the attempt of R. J. Hoffmann's highly problematic 1982 dissertation to dissolve the whole notion of Marcion's anti-Judaism. What Harnack had offered as a tentative suggestion devoid of real proof, Hoffmann found good to state as fact, referring to Marcion as "a convert from the Jewish community in Pontus" (*Marcion: On the Restitution of Christianity* [Chico, CA: Scholar's Press, 1984], 29). I follow the advice of Gerhard May's concluding statement in his review of Hoffmann's work ("Ein neues Markionbild?" *Theologische Rundschau* 51 [1986], 404–413: "H.'s Buch erreicht nicht das Niveau, das man heute von einer historischen Untersuchung verlangen kann. Man kann leider nur wünschen, daß es bald vergessen wird und nicht eine lange, unfruchtbare Auseinandersetzung mit ihm in Gang kommt." One bad review is of course not grounds for *damnatio memoriae*, but May's judgment is confirmed by the perhaps even more devastating review of Caroline Bammel in *JTS* 39 (1988), 227–32: "The first two chapters of the book, the most 'historical' in subject matter, are much the worst and are enough to put off all but the most naïve readers from feeling any confidence in so incompetent a guide." (p. 229).

<sup>15</sup> Stephen G. Wilson, "Marcion and the Jews," in *idem* (ed.), *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity* (vol. 2): *Separation and Polemic* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 45–58, here, 52–53.

<sup>16</sup> Wilson, "Marcion and the Jews," 55.

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conclusion that “both the Marcionite and the Catholic positions involve a denigration of Judaism”<sup>17</sup> seems fair enough and sounds a note now re-echoed on several sides, that Marcion ought not be scapegoated as a raging anti-Semite, as if thereby to take the onus off the far wider phenomenon of anti-Judaism in the Christian tradition. Thus Heikki Räisänen in his 1997 article “Marcion and the Origins of Christian Anti-Judaism” has cautioned that “some of this responsibility is misplaced when Marcion is viewed as the villain in the piece” and that “issues larger than the reputation of an individual are at stake.”<sup>18</sup> Räisänen vindicates Marcion to the extent that he takes his critique of the Old Testament as having a serious ethical basis that has not lost its relevance for Christians today.<sup>19</sup>

The more recent work of Joseph Tyson, whose monograph *Marcion and Luke-Acts* appeared in 2006,<sup>20</sup> takes the conscientious concern to share the responsibility for Christian anti-Judaism fairly a step further. Given the limitations of the present venue, I will not engage Tyson’s central and interesting thesis—his revival of his *Doktorvater* John Knox’s claim<sup>21</sup> that Luke and Acts were composed as counter-foils to Marcion’s New Testament—nor the attempt to plead for an early dating for Marcion’s activity. We will focus on Tyson to the extent that he seeks to exonerate Marcion from the charge of being at the extreme of early Christian anti-Judaism as per the prevailing consensus.

Tyson has summarized the aspects of his work touching the present topic in an article that appeared concurrently with his book, entitled “Anti-Judaism in Marcion and His Opponents.”<sup>22</sup> Here Tyson begins by referencing the reflections of Bart Ehrman in his 2003 book *Lost Christianities*. Had the Marcionite church triumphed over their proto-orthodox opponents, might the lachrymose history of Jewish-Christians relations have been better? Although “Marcion seems to have hated Jews and everything Jewish” — thus Ehrman — “their religion would have been considered to be of no relevance and certainly no competition for Christians. The entire history of anti-Semitism might have been avoided, ironically, by an anti-Jewish religion.”<sup>23</sup> Tyson thinks Ehrman’s characterization

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<sup>17</sup> Wilson, “Marcion and the Jews,” 58.

<sup>18</sup> Heikki Räisänen, “Marcion and the Origins of Christian Anti-Judaism: A Reappraisal,” *Temenos* 33 (1997), 121–35, here, 121.

<sup>19</sup> Räisänen, “Marcion and the Origins of Christian Anti-Judaism,” 132.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts: A Defining Struggle* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> John Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament: An Essay in the Early History of the Canon*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1942.

<sup>22</sup> In: *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 1 (2005–2006): 196–208 (accessible at: <http://escholarship.bc.edu/scjr/vol1/iss1/art21>).

<sup>23</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 111 (cited in Tyson, “Anti-Judaism in Marcion,” 197).

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of Marcion's sentiments in regard to Jews and Judaism needs "to be nuanced much more carefully and assessed in the light of views expressed by those who did in fact win the day, Marcion's opponents."<sup>24</sup> The demand for comparative analysis of the varieties of early Christian anti-Judaism is entirely in order; and I agree with Tyson that that it is too much to suppose we know Marcion to have hated Jews and "that it is simplistic to judge Marcion as anti-Jewish on the grounds of his attitude toward the Hebrew Bible"<sup>25</sup>

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But where Tyson goes from these considerations I cannot tread. I quote his comments that follow at length:

It is not sufficient simply to say that he was anti-Jewish, although he was certain that the morality he saw in the Hebrew Bible was deficient. Inevitably he would judge the religion that was based on these writings as inferior to his own. But apparently he would not question its legitimacy or its right to continue after the appearance of Jesus. He would pity Jews as being kept under the control of the God of creation, but he would regard their expectation of a Messiah as fully conforming to the writings of the Hebrew prophets. Further, his insistence on literal interpretation would, as Tertullian himself observed, create a significant compatibility with Jews.<sup>26</sup>

But without Marcion's writings before us, are we really able to discern whether his use of Jewish scriptures in a polemical intramural Christian conflict betokened a genuine respect for Jews and their religion or was simply the use of relevant documents for the sake of argumentation? Given the fact that such recourse to authoritative documents was recommended by rhetorical theory as a standard strategy in cases involving ambiguities of interpretation,<sup>27</sup> I find no sound basis for any legitimate inference here. Rather Tyson appears to be following a line of thought essential to Harnack's profile of Marcion as primarily a biblical theologian<sup>28</sup> with a penchant for literal interpretation. As if the mere procedure of literal interpretation, employed to parody and pillory the God of Israel, would have—as Tyson repeats in his conclusion of the article—"potentially created a bond of understanding between him and Jews that his opponents could not have achieved."<sup>29</sup> This is also an odd argument to make when Tyson himself is careful to note

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<sup>24</sup> Tyson, "Anti-Judaism in Marcion," 197. Similar material to what I cite here and in the other references below to this article is found in Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts*, 121–131.

<sup>25</sup> Tyson, "Anti-Judaism in Marcion," 201–202.

<sup>26</sup> Tyson, "Anti-Judaism in Marcion," 202.

<sup>27</sup> See Cicero, *De inventione* II, §166 ff. (LCL, Cicero II [London: Heinemann, 1949], 285).

<sup>28</sup> This is part of Harnack's attempt to distance Marcion *toto caelo* from gnosticism: "He proceeded from different presuppositions, from the Old Testament, from biblical Christianity, from Paul." (Marcion: *The Gospel*, 3; *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 4).

<sup>29</sup> Tyson, "Anti-Judaism in Marcion," 208.

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that Jewish scriptural interpretation in this period was “quite varied” and by no means literalistic, despite the polemical implications of early Christian writers about Jewish ‘literalism.’<sup>30</sup>

The contention of Tyson that Marcion did not question the “legitimacy” for Jews or their “right” to continue their own religion, moreover, strikes me as an anachronistic perspective, perhaps born of our own location in a pluralistic society. Such an optic is obtained, I believe, all too easily when one gets into ‘What if ...’ lines of speculation: What if the Marcionite church had triumphed over their proto-orthodox opponents? Wouldn’t the history of the relations between Christianity and Judaism have been quite other? Although Tyson tries to establish some distance from Ehrman’s line of speculation in this regard, he ends up in much the same place. I quote Tyson:

Marcion’s decision to exclude the Hebrew Bible from the Christian canon creates a clear demarcation between Christianity and Judaism, and in this sense he would encourage his followers to regard the survival of Judaism after the time of Jesus as legitimate but theologically irrelevant. Whether this would have led to a diminished degree of anti-Judaism on the part of his followers is, of course, impossible to say, but Ehrman is probably correct to observe that “benign neglect” is at least consistent with Marcionite principles.<sup>31</sup>

The point of the ‘what if’ exercise seems a matter of theological apologetics (which is by no means *res horrenda*), namely, the desire to say there *could* have been a form a Christianity that was less anti-Jewish, etc., that perhaps paradoxically Marcion’s alternative church might have been such a version of the faith. As pertains to the strictly history-of-religions concern to understand the appeal of Marcion in his own time, however, I would urge close attention to the implications of Tyson’s statement about the desirability of “a clear demarcation between Christianity and Judaism”: are we indeed to take it that no such clear demarcation was there apart from Marcion’s innovation? I would prefer a more robust formulation of what it was that Marcion sought: not merely a *clear demarcation* of difference from Judaism but an absolute excision of all things Jewish from the church. This distinction strikes me as significant because it clarifies the specificity of Marcion’s distancing strategy when compared to other attempts of Christian self-definition vis-a-vis Judaism.

But a judgment that Marcion’s movement was anti-Jewish, I would argue, can be securely ventured on the basis of the whole *pattern of religion* presupposed by the Marcionite canon, church, and particularly by Marcion’s conspiracy theory about the re-judaizing of

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<sup>30</sup> Tyson, “Anti-Judaism in Marcion,” 207, n. 51.

<sup>31</sup> Tyson, “Anti-Judaism in Marcion,” 202.

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the gospel by the apostles after the death of Christ. For unless we suppose that this last element was a kind of *post hoc* justification for Marcion's editorial decisions and his creation of a law-free canon, we must conclude that Marcion was indeed genuinely repulsed by what he rightly perceived as residual Jewish elements in the church at Rome, be it the proto-orthodox church's acceptance of the LXX as scripture or its more general assertion of continuity with the *Heilsgeschichte* of the Israelite tradition (or perhaps even elements of Jewish practice). Marcion's animus toward the God of the Old Testament<sup>32</sup> and his desire to purge the church of all things Jewish must be explained if the phenomenon of Marcion is to be understood at all.

Harnack's solution to the question of the origins of Marcion's negative attitude toward Judaism is connected to the element of his work has been found most unsatisfactory, namely, his insistence on regarding Marcion in isolation from any of the philosophical and speculative elements of contemporary Christian gnosticism.<sup>33</sup> Harnack distanced Marcion from the gnostic critique of the demiurge,<sup>34</sup> maintaining that the former "proceeded from different presuppositions, from the Old Testament, from biblical Christianity, from Paul."<sup>35</sup> This notion of Marcion as primarily motivated by exegetical concerns I find a particularly anachronistic part of Harnack's Marcion-portrait: as if he had spent his youth reading only the Pauline letters in the privacy of his inner chamber, so as to know the God of love and Jesus Christ exclusively from that source, and then had suffered a terrible shock upon entering a church hearing the Old Testament read aloud to discover the God of wrath revealed as the father of that gentle son! The intellectualist approach of the 'Marcion as exegete' theory recurs in Tyson, who posits a great respect on his part for the Hebrew Bible, on the grounds that his literal method of interpretation presupposed he thought it was "divinely inspired," and that his criticism of it "was not directed to its authority but to its morality."<sup>36</sup> Divinely inspired? Yes—by a divinity whose moral teachings Marcion considered unworthy of Christians!

I am not insensitive to the pain of history from the enlightened Christian side, nor am I unsympathetic to the project of Christian-Jewish dialogue—but I am not convinced one makes strides through an approach to the past that is unwilling to focus on what appears most evident from the study of Marcion: that the anti-Judaism of his doctrine, church,

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<sup>32</sup> I use this last term deliberately to indicate once again the intra-mural intention of Marcion's criticism.

<sup>33</sup> E.g., Ugo Bianchi, "Marcion: theologien biblique ou docteur gnostique?" *VC* 21 (1967), 141–149; John G. Gager, "Marcion and Philosophy," *VC* 26 (1972), 53–59.

<sup>34</sup> This is the aspect of 'gnosticism' that Michael Allen Williams has dubbed "biblical demiurgy" in *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 51.

<sup>35</sup> Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel*, 3; *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 4.

<sup>36</sup> Tyson, "Anti-Judaism in Marcion," 202.

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and canon appeared highly desirable to many Christians who had already been prepared in that regard by many decades of anti-Jewish rhetoric emanating from the birth-pangs of the nascent catholic church.

Given that none of Marcion's works<sup>37</sup> have survived and we have only *testimonia* from his opponents (and a single fragment<sup>38</sup> from the opening of the *Antitheses*), we must move from data on which broad consensus exists to uncertain points of interpretation. These sound points of departure are two: 1) the unmistakable thrust of Marcion's works—in Harnack's works—that the gospel “be free from all Judaism”;<sup>39</sup> and (2) the date of Marcion's activity, the middle of the second century. While this dating has been challenged, I follow the majority line of scholarship in accepting from Tertullian (*Adv. Marc.* I.19.2) that the year 144 was held to be of crucial important to the Marcionite church (probably as the date of their founder's break with the Roman church).<sup>40</sup> This date coheres with the testimony of Justin (from shortly after 150) that Marcion “is even now still teaching ...” and that this teaching has persuaded people κατὰ πᾶν γένος ἀνθρώπων, “across the whole human race” (*1 Apol.* 26. 5).<sup>41</sup> While Harnack and others have argued on the basis of a number of ancient witnesses that we must suppose teaching activity by

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<sup>37</sup> The *Antitheses* apparently functioned as a preface to Marcion's two-part canonical collection consisting of his *Evangelikon* (a version of Luke which *ex hypothesi* Marcion had edited by severing its opening chapters and removing other elements connecting Christ to the god of the Law and the Prophets) and the *Apostolikon*, a collection of ten Pauline letters, likewise redacted along similar lines.

<sup>38</sup> “O wonder beyond wonders, rapture, power, and amazement is it, that one can say nothing at all about the gospel, nor even conceive of it, nor compare it with anything” (Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel*, 59). Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 256\* cited this fragment in the German translation (from Armenian) of Joseph Schäfers, *Eine altsyrische antimarkionitische Erklärung von Parabeln des Herrn und zwei andere altsyrische Abhandlungen zu Texten des Evangeliums* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1917), 3f.

<sup>39</sup> Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel*, 25–26; *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 36.

<sup>40</sup> See Harnack's Beilage 1 in *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 3\*–30\* for discussion of the sources pertaining to dating Marcion. The only ancient source that would suggest a far earlier dating for Marcion is Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* VII.17), which has him in Rome during the reign of Hadrian (i.e., shortly after 117), standing as an “elder” among “younger” heretics such as Basilides and Valentinus. Harnack accepted this evidence and assigned Marcion's birth to c. 85 CE on that basis (*Das Evangelium*, 14\*–15). Gerhard May has presented the grounds for following Tertullian's dating (the only evidence that purports to follow a Marcionite source) and rejecting any early dating of Marcion that would make him contemporary with Polcarp, in “Ein neues Markionbild?” *Theologische Rundschau* 51 (1986), 404–413 (here, 406–408).

<sup>41</sup> Ed. E. J. Goodspeed, *Die ältesten Apologeten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1915), 26–77. §5 of chapter 26 reads: Μαρκίωνα δέ τινα Ποντικόν, ὃς καὶ νῦν ἐτι ἐστὶ διδάσκων τοὺς πειθομένους, ἄλλον τινὰ νομίζειν μείζονα τοῦ δημιουργοῦ θεόν· ὃς κατὰ πᾶν γένος ἀνθρώπων διὰ τῆς τῶν δαιμόνων συλλήψεως πολλοὺς πεποιήκε βλασφημίας λέγειν καὶ ἀρνεῖσθαι τὸν ποιητὴν τοῦδε τοῦ παντός θεόν, ἄλλον δέ τινα, ὡς ὄντα μείζονα, τὰ μείζονα παρὰ τοῦτον ὁμολογεῖν πεποιηκέναι. Justin also mentions Marcion in *Apology* 58.

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Marcion in Asia Minor prior to his arrival in Rome,<sup>42</sup> more recent scholarship has argued that this evidence can hardly be taken as historically reliable and is better explained as having been generated by the anti-heretical discourse that emerged due to the threat Marcionism presented to the proto-orthodox church.<sup>43</sup> The lines of argument in this paper, however, do not require a conclusive verdict on this matter.

What could have motivated Marcion in his truly radical severance of the religion of Christ from all things Jewish? And what could have led to the rapid growth of this movement and the serious threat it posed to the proto-orthodox church?<sup>44</sup> This latter element is attested not only by Marcion's contemporary Justin, but also by a lengthy chain of later opponents.<sup>45</sup> Tertullian framed the success of the Marcionite church in a witty if bitter epigram—"Wasps make hives, Marcionites churches" (*Marc.* 4.5.3)<sup>46</sup>—and in the next book all but grants Marcion's gospel tradition had spread throughout "the whole world" (*Marc.* 5.19.2). On the face of it, we are compelled to assume that Marcion's *Judenfrei* gospel must have been highly appealing to a substantial number of people who *already were Christian*—that is, if we take seriously Tertullian's assertion that teachers like Marcion made converts of those already in churches.<sup>47</sup>

What recommended Marcion's gospel and church to so many people who were generally attracted to the name of Christ can be nothing other than his church's clean break with Judaism. 'Not only are we not Jews,' a Marcionite missionary might say, 'but we have no truck with those people, their god, and their ways.' That proto-orthodox Christians might be tempted to decamp to the Marcionite church requires nothing more than that they felt distaste for whatever remnants and reminders of Judaism—the scriptures, the

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<sup>42</sup> Harnack: "probably as a mature man, during the approximately five years between 139 and 144, Marcion created his New Testament and his *Antitheses* in Rome; still the possibility must be left open that this had already been done during his stay in Asia Minor" (*Marcion: The Gospel*, 16–18; *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 24–26).

<sup>43</sup> The fullest recent discussion of the sources for the biographical data of Marcion is Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010). Moll rejects the attempts to date Marcion earlier enough to be contemporary with Polycarp and places his birth date between 100 and 110 (*ibid.* 26), which is later than Harnack's guess of "85 or somewhat later" (*Marcion: The Gospel*, 15).

<sup>44</sup> Ernest Evans posed this question in his excellent translation of Tertullian's five-volume *Against Marcion*: "What had ... he to say that was of interest to so many?" (*Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem*, 2 vols. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972], xii). I cite Evans' translation of this work except when otherwise noted.

<sup>45</sup> For the full list and discussion of those who opposed Marcion through the fifth century, see Harnack's appendix VI in *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 314\*–380\*.

<sup>46</sup> Translation my own.

<sup>47</sup> See Tertullian's telling remark in *Praescr.* 41.1 about the targets of the heretics' preaching (he names Valentinus and Marcion in ch. 39 of the same work): *hoc sit negotium illis, non ethnicos conuertendi sed nostros euertendi*. Greenslade (*Early Latin Theology*, 62) translates thus: "Their concern is not to convert the heathen, but to subvert our folk."

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

identification with the Israelite tradition, the contestation (if only mental) with Jews over this inheritance—were present in the catholic church. No surviving evidence suggests Marcion thought the church was part of Judaism, rather his protest was directed to the church's claim to continuity with the Israelite tradition (not to contemporary Judaism).

This is the sense in which I maintain that the best ground for understanding Marcion is sociological, namely, the clear separation of Christianity in most of its manifestations from Judaism. Elsewhere I have argued at length that the argumentative strategy of Tertullian in *Against Marcion* presupposed such a separation; and that the issue was rather the *nature of the relation*—partially continuous or totally disjunctive?—between two sociologically distinct entities, the church and Judaism.<sup>48</sup> An *assumed distinction* between Christianity and Judaism among the vast majority of parties claiming the name Christian is the only context in which the success of Marcion's church is comprehensible. Only if these two religion were perceived as distinct would you insist on an absolute disjunction between everything about the two. This is the implication of Tertullian's statement in *Adversus Marcionem* 1.19.4 that Marcion's "*proprium et principale opus*" was the "separation of Law and Gospel."

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<sup>48</sup> "*Communis magister Paulus: Altercation over the Gospel in Tertullian's Against Marcion*", ch. 9 in Todd D. Still and David Wilhite (eds.) *Tertullian and Paul* (London: T&T Clark International, 2013).