



**Study guide for
MARCIONISM
YESTERDAY AND TODAY**

MARCION (c. 80–c. 160)

Marcion was reared in Sinope of Pontus (modern Turkey), where his father was reported to have been a bishop and himself a wealthy ship-builder. He was active as a teacher in Asia Minor, perhaps as early as the opening decades of the second century, before going to Rome. The rejection of his teaching by the leaders of the main Christian centres led him to set up a rival church which in a few years was nearly as widespread as the great church.

Marcion is best known for his work on the text and canon of the Bible. He rejected the OT as a Christian book and collected the earliest known Christian canon, composed of an abbreviated version of Luke's Gospel and ten edited Pauline epistles (lacking the Pastorals). He presented his theological views in the Antitheses, in which he set out contradictions between the OT and the NT. His works do not survive, so his positions must be reconstructed from the refutations made by his opponents, the fullest of which is Tertullian's five books *Against Marcion*.

Marcion was convinced that *Paul was the only true apostle and that the original twelve, by 'Judaizing', became false apostles. Galatians was placed first in his collection of Paul's letters. The opening words of the Antitheses, 'O wealth of riches! rapture, power, amazement! seeing that there can be nothing to say about it, or to imagine about it, or to compare to it!' express his wonder before the Pauline gospel of grace. From Paul, Marcion deduced an exaggerated contrast between law and gospel. In agreement with his contemporary Aquila of Pontus, he practiced a literal interpretation of Scripture, rejecting all allegory. Marcion went far beyond Paul in concluding that there are two Gods: the God of the OT, the Creator, who is a God of law and justice and who predicted the Jewish Messiah; and the previously unknown God of the NT, the Father of Jesus Christ, who is a God of mercy and salvation.

Jesus Christ revealed the Father in the fifteenth year of the Emperor Tiberius, for Marcion omitted the birth narratives from the gospel. Jesus' death purchased human salvation, and Jesus raised his own soul from the grave. Marcion advocated *asceticism: the avoidance of sex frustrates the Creator God. Marcion administered baptism only to the unmarried or abstinent before the end of life. Water was substituted for wine in the Lord's Supper. To the charge of antinomianism in the absence of law, he responded with 'God forbid'.

The Church Fathers objected to Marcion's separation of salvation from *creation and of the church from its OT heritage. Marcion's challenge accelerated the church's recognition of a NT canon and sharpened its emphasis on certain doctrines in the rule of faith (see *Creeds). Marcion shared in common with *Gnosticism such things as the idea of the unknown God, a negative view of the created world and a depreciation of the OT; but he differed in his lack of speculative, mythological interest, rejection of allegory, emphasis on faith rather than 'knowledge', and concern to establish a church.¹

E. Ferguson, "Marcion (c. 80–c. 160)"
New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic.

¹ E. Ferguson, "Marcion (c. 80–c. 160)" in *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic*. 2nd edit. Ed: Martin Davie, Tim Grass, Stephen R. Holmes, John McDowell, T. A. Noble, (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2016) pg. 550-551

MARCIONISM

Outline

- I. Introduction
- II. Doctrine
- III. Works.

I. Introduction

Marcion of **Sinope** (d. ca. 160) was an important heretical theologian. In the estimation of Adolf Harnack, he was “the most significant figure between Paul and *Augustine” (Marcion, 314 [Fr. tr.]). Since his writings have been lost over time, the information that we have on the life and works of Marcion has reached us through indirect sources, from the numerous writings of his opponents. Seven short Latin prologues to seven Pauline letters have been preserved. The document is not from Marcion's hand, but probably of Marcionite origin. The most important sources are *Justin Martyr, *Irenaeus of Lyons and *Tertullian. Justin was Marcion's contemporary at *Rome, and the later authors greatly depend on him. He wrote the now lost Syntagma Against All Heresies, in which he spoke profusely of Marcion, but at a later date he also mentioned him in the first *Apology. Irenaeus, even when he does not actually name Marcion, frequently refers to him. Our principal source remains Tertullian's Against Marcion (207/212), which cites numerous passages in the *Antithesis of Marcion. Other sources include *Clement of Alexandria, the Elenchos that is some-times attributed to *Hippolytus of Rome and *Epiphanius of Salamis. Marcion grew up in Sinope (now Sinop) in the *Pontus region on the Black Sea. Supposedly excommunicated by his father (who must have been a bishop) for having seduced a *virgin, he came to symbolize the heretic who corrupts the virgin church. He made a fortune in trading arms. He was for some time a member of the Christian community at Rome, which he endowed with a sizeable patrimony. In 144 (the only precise date) he was excluded from that community, which restored to him the donation in its entirety; he then established a separate church that grew rapidly. He died around 160.

II. Doctrine.

Marcion did not want to be the founder of a new church, an innovator, and certainly not a prophet, but to preach the genuine and original message of Jesus in its purity, a message that he claimed was distorted by the church of his time. He finds the essence of this message in the *redemption of humanity, enacted through sheer compassion by God in Jesus Christ. With this perspective, he read the Holy Scriptures of the Christianity of his day, the OT, claiming that the God of whom it testifies is a Judge who is powerful and righteous, but also choleric, cruel, volatile and petty, able to claim, “I am he who causes the disaster (Is 45:7, see Tertull., Adv. Marc. I, 2 etc.). Therefore, this God cannot be the same as the Father of Jesus Christ. This latter God is in fact “exclusively” benign, as he himself has demonstrated by sending Jesus Christ to us. Hence two corollaries arise, the fundamentals of Marcionite doctrine: (1) the benign God, Father of Jesus Christ, becomes distinct from the God of the OT, creator and lord of this world, and (2) the OT is to be rejected as the foundation of Christian faith. The character of the two deities is precisely indicated in the Antithesis (see below). One is expressed in gospel, the other in law; the first is benign, the other just, although not essentially bad; the first is a Savior, the second a Judge; one reveals his essence by sending his very own Son, the other by creating this fallen world. The difference between the two deities is revealed above all in their behavior toward human beings. Humanity is a creature of God the creator, his “image and resemblance,” a being from his “substance.” Nonetheless, this God permits that his creatures disobey the law and plunge into *death (see Tertull., Adv. Marc. II, 5). On the contrary, the

“other” God, while not having contracted any obligation with human beings, who are beings of another God, has compassion that leads him to announce through Christ the remission of sins, without any punishment (see Tertull., Adv. Marc. I, 23; I, 7). Whoever so believes is liberated from the chains of narrow legalism. To such persons is rendered possible a new life, without fear, in which, through grateful wonder in the face of the *love and *goodness of God, a new morality spontaneously emerges (see Tertull., Adv. Marc. I, 27 and the prologue of the Antithesis, Harnack 256).

Also characteristic of the Marcionite ethic is a rigorous *asceticism, defined as a renunciation of desire for matter as the structure of this world and for the *temptations of matter, together with an abstinence from both marriage and procreation that seeks not to perpetuate the fallen world of God the creator. The work of Christ consists in the announcement of this *forgiveness and this love of God. To such an end it is sufficient that he assumes a *docetic body. The thugs of God the creator do not recognize him, and by crucifying him they give him the opportunity to go down into the underworld and to announce even there his message. The believers will come back to *life one day “with the *soul”; as a consequence, this doctrine does not allow a *resurrection of the *flesh (Tertull., Adv. Marc. I, 24).

III. Works.

Marcion establishes his gospel on an exclusively biblical basis. He finds it only in the apostle Paul and in the gospel of Luke, treated as Pauline. Yet in his theory, these writings would not be preserved in their original form, but immediately after their redaction would have been falsified by the “Judaizers” or followers of the God of this world, according to criteria at their convenience including legalism and a juridical ideology. Marcion thus emends the Pauline letters he recognizes as authentic (Galatians, 1-2 Corinthians, Romans, 1-2 Thessalonians, Laodiceans = Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon), and also Luke, and he adapts them to his creed, making consistent expunctions and adding nothing! Thus he creates the first canon of NT writings. How these Scriptures were presented in the critical text established by Marcion is completely unknown. Certainly the underlying text was not the “Western” one, as Harnack assumes. The research on this problem is being radically redirected on the basis of new discoveries and concepts of NT textual criticism. Marcion justifies his *canon in the so-called Antithesis, a sort of “Introduction to the NT” for Harnack. The work is now lost. In this work, responding to the insinuations of his opponents, the author successively contrasts opposing statements at a *dogmatic and *exegetical level, concerning the redeemer God and the creator God and concerning their respective acts (see above and the refutations of the Antithesis in Tertull., Adv. Marc. II, 28).

Varying responses have recently been given to the question of whether Marcion had connections with the *gnostics. The predominant opinion seems to be that he knew gnostic Christians and that he was influenced by them, but not to the degree that one can group him with the gnostics. There are striking differences, esp. the negation of an immanent presence in the human person of an essence of divine being, as well as the exclusion of *myth as a basis for constructing doctrine. Marcion exercised a profound influence on the development of the doctrine of the church, putting it on guard against the real and present danger of his times, of the corruption of the *kerygma in a legalistic sense. Yet such an influence has often been exaggerated. One can hardly name a single element, either in dogma or in the development of the canon, that without him would not have been introduced or that would have been different. As a result the broader church expelled him, not only because of his distinction between two deities and for overbearing interventions into the text of the Holy Scriptures, but above all

because of his entirely unsustainable *Christology—something that does not seem to have been emphasized strongly enough, esp. by Harnack. From such an insufficient Christology emerge other points of criticism. As Justin had already attested ca. 150, the Marcionite church expanded rapidly “even to the ends of the earth.” Up until ca. 190, it constituted a true danger for the broader church. After this date the importance of the church diminishes, as it becomes partially absorbed by *Manicheism. In spite of this, and even though their very own doctrine prohibiting procreation constituted an obstacle to their growth, the Marcionite community persisted until the end of the 3rd c. in the West. In the East, it persisted even until ca. 450, particularly in the peripheral extent of the *Syriac language, and with greater vitality, as the refutations of and writings against heresies attest (*Ephrem the Syrian, *Rabbula of Edessa, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus). Marcionism exercises a notable influence even today, whether through the simultaneously positive and negative evaluation offered by Harnack, or in a broader sense through a belief system that is based primarily on individualistic faith and on the experience of salvation.²

B. Aland, “Marcionism”,
Encyclopedia of ancient Christianity,

² B. Aland, “Marcionism”, Encyclopedia of ancient Christianity, Gen ed. Angelo Di Berardino (Downers Grove, IVP Academic, 2014) pg. 2:676-678

Early Church Father's Quote Bank on Marcion

There is Marcion, a man of Pontus, who is even at this day alive. He teaches his disciples to believe in some other God greater than the Creator Justin Martyr 1.171.

Marcion of Pontus. . . advanced the most daring blasphemy against Him who is proclaimed as God by the Law and the Prophets. Marcion says that this God is the author of evils, takes delight in war, is infirm of purpose, and is even contrary to Himself. He says that Jesus was derived from that Father who is above the God that made the world. . . He says that Jesus was manifested in the form of a man to those who were in Judea, abolishing the Prophets and the Law, and all the works of that God who made the world. Irenaeus 1.352.

Besides this, Marcion mutilated the Gospel which is according to Luke, removing all that was written concerning the generation of the Lord. He also deleted a large amount of the teaching of the Lord. . . . In like manner, too, he dismembered the epistles of Paul, removing all that the apostle said concerning the God who made the world. . . . Marcion says that salvation will be the attainment only of those souls who have learned his doctrine. Irenaeus 1.352.

Marcion met Polycarp on one occasion, and said, "Do you know me?" Polycarp replied, "I do know you, the first-born of Satan." Such was the horror that the apostles and their disciples had against holding even verbal communication with any corrupters of the truth. Irenaeus 1.416.

With regard to those [i.e., the Marcionites] who allege that Paul alone knew the truth and that to him the mystery was manifested by revelation, let Paul himself convict them. Irenaeus 1.436.

By dividing God into two, declaring that one is "good" and the other is "just," Marcion actually puts an end to Deity altogether. Irenaeus 1.459.

The followers of Marcion and those who are like them maintain that the prophets were from another God. Irenaeus 1.511.

Marcion, a native of Pontus, was far more frantic than these [Gnostics]. He omitted the majority of the tenets of the greater number [of Gnostics], advancing into a doctrine still more unabashed. He supposed there to be two originating causes of the universe. He alleged one of them to be a certain good God, but the other one to be an evil One. Hippolytus 5.110.

Tertullian³ on Marcionism

Where was Marcion then, that shipmaster of Pontus, the zealous student of Stoicism?... For it is evident that those heretics lived not so long ago . . . and that they at first were believers in the doctrine of the catholic church. They were in the church of Rome under the episcopate of the blessed Eleutherus. However, because of their ever restless curiosity, . . . they were expelled more than once. In fact, Marcion was expelled with the two hundred sesterces (roman coin) that he had brought into the church. And, when banished at last to a permanent excommunication, these men scattered abroad the poison of their doctrines. It is true that, afterwards, Marcion professed repentance, and he agreed to the conditions granted to him. Those conditions were that he would receive reconciliation if he restored to the church all the others whom he had been training for perdition. However, he was prevented by death from doing this. - Tertullian 3.257.

³ Tertullian is not interested in nuance nor being academically clear. He is contending for the faith. A modern day parallel would be 'Johnnie Mac' (MacArthur), who also uses extreme examples from opposing view points to bring weight to his often antiquated arguments. Tertullian's arguments are not antiquated. He is awesome.

Marcion rejected the two epistles to Timothy and the one to Titus, all of which deal with church discipline. His aim, was, I suppose, to carry out his interpolating process even to the number of epistles. Tertullian 3.473, 474.

Do not be deceived; God is not to be mocked." But Marcion's God can be mocked. For he does not know how to be angry, or how to take vengeance. Tertullian 3.438; see also 2.229, 2.543.

Let Marcion then exhibit, as gifts of his God, some prophets—such as have not spoken by human sense, but with the Spirit of God— such as have both predicted things to come and have made manifest the secrets of the heart. Let him produce a psalm, a vision, a prayer—only let it be by the Spirit, in an ecstasy {that is, in a rapture) whenever an interpretation of tongues has occurred to him. Let him show to me also that any woman of boastful tongue in his community has ever prophesied from among those special "holy sisters" of his. Now, all these signs are forthcoming from my side without any difficulty. Tertullian 3.446, 447.

I say that my Gospel is the true one. Marcion says that his is. I assert that Marcion's Gospel is adulterated. Marcion says that mine is. Now what can settle this matter for us—unless it is the principle of time. This principle maintains that the authority lies with that doctrine that is found to be more ancient. It assumes as a fundamental truth that corruption belongs to the side that is convicted of comparative lateness in its origin. For, inasmuch as error is falsification of truth, it must necessarily be that truth precedes error. Tertullian 3.349.

Since Marcion separated the New Testament from the Old, it is obvious that he is subsequent in time to that which he separated. For it was only in his power to separate what had previously been united. Tertullian 3.257.

One man perverts the Scriptures with his hand. Another perverts their meaning by his exposition. For although Valentinus seems to use the entire volume [of Scripture], he has nonetheless laid violent hands on the truth. Only, he has done it with a more cunning mind and skill than Marcion. Marcion expressly and openly used the knife, rather than the pen. For he made excisions of the Scriptures to suit his own subject matter. Tertullian 3.262.

The heretic of Pontus introduces two Gods. Tertullian 3.272.

Marcion makes his Gods unequal. One is judicial, harsh, and mighty in war. The other is mild, placid, and simply good and excellent. Tertullian 3.275.

Marcion . . . has removed from his God - the severity and energy of the judicial character ... A better god has been discovered, who never takes offense, is never angry, never inflicts punishment, who has prepared no fire in hell, no gnashing of teeth in the outer darkness! He is purely and simply good. He indeed forbids all delinquency, but only in word. For he does not want your fear.. And so satisfied are the Marcionites with such pretenses, that they have no fear of their God at all. They say it is only a bad man who will be feared, a good man will be loved. Tertullian 3.290-292.

Similarly on other points also, you [Marcion] reproach the God of the Law with fickleness and instability for contradictions in His commandments. For example, He forbade work to be done on Sabbath days. However, at the siege of Jericho, He ordered the ark to be carried around the walls for eight days—which would, of course, include a Sabbath. You do not, however, understand the law of the Sabbath: it is human works that it prohibits—not divine. - Tertullian 3.313.

Marcion has laid down the position that Christ was revealed by a previously unknown God for the salvation of all nations, in the days of Tiberius. Marcion says this Christ is a different Being from the one who is ordained by God the Creator for the restoration of the Jewish state, and who is yet to come. Between these two Christs, he interposes the separation of a great and absolute difference. Tertullian 3.351.

This shows that at the very outset of Christ's ministry, Christ came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but rather to fulfill them. But Marcion has erased that passage as an interpolation. Tertullian 3.352, 353.

Marcion does not unite the nuptial bond. Nor, when contracted, does he allow it. He baptizes no one but a celibate or a eunuch. For all others, he reserves baptism until death or divorce. Tertullian 3.361.

Marcion does not in any way admit the resurrection of the flesh. Rather, it is only the salvation of the soul that he promises. Tertullian 3.450.

The latter method has been adopted by Marcion. He reads the passage that follows—"in whom the god of this world"—as if it described the Creator as the "god of this world." He does this in order that he may (by these words) imply that there is another God for the other world. Tertullian 3.453.

The serious gaps Marcion had made in this epistle [to the Romans], especially by with-drawing whole passages at his will, this can be clear from the un mutilated text of our own copy. Tertullian 3.457.

As our heretic is so fond of his pruning-knife, I do not wonder when syllables are expunged by his hand, seeing that entire pages are usually the matter on which he practices his effacing process. Tertullian 3.467.

Let Marcion know that the fundamental principle of his creed comes from the school of Epicurus. . . . But how remote is our truth from the work of this heretic. For [our faith] fears to arouse the anger of God, and it firmly believes that He produced all things out of nothing. It believes that He promises to us a restoration from the grave of the same flesh, and our faith holds without a blush that Christ was born of the virgin's womb. Tertullian 3.411.

A Dictionary of Early Christian Belief ⁴
David W Bercot .

⁴ David W Bercot, A Dictionary of Early Christian Belief, (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson 2013) All quotes are from The Ante-Ntcene Fathers eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; 1885-1887; repr. 10 vols. (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1994). Cited in SBL after each quote.

A Short Note on Old Testament Theology

The divine names in the Bible Divine names begin in the Scriptures. Although 'God' functions in Christian *worship as a proper noun, in the OT God is named in many ways, expressing the various aspects of his perfect life:

1. El, Eloah, Elohim (in English translations of the Bible, typically 'God'); El Elyon ('God most high'). These names suggest a transcendent being, superhumanly powerful, and with inexhaustible life in himself, on whom everything that is not himself depends for its being and life.
2. Adonai ('Lord'). One who rules over all else.
3. Yahweh ('the Lord'), Yahweh Sabaoth ('Lord of hosts' or 'Lord Almighty'). Yahweh is God's personal name for himself, by which his people were to invoke him as the Lord who had taken them into covenant with himself in order to do them good. When God first revealed this name to Moses (Exod. 3), he explained it as meaning 'I am what I am', or perhaps more accurately, 'I will be what I will be'. It is thus a declaration of independent, self-determining existence.

The NT identifies the God who is Father of Jesus Christ as the God of the OT, the only God there is, and it sees Christian *salvation as the fulfilment of God's promises. There is thus no space for 'Marcionism', or any other system that sets the God of the OT against the God of Jesus. God is named in the NT as 'Father'. 'Lord' (kurios; translating Adonai) becomes the regular term for characterizing, confessing and invoking the risen and enthroned Christ (Acts 2:36; 10:36; Rom. 10:9–13; 1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 12:8–10; Rev. 22:20, etc.). Christians are to be baptized into the 'name' (singular) of 'the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit' (Matt. 28:19). This is God's 'Christian name', as Barth happily put it.

S. R. Holmes, "God",
New Dictionary of Theology:

Marcionism Today: Functional Marcionism

Two Reasons

Generally the label of Modern-Day Marcionite is thrown around for one of **two reasons**.⁵

1. Someone hold a defendant theology of the Old Testament.
People who fall into this category don't like to do the work of understanding things like the purpose of the Old Testament Law. Read up on it and come to a decision about how they will understand progressive revelation.
2. Someone privilege the N.T. over the O.T. in a way that is theologically not acceptable.
It is clear that there are points of continuity between the new and old testaments and points of discontinuity. The problem comes when people don't take the time to learn the ways that are theologically unacceptable.

Common False Dichotomies

- Jesus versus the Old Testament
- Jesus versus the Apostle Paul

Functional Marcionism

Daniel L Gard Gets to the heart of the matter in his article "The Church's Scripture and Functional Marcionism"⁶ In it he defines "Functional Marcionism" this way.

The reception of the canon by the modern church is inhibited, it seems to me, by "Functional Marcionism." By this I mean the partial victory of Marcion in the modern church, which excludes his fundamental theological aberrations but embraces in different ways the canonical consequences of those aberrations. Those consequences have less to do with the theoretical authority of the Old Testament than with the actual determinative value of those books.

He gives four types

Type 1: Reverse Marcionism

The first form of Functional Marcionism I will call "Reverse Marcionism," a form most clearly observable in American civil religion. Unlike the historical Marcion, the public face of religion in America de-emphasizes the claims of Jesus and Paul and seeks the presentation of a generic "god" to whom all can give their assent. Understandably, there is a concern for sensitivity to the pluralistic nature of American society... The god of civic religion is a god who is as Marcion described him. He is loving and embracing but lacks attributes such as justice and wrath.

Type 2: Semi-Marcionism

If there is a "Reverse Marcionism" which rejects the New Testament, there is also a widespread "Semi-Marcionism." I define this as the tendency to use a pick-and-choose hermeneutic in regard to

⁵ The opinion expressed in this section are the authors (J. Dawson Jarrell) and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Remnant Radio and its subsidiaries.

⁶ Daniel L. Gard, 'The Church's Scripture and Functional Marcionism' Concordia Theological Quarterly Vol 74 (2010) p. 209-224

the Old Testament. In other words, the authority of the Old Testament is recognized, but those texts and teachings of the Old Testament that make the interpreter uncomfortable can be simply ignored or, perhaps, classified as belonging to a different dispensation. Though lacking unanimity in details among its adherents, Semi-Marcionites are proponents of a "canon within a canon."

Type 3: Hyper-Marcionism

A third form of Functional Marcionism is what I will term "Hyper Marcionism." Unlike historical Mardonism, this approach toward the Scriptures does not necessarily acknowledge divine inspiration, nor is it necessarily averse to allegorical interpretation. Like Mardon, however, it does impose theological presuppositions on the biblical text, rendering it functionally limited at best. I call this "Hyper-Mardonism" because it stands in judgment of any text, any book, either testament, or the Scriptures in their entirety.

What are those theological presuppositions? They are the classic starting points for critical studies. For example, the assumption is made that there can be no predictive prophecy, resulting in a reading of the Old Testament that is in absolute discontinuity with the New Testament. The Old Testament reflects Israelite thinking about God; the New Testament reflects Christian thinking about God.

Type 4: Unintentional Marcionism

The fourth and final type of Functional Marcionism is perhaps the most difficult to identify because it does not have the strong theological motivation of other types. Its adherents do not, as a rule, denigrate the Old Testament as unworthy of God or as without a role in the life of the church. Quite the contrary, they maintain the inspiration, inerrancy, and significance of the entire Christian canon with great fervor. Yet the Old Testament remains something of a lesser literature than the New Testament. It is a purer Functional Marcionism because it is unintentional.

The whole article is worth a read it is found [HERE](#)

Examples and Illustrations

Illustration: Ignorant or Idiot marcionism

When we speak of modern day marcionism it is not often doctrine that is in view. That would assume that modern Christians actually know what doctrine is, likely today's marcionism is more rooted in ignorance. Common among many today is the view that affirms the Old Testament has a God of wrath and condemnation and the New Testament has a God of love and mercy. The God of the Old Testament gives difficult laws that no one can possibly follow. And then he condemns people for not keeping them. But no one can 'keep' them. So that doesn't seem fair! The Old Testament God is a self-centered bully, a God of wrath if people don't play by his rules. Jesus, on the other hand, proclaims a message of forgiveness, not condemnation. The God of Jesus is the God of love. He loves the world, he loves everyone in it, he loves the sinner. He has mercy on the sinner. He forgives the sinner. He welcomes the sinner. This is a different portrayal of God. The New Testament God is a God of the sweetest "marshmallow filled" sentimental and sappy love. This

Possible Examples

1. Andy Stanley's pragmatism: Stanley gave a pragmatic argument for privileging the new testament that got him accused flirting with Marion. He made the statement in a sermon that we need to unhitch from the Old Testament. His context was people who hold up not the understanding God in the old Testament as a hinderance to becoming a Christian. His point

was evangelistic. Basically they don't worry over that stuff, start with Jesus you can work out that Old Testament stuff later.

2. The Red letter Christian movement: Red-Letter Christians constitute a short lived movement within Christianity. "Red-Letter" refers to New Testament verses and parts of verses printed in red ink, to indicate the words attributed to Jesus without the use of quotations. While many Christians throughout church history have defined themselves as emphasizing the teachings of Jesus. They believe Christians should be paying attention to Jesus' words above other scriptures. Regarding the ethics of the Christian life, Christians should focus on what Jesus talked about and not the whole council of God in Scripture. Other issues such as the question of abortion and homosexuality are viewed as important but over-emphasized.

3: Marion-lite (The Miller lite of Heresy) - "Tastes Great!...Less Filling!"

Dismissing aspects of the text is something we all can do. It is easy to read James and not Romans or study Revelation and not Matthew, easier still to love proverbs and never even think about Leviticus. This tendency has many different articulations and we all should be on guard of developing a canon within a canon. In short, an adherent to this approach has a sentimental and subjective view of the scriptures not in their hermeneutic but in their approach. They only read what they like to read. Sadly the result in adherents lack a well rounded knowledge of scripture and the wisdom and maturity that is produced.

Appendix

Adolf Von Harnack's Sketch of Marcionism from his "History of Dogma", Vol. I

[The chapter has been redacted and organized for quick reference.]

MARCION'S ATTEMPT TO

- (1.) SET ASIDE THE OLD TESTAMENT FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIANITY,
- (2.) TO PURIFY TRADITION,
- (3.) TO REFORM CHRISTENDOM ON THE BASIS OF THE PAULINE GOSPEL.

MARCION cannot be numbered among the Gnostics in the strict sense of the word. For (1) he was not guided by any speculatively scientific, or even by an apologetic, but by a soteriological interest. (2) He therefore put all emphasis on faith, not on Gnosis. (3) In the exposition of his ideas he neither applied the elements of any Semitic religious wisdom, nor the methods of the Greek philosophy of religion. (4) He never made the distinction between an esoteric and an exoteric form of religion. He rather clung to the publicity of the preaching, and endeavoured to reform Christendom, in opposition to the attempts at founding schools for those who knew and mystery cults for such as were in quest of initiation. It was only after the failure of his attempts at reform that he founded churches of his own, in which brotherly equality, freedom from all ceremonies, and strict evangelical discipline were to rule. Completely carried away with the novelty, uniqueness and grandeur of the Pauline Gospel of the grace of God in Christ, Marcion felt that all other conceptions of the Gospel, and especially its union with the Old Testament religion, was opposed to, and a backsliding from the truth...

The numerous contradictions which arise as soon as one attempts to reduce Marcion's propositions to a system, and the fact that his disciples tried all possible conceptions of the doctrine of principles, and defined the relation of the two Gods very differently, are the clearest proof that Marcion was a religious character, that he had in general nothing to do with principles, but with living beings whose power he felt, and that what he ultimately saw in the Gospel was not an explanation of the world, but redemption from the world, --redemption from a world, which even in the best that it can offer, has nothing that can reach the height of the blessing bestowed in Christ.

Special attention may be called to the following particulars.

1. Marcion explained the Old Testament in its literal sense and rejected every allegorical interpretation. He recognized it as the revelation of the creator of the world and the god of the Jews, but placed it, just on that account, in sharpest contrast to the Gospel.

On the basis of the Old Testament and of empirical observation, Marcion divided men into two classes, good and evil, though he regarded them all, body and soul, as creatures of the demiurge. The good are those who strive to fulfil the law of the demiurge. These are outwardly better than those who refuse him obedience. But the distinction found here is not the decisive one. To yield to the promptings of Divine grace is the only decisive distinction, and those just men will shew themselves less susceptible to the manifestation of the truly good than sinners. As Marcion held the Old Testament to be a book worthy of belief, though his disciple, Apelles, thought otherwise, he referred all its predictions to a Messiah whom the creator of the world is yet to send..

2. Marcion placed the good God of love in opposition to the creator of the world. This God has only been revealed in Christ. He was absolutely unknown before Christ, and men were in every respect strange to him. Out of pure goodness and mercy, for these are the essential attributes of this God who judges not and is not wrathful, he espoused the cause of those beings who were foreign to him, as he could not bear to have them any longer tormented by their just and yet malevolent lord. The God of love appeared in Christ and proclaimed a new kingdom (Tertull., adv. Marc. III. 24. fin.). Christ called to himself the weary

and heavy laden, and proclaimed to them that he would deliver them from the fetters of their lord and from the world. He showed mercy to all while he sojourned on the earth, and did in every respect the opposite of what the creator of the world had done to men. They who believed in the creator of the world nailed him to the cross. But in doing so they were unconsciously serving his purpose, for his death was the price by which the God of love purchased men from the creator of the world. He who places his hope in the Crucified can now be sure of escaping from the power of the creator of the world, and of being translated into the kingdom of the good God. But experience shows that, like the Jews, men who are virtuous according to the law of the creator of the world, do not allow themselves to be converted by Christ; it is rather sinners who accept his message of redemption. Christ, therefore, rescued from the underworld, not the righteous men of the Old Testament (Iren. I. 27. 3), but the sinners who were disobedient to the creator of the world....

3. The relation in which Marcion placed the two Gods, appears at first sight to be one of equal rank. Marcion himself, according to the most reliable witnesses, expressly asserted that both were uncreated, eternal, etc. But if we look more closely we shall see that in Marcion's mind there can be no thought of equality. Not only did he himself expressly declare that the creator of the world is a self-contradictory being of limited knowledge and power, but the whole doctrine of redemption shows that he is a power subordinate to the good God. We need not stop to enquire about the details, but it is certain that the creator of the world formerly knew nothing of the existence of the good God, that he is in the end completely powerless against him, that he is overcome by him, and that history in its issue with regard to man, is determined solely by its relation to the good God. The characteristic of Marcion's teaching is just this, that as soon as we seek to raise his ideas from the sphere of practical considerations to that of a consistent theory, we come upon a tangled knot of contradictions. The theoretic contradictions are explained by the different interests which here cross each other in Marcion. In the first place, he was consciously dependent on the Pauline theology, and was resolved to defend everything which he held to be Pauline. Secondly, he was influenced by the contrast in which he saw the ethical powers involved. This contrast seemed to demand a metaphysical basis, and its actual solution seemed to forbid such a foundation.....

4. Marcion had no interest in specially emphasizing the distinction between the good God and Christ, which according to the Pauline Epistles, could not be denied. To him Christ is the manifestation of the good God himself. But Marcion taught that Christ assumed absolutely nothing from the creation of the Demiurge, but came down from heaven in the 15th year of the Emperor Tiberius, and after the assumption of an apparent body, began his preaching in the synagogue of Capernaum. This pronounced docetism which denies that Jesus was born, or subjected to any human process of development, is the strongest expression of Marcion's abhorrence of the world. But Marcion's docetism is all the more remarkable that, under Paul's guidance, he put a high value on the fact of Christ's death upon the cross. Here also is a glaring contradiction which his later disciples laboured to remove. This much, however, is unmistakable, that Marcion succeeded in placing the greatness and uniqueness of redemption through Christ in the clearest light and in beholding this redemption in the person of Christ, but chiefly in his death upon the cross.

5. Marcion's eschatology is also quite rudimentary. Yet he assumed with Paul that violent attacks were yet in store for the Church of the good God on the part of the Jewish Christ of the future, the Antichrist. He does not seem to have taught a visible return of Christ, but, in spite of the omnipotence and goodness of God, he did teach a twofold issue of history.

Along with the fundamental proposition of Marcion, that God should be conceived only as goodness and grace, we must take into account the strict asceticism which he prescribed for the Christian communities, in order to see that that idea of God was not obtained from antinomianism. We know of no Christian community in the second century which insisted so strictly on renunciation of the world as the Marcionites. No union of the sexes was permitted. Those who were married had to separate ere they could be received by baptism into the community. The sternest precepts were laid down in the matter of food and drink...

6. Marcion defined his position in theory and practice towards the prevailing form of Christianity, which, on the one hand, showed throughout its connection with the Old Testament, and, on the other, left room for a secular ethical code, by assuming that it had been corrupted by Judaism, and therefore needed a reformation. But he could not fail to note that this corruption was not of recent date, but belonged to the oldest tradition itself. The consciousness of this moved him to a historical criticism of the whole Christian tradition.._

Remarks

The innovations of Marcion are unmistakable. The way in which he attempted to sever Christianity from the Old Testament was a bold stroke which demanded the sacrifice of the dearest possession of Christianity as a religion, viz., the belief that the God of creation is also the God of redemption...

Marcion was the first, and for a long time the only Gentile Christian who took his stand on Paul. He was no moralist, no Greek mystic, no Apocalyptic enthusiast, but a religious character, nay, one of the few pronouncedly typical religious characters whom we know in the early Church before Augustine...

Nearly all ecclesiastical writers, from Justin to Origen, opposed Marcion. He appeared already to Justin as the most wicked enemy. We can understand this, and we can quite as well understand how the Church Fathers put him on a level with Basilides and Valentinus, and could not see the difference between them.

- Because Marcion elevated a better God above the god of creation, and consequently robbed the Christian God of his honour, he appeared to be worse than a heathen...as a blaspheming emissary of demons, as the first-born of Satan (Polyc., Justin, Irenaenus).
- Because he rejected the allegoric interpretation of the Old Testament, and explained its predictions as referring to a Messiah of the Jews who was yet to come...
- Because he deprived Christianity of the apologetic proof (the proof from antiquity)...
- Because he represented the twelve Apostles as unreliable witnesses, he appeared to be the most wicked and shameless of all heretics.
- because he gained so many adherents, and actually founded a church, he appeared to be the ravening wolf (Justin, Rhodon), and his church as the spurious church. (Tertull., adv. Marc. IV. 5).

In Marcion the Church Fathers chiefly attacked what they attacked in all Gnostic heretics, but here error showed itself in its worse form. They learned much in opposing Marcion (see Bk. II.). For instance, their interpretation of the *regula fidei* (rule of Faith)..⁷

⁷ Adolf Von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Vol. I Trans. N. Buchanan. (Boston, Little Pub. 1901) pp. 266-281

Tertullian's Rhetorical Skill

In book 1 of Tertullian's five books against Marcion⁸, (also titled, Against Marcion) Tertullian, the old warrior and lay theologian spits a savage "Tour de force" of rhetoric that would make Snoop Dogg bob his head. After explaining the reason for the new work, Tertullian begins his argument. Enjoy.

The Euxine Sea⁹, as it is called, is self-contradictory in its nature, and deceptive in its name. As you would not account it hospitable from its situation, so is it severed from our more civilized waters by a certain stigma which attaches to its barbarous character. The fiercest nations inhabit it, if indeed it can be called habitation, when life is passed in wagons. They have no fixed abode; their life has no germ of civilization; they indulge their libidinous desires without restraint, and for the most part naked. Moreover, when they gratify secret lust, they hang up their quivers on their car-yokes, to warn off the curious and rash observer. Thus without a blush do they prostitute their weapons of war. The dead bodies of their parents they cut up with their sheep, and devour at their feasts. They who have not died so as to become food for others, are thought to have died an accursed death. Their women are not by their sex softened to modesty. They uncover the breast, from which they suspend their battle-axes, and prefer warfare to marriage. In their climate, too, there is the same rude nature. The day-time is never clear, the sun never cheerful; the sky is uniformly cloudy; the whole year is wintry; the only wind that blows is the angry North. Waters melt only by fires; their rivers flow not by reason of the ice; their mountains are covered with heaps of snow. All things are torpid, all stiff with cold. Nothing there has the glow of life, but that ferocity which has given to scenic plays their stories of the sacrifices of the Taurians, and the loves of the Colchians, and the torments of the Caucasus. Nothing, however, in Pontus¹⁰ is so barbarous and sad as the fact that Marcion was born there, fouler than any Scythian, more roving than the waggon-life of the Sarmatian, more inhuman than the Massagete, more audacious than an Amazon, darker than the cloud, (of Pontus) colder than its winter, more brittle than its ice, more deceitful than the Ister, more craggy than Caucasus. Nay more, the true Prometheus¹¹, Almighty God, is mangled by Marcion's blasphemies. Marcion is more savage than even the beasts of that barbarous region. For what beaver was ever a greater emasculator than he who has abolished the nuptial bond? What Pontic mouse ever had such gnawing powers as he who has gnawed the Gospels to pieces? Verily, O Euxine, thou hast produced a monster more credible to philosophers than to Christians. For the cynic Diogenes used to go about, lantern in hand, at mid-day to find a man; whereas Marcion has quenched the light of his faith, and so lost the God whom he had found. His disciples will not deny that his first faith he held along with ourselves; a letter of his own proves this; so that for the future a heretic may from his case be designated as one who, forsaking that which was prior, afterwards chose out for himself that which was not in times past. For in as far as what was delivered in times past and from the beginning will be held as truth, in so far will that be accounted heresy which is brought in later.

- Tertullian. "Against Marcion" II.3. pg. 271-272

⁸ This book was written in 207 AD as an apologetic against Marcionism, the heretical movement started by Marcion. At the time of writing the movement had almost grown as large as orthodox Christianity

⁹ we know it as the Black Sea

¹⁰ a geographic Area located on the southern coast of the Black Sea, what is now northern Turkey.

¹¹ Tertullian describes God as the True Prometheus. Prometheus was a Titan, credited with the creation of humanity. In His work the Apology he describes what he intends by such a metaphor "He[God] is the true Prometheus who gave order to the world by arranging the seasons and their course" (Tertullian Apology ANF03.1.18. pg. 33).