

# Introduction

As far back as 1977, Jon Nilson wrote:

Increasing awareness of these contacts [between Jews and Christians] has prompted a new appreciation of Judaism as a forceful influence upon the evolution of early Christianity. Despite the disappointing paucity of certitudes, a more accurate grasp of the *Sitz im Leben* of much early Christian literature is emerging. This creates the possibility that hitherto familiar documents might be read in a new light and so take on a renewed utility in the effort to understand the historical and theological dimensions of the development of early Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

Forty years on, new and revealing ways of reading the familiar documents of early Christianity are still being found. The most recent development has been the confluence of early Judaism, New Testament, and Patristic scholarship working together to learn from one another and better map the emergence of both Christianity and Judaism. Even the terms are unhelpfully polarising in this period, as we have come to know them. In this context this work cannot help but be influenced by some of the key scholars and works within the relevant body of literature. It shares the aim for a clearer understanding of the early Christian period. It does this by considering Justin Martyr's relationship with or to the arch-heretic Marcion.

Why Justin? Because Justin is one of our earliest witnesses, the first to attempt to advise the rulers as to the merits of Christianity, and the first to deal explicitly with Marcion. As Sara Parvis and Paul Foster

1. Jon Nilson, "To Whom is Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* Addressed?," *TS* 38 (1977), 538.

note, Justin “is a veritable mine of information about mid-second century Christian and even Jewish and Roman theology, attitudes and practices.”<sup>2</sup> It is well known that Justin commented on Marcion in his *First Apology*, but it is my contention that Marcion is relevant to a great deal more of Justin’s work than the few mentions that are obvious. I will argue that Justin is concerned in a great deal of what he says with the spectre of Marcion, and that much of what he says makes more sense against the background of an influential Marcionite theology. The core thesis is that Justin’s approach to theology is deeply, although not wholly, motivated by an effort to distinguish true “Christianity” from the Marcionite tradition, at a time when the two are not easily distinguishable. Many of the distinctions that come to be recognised are the fruits of Justin’s labor.

I will not argue for any greater achievements on Marcion’s part than the traditional claims. The relationship of Marcion to the canon is not a topic Justin discusses, and neither will I do so. Justin is my primary concern, and so, I assume, the portrayal of Marcion as told by Justin and Irenaeus, the other witness in close proximity to him, is relatively accurate, although always in need of careful critical analysis. Below I will sketch the picture of Marcion that will provide the background for my argumentation throughout. The main aim is to explore what Christian identity is for Justin and the way in his views are to some extent a response to the crisis Marcion represents. Justin’s Christian identity takes a more definitive shape because of the threat Marcion presents. As Reed has put it:

When we examine these works together [the *Dialogue* and the *Apologies*], the contours of a wider project begin to emerge. Polemical and apologetic concerns may occasion each of his works, but in the process Justin begins to articulate a distinctly Christian identity, the borders of which are defined against three different categories of “others”: pagans, Jews, and heretics.<sup>3</sup>

2. S. Parvis and P. Foster, “Introduction: Justin Martyr and His Worlds,” in *Justin Martyr and His Worlds*, ed. Sara Parvis and Paul Foster (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 1.

3. Annette Yoshiko Reed, “The Trickery of the Fallen Angels and Demonic Mimesis of the Divine: Aetiology, Demonology, and Polemics in the Writings of Justin Martyr,” *J ECS* 12 (2004): 154.

Nilson, quoted above, saw clearly that new insights and understandings concerning Jewish–Christian relations transformed familiar texts, opened much to question, making the texts new again in a sense. This process has only accelerated in the forty years since he wrote. It is the development of deeper understanding of the *Sitz im Leben* of Justin’s writings that makes possible my demonstration here: that it is Justin in the mid-second century who rises to the political challenge of being on the fringes of the Jewish community, but not obviously or necessarily part of it and its protections, while at the same time being linked with Christians who follow Marcion and seek to drag other Christians away from this same community. The way Justin attempts to deal with these challenges is to define and make known what it is to be Christian. Specifically, he addresses the relationship between Christians and Israel and its god and considers the ways Christianity is both within and without that community. In doing so, prompted by the attempts of Marcion to pull Christians out of the Jewish community, Justin forms a distinctive and clear Christian identity for the first time. It goes without saying that this process does not end with Justin, and nor does engagement and argument with Marcionism: both continue for many centuries. Nonetheless, Justin takes the first steps, and those who contribute to the task after him (Irenaeus and Tertullian initially) are in his debt.

Chapter 1 will introduce Justin’s texts as intimately bound to the question of Christian identity. Specifically, they are exercises in defining what it is to follow Jesus when there was no clear answer to this question. Marcion represents the strongest, although not the only, alternative proposal for what it is to follow Christ. Before progressing to the relevance of Marcion, however, the first chapter will set the scene for the simultaneously Jewish and Greco-Roman “religio-political” world they both inhabit.

On this last point, chapter 1 will proceed to demonstrate how there is no way of explaining what a Christian is at this stage without some reference to Judaism; even Marcion’s theology is definitively shaped by the Jewish tradition. It is not clear if Christians are distinguished from

Jews by the Romans, nor is it clear that they seek to transcend ethnoracial Jewish ties. The Jewish story is an essential one for the Christian story. Justin's tales of Jewish persecution of Christians, which we can assume hold some truth, nonetheless rhetorically recast Christians as the genuine exponents of the Jewish tradition, as the true Israel.

Once we have established the irreducible relevance and complexity of the Christian relation to Judaism, chapter 2 will go on to consider the particular use of the term "Christian" in Justin's texts and what it reveals about who or what Christians are. At this time, Christian is a shame name, mainly used by others to describe the followers of Jesus. The application of this term is itself evidence of perceived dishonor. This is slowly changing as Christians like Justin claim the term for themselves, in a similar manner to which members of ethnic minority groups sometimes adopt and invert the meaning of derogatory names for their group. Furthermore, beyond the derogatory tone of this term, it is largely devoid of meaning when used by non-Christians, as precisely who and what Christians are and do is not clear to them. What is most important, however, is that this usage indicates the dynamic that motivates Justin's text: to clarify and define what it means to be Christian. The nature of this project entails that there can be only one, or only one centrally agreed, understanding of this and thus we find the beginnings of the making of Orthodoxy. In defining and clarifying what a Christian is, Justin cannot allow beliefs that contradict the true understanding of who Christ is, such as those of Marcion, to stand.

In order to make this clear, chapter 2 will draw attention to how Justin defines what it is to follow Christ, that is, what it is to be a pupil of his philosophy, as opposed to other philosophies, doctrines, and teachers. Only those who follow Christ and his own teaching directly can be thought of as Christians. This entails some central Christian dogma, which Marcion would find repugnant. By framing the debate thus, Justin is able to expose Marcion as a follower of his own doctrines, rather than those of Christ, whatever he and his followers claim. The central question then is one of Christian identity: who has the right

to be called Christian and what does this mean? This is what Justin is trying to deal with in the *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* (*Dialogue*) and the *First Apology* (*1 Apology*). This endeavour necessarily involves Marcion and does so beyond the few places Marcion is specifically mentioned in these texts. Rather, the whole structure of Justin's project is designed to rule out Marcion and others like him. Philosophy is an immensely powerful analogy for Justin because it is readily understood by all in the Greco-Roman world and draws attention to the lineage of teaching, which is precisely what Justin wants to secure for his group and expose its lack as a failing in others. The conclusion drawn in this section is that Justin displays evidence for a highly disputed and emerging "Christianity" that, being so diverse, cannot be understood by Romans. This is the heart of Justin's philosophy, to define and establish the true Christianity and rule out pretenders, rather than to mollify or convert the Greco-Roman authorities.

Chapter 2 continues to examine this theme, this time with detailed examination of the *Dialogue*. This chapter focuses on the *Dialogue* and draws out the significance of Justin's presentation of the following of Christ as philosophy. The first half of chapter 2 builds on van Winden, who successfully challenged the notion that the early, "philosophical" part of the *Dialogue* is at odds with the rest of the piece. The eleven chapters are taken to constitute an introduction to the whole piece, establishing the major themes that will occur in the rest of the discussion. These themes, it will be argued, which are presented by Justin in the form of a philosophical debate with a great Christian teacher, are noticeably contra-Marcionite. The opening section lays down a series of markers for what Justin, and Christians, deny or do not deny. The crucial point about this section is that Trypho and his friends do not know Justin is a Christian until late in this section. They think of him as a philosopher and listen without prejudice. Only once they have discovered he is a Christian can the piece segue into the rest of the discussion about the claims of Christians and the interpretation of Scripture. Yet Justin never ceases to see himself as philosopher; he sees himself as a representative of the teaching of Christ. This

understanding was outlined initially in the philosophical introduction, and the themes and teachings outlined there continue to run through the whole course of the debate between Justin and Trypho. The second half of the chapter traces these themes (particularly the number of gods, providence, justice, and righteousness, and prophecy) as they reappear at various points in the text and considers the ways they are suggestive of a contra-Marcionite agenda. The second part of chapter 3 concludes with analyses of two sections of the *Dialogue* with clear relevance to Marcion: 35 and 80. These two sections are where Justin draws out the function of philosophy established in his introduction and uses it to rule out those who claim to be Christians, but do not share the true Christian teaching that he has from Christ. Marcion or Marcionites cannot be considered the only group to whom this material is germane, but it will be argued that several features suggest that Marcion is foremost in Justin's mind. Chapter 2 concludes that philosophy is central for Justin because it upholds standards and regulates dissemination of teaching, which is precisely what Justin is trying to achieve in clarifying what it is to be Christian and who can be considered Christian.

Chapter 3 turns attention to the *Apologies* (mainly *1 Apology*). Justin's *1 Apology* is ostensibly an appeal to the rulers to end the persecution of Christians. Jews and Judaism feature much less in this text and the tone is more judicious and political. This chapter will argue that while *1 Apology* appears to be an appeal to the rulers to stop the persecution of Christians, it is not a stable form of apologetics from a settled Christian position but is rather, as with the *Dialogue*, a claim for what and who is Christian. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that Justin is not looking to stop persecution from the rulers in this piece, but only to clarify who ought to be punished as a Christian and who ought to be punished as something else. Despite the different form of the piece, *1 Apology* is no less than the *Dialogue* a part of an attempt to define and clarify what it means to follow Christ (and to exclude Marcion from this).<sup>4</sup> To this end, Justin is appealing to the rulers to put Christians

4. The relationship of *2 Apol* to *1 Apol* is longstanding vexation. There are numerous advantages

under more scrutiny not less, for them to be subject to more probing investigation rather than to be left alone to worship their god in peace. The reason for this is that the probing investigation, which will examine who is Christian on the grounds Justin himself suggests, will vindicate Justin's Christianity at the expense of the also popular Marcionite movement. For example, the criteria Justin lays down for the authentic way of Christ is defended against atheism and demonology. This exposes Marcionites to these charges because the defence Justin adopts would be untenable within a Marcionite theology. Furthermore, Justin presents Christians as reliable and dutiful citizens. His predicates for this are assuredly Judeo-Christian, mainly adherence to and worship of the omnipotent and just one true god. By implication, this excludes Marcionites since they do not worship this god, and thereby suggests they are less than good citizens.

The final third of Chapter 3 returns to the theme of recognised teaching. No less in *1 Apology* than in the *Dialogue* does Justin emphasize the importance of the source of one's doctrines, which for him must be Christ and the prophets. It will be shown that he expends a great amount of energy in *1 Apology* to demonstrate this. In doing so, he aims to expose Marcion and his followers as teaching something other than the way of Christ or divine philosophy, and thus demonstrate that they

to seeing them as comprising one text, two texts and one and half texts. Recently Minns and Parvis proposed a hypotheses which envisages *2 Apol* as closely related to *1 Apol* but distinct in the form of working notes which came to be separated, they call this the "cutting-room floor" theory. This, one of two theories they present, though by no means faultless has the advantage of accounting for intertextuality (including the contextually incongruous appearances of the prophets, who foretold Christ, who are thoroughly introduced in Justin's other texts leaving nothing to the readers' prior knowledge) whilst granting difference of tone and style on account of their different literary reality of each. Thorsteinsson has responded to this with a renewed case for the two-text solution. His position more directly accounts for tonal differences and the absence of scriptural referents in *2 Apol*. However the "cutting-room floor" theory accounts for the later by in effect suggesting these references were too important to be left out whilst qualifying the references to the prophets in *2 Apol*, since scripture and the prophets cannot be separated for Justin. Ultimately neither explanation enjoys total supremacy but the "cutting-room floor" theory accounts for both difference and similarity better in my view. I will move from *1 Apol* to *2 Apol* relatively freely considering them as part of common project if not precisely the same text. See Denis Minns and Paul Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies, Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (OECT; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 26. And R. M. Thorsteinsson, "The Literary Genre and Purpose of Justin's Second Apology: A Critical Review with Insights from Ancient Epistolography," *HThR* 105 (2012). Also for a recent defense of the one-text position see Lorraine Buck, "Justin Martyr's Apologies: Their Number, Destination and Form," *JTS* 54 (2003): 45-59.

are not Christians and should be punished as non-Christians. Chapter 3 makes clear that Justin places Marcion not only outside of the Christian philosophy, but into the tutelage or possession of the demons. The demons offer a metanarrative for all that conceals truth and is evil, and Justin places Marcion right in the centre of this. By doing so, he identifies Marcion as the clear and present contemporary danger: not only not Christian, but in fact anti-Christian. In this way, Marcion is part of the wider story which includes earlier “heretics” (as they would come to be known) and future ones.

Marcion is not the overt subject of Justin’s work, but clarification of what is genuinely Christian is one of the main thrusts and it is this which pushes contra-Marcionite claims to the fore. Therefore, before proceeding to chapter 1 and the main argument, it is necessary to offer an account of Marcion’s beliefs as recent scholarship has defined them so as they can be identified accurately in Justin’s text. Therefore the following section will offer a prelude by way of a short sketch of the Marcion to whom Justin was reacting.

### **Whose Marcion?**

Before we begin an investigation into the influence or relevance of Marcion as background to much of what Justin had to say about defining a “true Christian,” we must pay attention to the question of whose Marcion we are talking about. That is, we have a number of witnesses to him whose claims are not always transparent or in agreement. Furthermore, we have a series of early fathers with a polemical purpose, whose testimonies must be taken seriously, but critically. These include famous figures such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen as well as Hippolytus, Epiphanius of Salamis, and anonymous writers such as the author of the *Refutation of All Heresies*. These accounts build on earlier accounts, glossing, generalizing, and sometimes augmenting them. Together such accounts come to represent a more or less agreed tradition of what is “known” about Marcion.<sup>5</sup> The main exponents for our Marcionite background will be Justin himself, Irenaeus as another early commentator and potential

pupil of Justin, and Tertullian who gives the fullest account within relatively close proximity of time. These also need to be viewed critically yet will help us to establish some basic early claims about Marcion that are pertinent to his wider project and writings.<sup>6</sup>

In the field of modern scholarship, the name of Adolf von Harnack stands above all others for defining who Marcion was. His strong claim was that “Marcion, in all probability, was the first to conceive and, and in great measure to realise the idea of placing Christendom on the firm foundation of a definite theory of what is Christian.”<sup>7</sup> In recent years (as well as at the time of his own writing), however, von Harnack’s Marcion has attracted criticism and review. Sebastian Moll has presented an important recent portrait, and Markus Vinzent has also been engaged with understanding who Marcion was.<sup>8</sup> Most recently, Judith Lieu has provided a comprehensive account which closely examines the variations and sources of the “constructed Marcions” from within the apologetic and polemical tradition of the early church. In addition to these, Dieter Roth’s reconstruction of Marcion’s gospel attempts to correct certain methodological weaknesses in Harnack’s interaction which condition his picture of Marcion with his own bias.<sup>9</sup>

This book aims to demonstrate that Marcion features in Justin’s texts as more than an occasional heretical nuisance character. Rather in a subtle manner, he helps to shape much of Justin’s project as a whole. I will not offer a comprehensive representation of Marcion and his work since that work has been effectively done by others. Rather this chapter will lay out a sufficient working understanding of Marcion’s beliefs that seems reasonable from the primary source material and recent secondary engagement with the subject. It is not exhaustive, but sufficient for understanding the context and theology of a man who

5. Judith Lieu, *Marcion and the Marking of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 9.
6. The work of thoroughly reassessing the various traditions and accretions about Marcion over time has recently been executed by Judith Lieu. Her recent *Marcion and the Marking of a Heretic* sets out in detail the relationships between earlier and later claims and the agendas in play.
7. Adolf Von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 1, trans. Neil Buchanan (Boston: Roberts, 1895), 279.
8. Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Markus Vinzent, *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels*, *Studia Patristica Supplements 2* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014).
9. Dieter T. Roth, *The Text of Marcion’s Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 25–28.

was a successful evangelist, whose theology was considered the most dangerous of contemporary theologies as it continued to be engaged with by church fathers for centuries after his death. The number of engagements, as well as their length, is testament itself to his importance in the early patristic period.<sup>10</sup> Adolf von Harnack took Marcion very seriously and sought to show the true Marcion behind all the polemical renderings.

Understanding what Marcion believed, as much as the sources allow us to, is essential to this attempt. That said, there are issues relating to Marcion that I will not attempt to elucidate. Sebastian Moll, at the beginning of his excellent book on Marcion, identifies two levels of portrait about Marcion. The first of these is Marcion himself and his relation to his world and time. The second is his relationship to the development of the New Testament, as we know it. My argument requires an interest in the first of these but not the second. It matters greatly what Marcion believed, because traces of this are what I believe motivated and drove much of what Justin says in his texts as a form of indirect refutation. His relationship to the formation of the New Testament is not an irrelevant question, but represents a separate project, which is outside the bounds of my work here.<sup>11</sup> My argument can proceed quite normally, simply on the understanding that Marcion had a distinctive understanding of the New Testament Scriptures without pushing this question any further.<sup>12</sup>

Why Marcion, then, and not Valentinus or Basilides? After all, the followers of Valentinus and Basilides, both of whose teachings are harder to reconstruct than Marcion's, are mentioned along with Marcionites in *Dial.* 35.6. There is therefore a question over the extent

10. Dieter T. Roth, "Marcion and Marcionites," in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall et al. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), n.p., online at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah05110/pdf>.

11. Questions in this area have recently come to the fore once more and are being intensely debated by contemporary scholars, yet no firm consensus has emerged hitherto. See Dieter T. Roth, "Marcion's Gospel and Luke: The History of Research in Current Debate," *JBL* (2008): 513–27; Roth, "Marcion's Gospel: Relevance, Contested Issues, Reconstruction," *ExpTim* (2010): 287–94; and Markus Vinzent, *Dating of the Synoptic Gospels* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 15.

12. To explore this issue in its own right and in detail, Roth's recent reconstruction of Marcion's gospel examines the major issues and presents the text. See Roth, *Marcion's Gospel*.

to which the arguments Justin makes have particular reference to Marcion and his followers as opposed to other heretical groups. However, even if some of his arguments can be applied to other groups, my argument will be that Justin's texts nonetheless read as if the danger presented by Marcionite theology has particular import that other "heresies" do not.<sup>13</sup> Relating to this kind of difficulty, Moll has said: "When Origen explains the allegorical meaning of the battles of Joshua for instance, he explicitly addresses Marcion, Valentinus and Basilides. Thus, these other heretics could also be envisaged in the elder's preaching."<sup>14</sup> Moll here is pointing out the difficulty of isolating theological views at this time, although here he is particularly concerned with the case of entirely unnamed heresies in an Irenaeus text. Although I will argue that points made by Justin, which have not usually been discussed as part of a wider contra-Marcionite project by Justin, are evocative of Marcion, I acknowledge the possibility that other heretical groups named by Justin may share in parts.

Though their followers are mentioned in *Dial.* 35.6 (as are Marcionites), these two Gnostics do not feature personally in *1 Apol.* 26 or 58, where Marcion himself appears as the successor to previous heretical leaders (Simon Magus and Menander). Marcion not only appears more often, but as a contemporary of Justin;<sup>15</sup> he is a real and present danger. Furthermore, we know Justin wrote a text specifically to Marcion (*πρὸς Μαρκίωνα*). All of these points are suggestive of his particular relevance to Justin.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Marcion is also said by Justin to have influenced all peoples; there is no province where his teaching is not known,<sup>17</sup> and Marcionite "Christians" are known to

13. Charles E. Hill has argued similarly that the central arguments of the letter to Florinus, although not solely anti-Marcionite in argument, reveal an anti-Marcionite agenda. The thesis here is the same in relation to Justin. Although not all of his arguments can be specifically tied to Marcion, many are suggestive of Marcion and, more importantly, Marcion seems to form the background picture that provokes the response, which goes on to include other related heresies. See Charles E. Hill, *From the Lost Teaching of Polycarp: Identifying Irenaeus' Apostolic Presbyter and the Author of Ad Diognetum* (WUNT 186; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

14. Moll, *Arch-Heretic*, 18.

15. Valentinus (100–160) would have also been a contemporary of Justin's but Justin does not name him as such as he does pointedly on two occasions concerning Marcion, but only his followers. Basilides could have been a contemporary but was probably dead (138 CE) by the time of Justin's conversion.

16. Vincent, *Dating of the Gospels*, 29–34.

have formed the majority of “Christians” in Syria in the time of Justin and his student Tatian.<sup>18</sup> This is therefore a power and influence reserved only for Marcion among the heretics Justin mentions. As Lampe bluntly puts it: “One can conclude that Marcion in his lifetime undoubtedly surpassed all other heretics in effectiveness.”<sup>19</sup> Also, it is salient to point out that the knowledge of, or of the primary engagement with, Valentinus and Basilides is dwarfed by that of Marcion. Marcion simply seems to be a bigger deal, and many of the particular arguments Justin makes to distinguish his group, the Christians, from the Marcionites, which I aim to present, do not seem to pertain to followers of Valentinus and Basilides as easily. That said, the influence of these other heretics cannot be discounted completely, and nor can Simon Magus, Menander (who appears for a quite particular reason which I demonstrate in chapter 3), and Cerdo (who does not appear, but the tradition closely associates him with Marcion as his teacher). However, in order to make this argument, it is important to be clear about what Marcion believed, so there can be clarity about issues that are particularly redolent of Marcion’s specter and those who may be more widely applicable among heresies insofar as Justin knew them.

To begin this short but necessary explication, Sebastian Moll has a concise and helpful list concerning what Justin reports about Marcion:

1. He has many followers all around the world;
2. His followers revere him;
3. He believes in a god who did not create the universe and who is superior to the Demiurge;
4. He believes in a son of this superior god, who is not the Christ predicted by the prophets; and
5. His teaching is *ἄλογος* (irrational) and without *ἀπόδειξις* (proof).<sup>20</sup>

17. Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 250.

18. Han Drijvers, “Syrian Christianity and Judaism,” in *The Jews Among Pagans and Christians: In the Roman Empire*, ed. Judith Lieu, John North, and Tessa Rajak (London: Routledge, 1992), 130.

19. Lampe, *Paul*, 251.

20. Sebastian Moll, “Justin and the Pontic Wolf,” in Parvis and Foster, eds., *Justin Martyr*, 149.

Obviously this list concerns not only what Marcion believed as such, but also what Justin believed about Marcion's project. For current purposes, the most relevant of Moll's five points are points three, four, and five, because they identify key differences between Justin's and Marcion's theologies. Point three establishes Marcion's belief in another, hitherto unknown god. Point four's reference to the prophets should alert the reader to the distance between Justin and Marcion on the issue of prophecy and the god it comes from: the god of the Jews. This might seem obvious but it ought to be explicitly stated. Marcion's demiurge could in fact have been Platonic, or of almost any tradition other than Judaism. That he is not is significant. Just why Marcion is so opposed to this god has not been easy to establish. Bauer postulated that a hatred of the Jews was in part a motivating factor, but Moll has shown that there is no evidence for this.<sup>21</sup> "But what else could have made him believe that this evil deity, which he detests so much, was the god of the Jews? The answer is almost anticlimactic: because the Old Testament<sup>22</sup> says so."<sup>23</sup> Moll has correctly identified that Marcion had a strong aversion to the created order as such, and that he believed that the creator was the god of the Jews because this was what the Scriptures told him.<sup>24</sup> Marcion was an avowed biblicist and was probably brought up in a tradition that valued the Scriptures highly so it ought to be no surprise that this is the god he rejects.<sup>25</sup> If he came from an entirely different pagan tradition, it would certainly

21. Moll, *Arch-Heretic*, 60. Moll's argument is that while Marcion did not hate the Jews and respected the integrity of their tradition and the expectation of a messiah to come on the basis of prophecy, he was not positive about, or an advocate of, Judaism. For Marcion, their god is a deceiver and they are a trapped people. There is evidence to suggest that the Jews understandably responded to this by defending their traditions against Marcion. This suggests that his threat was not just to Christians, like Justin, but extended to non-Christian Jews also. See Judith Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 265–70.

22. I call these texts the Old Testament because it is important to those who became the orthodox to defend the continuity and complementarity of the two 'testaments'. For Marcion they would be more like the Hebrew Scriptures in being part of another, quite separate, tradition from the revelation of Christ.

23. Moll, *Arch-Heretic*, 61.

24. J. B. Tyson has also come to the same conclusion. Joseph B. Tyson, "Anti-Judaism in Marcion and His Opponents," *SCJR* 1 (2005–2006): 201.

25. Moll believes it likely that Marcion was raised in a Christian home and carried over Christian patterns into his new Church. See S Moll, *Arch-Heretic*, 27. Harnack believed he was more likely to have been raised in a consciously Jewish community. See Adolf Von Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God*, trans. J. E. Steely and L. D. Bierma (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1990), 15. Either way

seem arbitrary to pick on the god of the Jews. Marcion does not deny the existence of the god of the Jews, then, nor does he hate the Jews. Rather he believes in a superior god to whom Christ belongs rather than the creator god of the Scriptures. For him, the god of the Jews is the god of the Jews alone, and Christians are those who follow the Christ of the superior god.<sup>26</sup>

Point five is particularly important; For Justin, Marcion's teaching is without proof because prophecy is the criterion for evidence. Justin dedicates vast stretches of text to the prophets. Justification for this does not necessarily require attention to Marcion, but if the notion that one of Justin's main aims in his texts is to clarify and distinguish his theology and practice from the Marcionite alternatives, then the volume of this material takes on another dimension; so his project comes to be seen as careful exposition of the evidence from prophecy for the true theology over against the indemonstrable claims of Marcion.

Witnesses to Marcion after Justin are numerous and say a great deal more; but it would be unreasonable to assume that the above table represents all Justin knew of Marcion, at least because they lived in the same city where the population of "Christians" of any kind would not have been huge at the time and were known to dispute among themselves.<sup>27</sup> Philosophical disputes were a popular phenomenon in Greco-Roman cultural life at Rome and in other major imperial centres. Christian teachers such as Justin and Marcion are to be located within this wider Greco-Roman social context. The disputant context of this cultural form frames the projects of both men and eventually became a common pattern of Christian *paideia*.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, they were educated Christians, hardly a common breed, and Marcion was at least a prominent leader, as Justin himself attests.<sup>29</sup> Even if Justin had not

the Old Testament Scriptures would have been central to his experience. Vinzent has recently revisited this issue. See Markus Vinzent, "Marcion the Jew," *JAAJ* 1 (2013): 159–201.

26. In *Marc.* 4.33,4, Tertullian asks how the Creator could be alien to the Pharisees when, as Marcion says, this god is "the particular god of the Jewish nation": *proprius deus Iudaicae gentis*.

27. Markus Vinzent, "Give and Take amongst Second Century Authors: The Ascension of Isaiah, the Epistle of the Apostles and Marcion of Sinope," *StPatr* 50 (2011): 126–29.

28. Lieu, *The Marking of a Heretic*, 303–4.

met Marcion personally, he would, however, surely have met quite a few first-phase Marcionites in a Christian community as small as Rome's in the early second century. We also know of at least one text, and potentially two, that Justin wrote where Marcion was the main topic. Furthermore, Irenaeus, who reveals a great deal about what Marcion believed, is well attested to have been familiar with Justin's texts and perhaps even a young member of Justin's own school.<sup>30</sup> This being the case, much of what Irenaeus knew of Marcion was most likely taught to him by Justin as well as his own experience, which would have been contemporary with Justin's also. Irenaeus is therefore also an important source in establishing what Marcion believed; as all who comment on Marcion will agree. The next nearest contemporary who wrote greatly on Marcion is Tertullian, without whose witness most studies on Marcion would prove impossible to sustain. By the time of Tertullian's *Against Marcion*, it is increasingly less certain what refers to Marcion himself and what refers to Marcionites. Nonetheless, Tertullian clearly had Marcion's writings<sup>31</sup> and thus has to be taken seriously, always remembering his polemical purpose, as a witness to what the man and his school believed.

The beliefs of Marcion that inform this reading of Marcion in Justin from Irenaeus and Tertullian include:

1. That the other son in whom Justin asserts Marcion believes is Jesus Christ; this is obviously what Justin has in mind when he speaks of those who claim to be Christians but are not, a group that at least includes Marcionites.<sup>32</sup>

29. Moll makes this point in relation to Ptolemy and Marcion's common acquaintance, but the same can be thought to apply here. See Moll, *Arch-Heretic*, 48.

30. Michael Slusser has argued for this directly and has support in this from John Behr. See Michael Slusser, "How Much Did Irenaeus Learn from Justin?," *Studia Patristica* 40 (2006): 515–20; and John Behr, trans., *St Irenaeus of Lyons, On the Apostolic Preaching* (PPS; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 1–11.

31. However, it is an important qualification that there is some doubt as to when precisely in his career Tertullian gained direct access to Marcion's texts. It may well be that he did not possess these texts until quite late in his writing. See Lieu, *The Marking of a Heretic*, 53. Further to this it is important to remember that Tertullian, and other fathers who interacted with Marcion's texts, did so not to catalogue and preserve them for posterity but to refute them so what they present is they felt they need to make their case. Their witness therefore are not simply witnesses to his texts but to a tradition of interpretation. See Roth, *Marcion's Gospel*, 7.

2. That Marcion sees a radical separation between the Scriptures of the Jews and the New Testament; namely that they come from different gods and do not interact any way other than antithetically.<sup>33</sup>
3. That Marcion understands the god of the Jews to be a tyrannical judge in contrast to the welcoming superior god.<sup>34</sup>

The final point is particularly important to us because this is a topic upon which Justin expends a lot of time and energy. The precise nature of Marcion's view of the god of the Jews as a judge is not straightforward. Winrich Löhr has recently challenged the received (Harnackian) wisdom on this and his views must be taken into account, albeit briefly. The central issue here is that both Justin and Marcion agree that the god of the Jews is a judge, but disagree on how this is understood and the extent to which he can care for his creation while being a judge.<sup>35</sup> For Justin, the one god, providence, justice, and righteousness all go together in the only divine being. For Marcion, these characteristics are not virtues and his new divinity does not partake in them. The second issue, which is not isolated from the first, is Scripture or prophecy. This concerns the demonstration of the character of the one true god and who Jesus is. These are the main spheres of engagement, and they are by no means limited to the two chapters of *1 Apology* where Marcion is named, nor the appearance of Marcionites at *Dial.* 35.6. These topics divide Justin and Marcion and dominate much of the discussion Justin's *1 Apology* and the *Dialogue*.

The task of the rest of this chapter then is to explicate what we can know of Marcion's views on these two issues. In particular, it considers his understanding of the cruel, judgmental, uncaring god of the Jews, the relationship between his own higher god and Christ, and his approach to the Jewish Scriptures as antithetical material to the testimony of his *other* god.

32. See Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.27.2.

33. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.27.2.

34. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.25.2-3, Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.25.2, 2.11.1.

35. Moll, *Arch-Heretic*, 62.

## Marcion's Dualism

Although the earliest contemporary sources<sup>36</sup> describe Marcion's theology as dualistic, the precise nature of this dualism has come to be disputed.<sup>37</sup> It had been generally accepted, following the testimony of Harnack, that Marcion distinguished between a just god (the god of the Jews) and a good god (his supreme non-creator god). Löhr's engagement with the topic challenges this view. Specifically, Löhr believes that Marcion is more likely to have distinguished between a good god and an evil god rather than a good god and a just god, a designation that does not appear precisely until the work of Tertullian.<sup>38</sup>

Moll takes Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* to identify and target a Marcionite position. The key quotation says: "For some say that it [the Law] was given by God the Father, while others turn the opposite way and insist that it was given by the adversary, the devil who causes perdition, just as they attribute to him the fashioning of the world, saying that he is the father and maker of the universe" (Epiphanes, *Pan.* 33.3.2 [P. R. Amidon]). Moll notes that a reference to the justice of the creator is conspicuous by its absence; the creator is plainly identified as evil alone in terms of characterization. More directly, Löhr brings forth from Irenaeus explicit evidence for Marcion's belief in the evil nature of the creator: "He [Marcion] uttered the impudent blasphemy that the God who was proclaimed by the law and the prophets was the author of evil, and desirous of war" (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.27.2 [D. J. Unger]). In 3.12.12 Irenaeus also calls him bad (*malus*) although in 3.25.2 the picture is complicated somewhat by the ascription of the distinction between the good and the judge: "Again, in order that they might take away from the Father the power of reproving and of judging, thinking that it is

36. These can be taken to include Ptolemy as well as Justin in Moll's scheme alongside Irenaeus and Rhodo as closest non-contemporary sources.

37. A tripartite system emerges later in the tradition but is not attested in the relevant period. See Moll, *Arch-Heretic*, 54.

38. Winrich Löhr, "Did Marcion Distinguish between a Just God and a Good God?," in *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung: Marcion and His Impact on Church History*, ed. Gerhard May, Katharina Greschat, and Martin Meiser (TU 150; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 131–46.

unworthy of God, and believing they have found a god who is good and free from anger, they asserted that one god judges and the other saves” (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.25.2 [Rousseau 482]). This begins to sound again a little like the classic distinction between the just and the good god.

In *Haer.* 3.25.3, Irenaeus describes the former god mentioned above as judicial by saying there is one good god and one of the court (*alterum bonum et alterum iudicalem dicens*). Moll, however, points out that *iudicalem* not *iustum* is employed by Irenaeus here, and that in Greek judge (*κρίτης*) and just (*δίκαιος*) are not etymologically related.<sup>39</sup> Irenaeus could call this god a judge without implying he is a just or righteous judge. This description can mean more prosaically that there is a good god and a lower god who handles legal matters without the dense moral overtones of righteousness. Judgment itself, rather than judgment qualified by the adjective *righteous* or *just*, is the problem for Marcion that Irenaeus can be seen to describe. This is in fact exactly what Löhr thinks Irenaeus is trying to demonstrate: “A judge reprehends and shows anger—but not the true God. Marcion therefore allotted these characteristics of a judge to a different, lower god. If Irenaeus is right, Marcion did not so much distinguish between a just god and a good god as rather between a god who is a severe and angry judge and a good god.”<sup>40</sup> So, rather than there being degrees or qualities of judgment, the concept itself is out of the question for Marcion when it comes to his supreme god; any god who practices judgment must be therefore a lower sort of god, and not the father of Jesus. As Harnack said, “Marcion proclaimed with a splendid assurance that the loving will of Jesus (and, that is, of God) does not judge, but comes to our aid, and he intends that nothing else at all be said of him.”<sup>41</sup> In Irenaeus, then, we do not find convincing evidence that Marcion distinguished between a good god and just god but rather an angry or bad judge and a good god. If Ptolemy is accepted as witness, this is consistent with his view of Marcion having an evil god and a good god in mind. Tertullian ostensibly presents counterevidence that

39. Moll, *Arch-Heretic*, 50n13.

40. *Ibid.*, 137.

41. Harnack, *Marcion*, 143.

Marcion believed in a good god and a just god when he appears to argue against interlocutors who confidently assert a good and a just god in book two of *Adversus Marcionem*; however, Löhr argues that things are not as they seem here either.

Löhr understands that Tertullian can be seen to have developed Irenaeus's critique, according to which Marcion was mistaken in his view that judicial emotions in the creator god were unpalatable and so to be denied in the father of Jesus Christ.<sup>42</sup> *Marc.* 1.25.2 is a key text here: "So our next subject of discussion rightly is whether a god is to be accounted such by virtue of goodness alone, to the exclusion of those other adjuncts, those feelings and affections, which the Marcionites deny to their god and attach to the Creator, but which we recognize in the Creator as no dishonour to God" (Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.25.2 [Evans]).<sup>43</sup> Tertullian introduces the discussion about what is proper to god and what is not, in contrast to Marcionites. As Löhr presents it, however, what Tertullian does not deny is that *justice* is an attribute of god; rather he denies that his god is not good in contrast to the Marcionite god. His main objection is to deny the attribution of cruel judgment to god:

In II.11.1 Tertullian starts his argument by reminding his readers that for the Marcionites the creator is a severe and cruel judge. Tertullian first argues that the *saevitia* [severity] of the divine judge is something essentially secondary, a reaction to the Fall. God is primarily the good and benevolent creator. Then, as a second step, Tertullian wishes to demonstrate that justice and goodness belong together. God the creator is good and just right from the beginning: 'His goodness constructed the world, his justice regulated it'. . . . As a third step, Tertullian demonstrates that the justice and goodness of the one God do not only cooperate in creating the world but also in punishing evil men afterwards. Severity is not a problem for Tertullian then. . . . If one analyses Tertullian's argument more closely, it becomes quite clear that in this section of Book II he argues against a Marcionite position that wishes to distinguish the patient goodness of the highest god and father from the severity and cruelty of the second god, the creator, legislator and punishing judge.

42. *Ibid.*, 138.

43. *Iam enim et hoc discuti par est, an deus de sola bonitate censendus sit, negates ceteris appendicibus, sensibus et affectibus, quos Marcionitae quidem a deo suo abigunt in creatorem, nos vero et agnoscimus in creatore ut deo dignos.*

## JUSTIN AGAINST MARCION

There is no indication whatsoever that Tertullian argues against a Marcionite distinction between a good god and a just god. . . . Even if Marcion had indeed designated the god of the Old Testament as 'just', it would have been only an abbreviation for his being a severe and cruel judge, a petty-minded and self-contradictory legislator . . . not merely an invention but a later development in the school.<sup>44</sup>

All this being the case, Moll sums up the most important aspect quite succinctly:

For even although it must be doubted that Marcion ever thought of the God of the Old Testament as just, he certainly saw him as a judge, and from what has been said about his role as Creator and Lawgiver so far, it can hardly be surprising that Marcion considered him to be a particularly cruel one. The Old Testament God created man as a compulsive transgressor, gave him the Law which he was too feeble to obey, and now judges him for his transgressions. Obviously this God is playing a very cruel game with his subjects.<sup>45</sup>

Marcion saw the god of the Jews as cruel and against his people; as limited and petulant. This is a stark contrast to the position of Justin and those like him in the claims they are compelled to make from Scripture about the universality of the creator god and agency of humankind.

Still it is important that we have carefully established that it is likely that Marcion distinguished between a good god and a god who was an evil and angry judge because this governs how we read the specter of Marcion in Justin's texts. The old distinction (between a good god and a just god) would have drawn attention to those moments where Justin calls god just, and seen these as indicative of a deliberate or necessary distinction from Marcion. Enrico Norelli makes a subtle argument that can preserve something of the former distinction between just and good, while at the same time acknowledging the evil nature of the creator god. Norelli does this by arguing that, for Marcion, the creator god is as much a victim of the law as his human subjects.<sup>46</sup> He is angry

44. Löhr, "Just God," 139, 144.

45. Moll, *Arch-Heretic*, 62.

46. Enrico Norelli, "Marcion: ein christlicher Philosoph oder ein Christ gegen die Philosophie?," in May, Greschat, and Meiser, eds., *Marcion and His Impact*, 118.

but not primarily so. Primarily, he is a rational god locked into a logic of transgression and repayment, which necessitates formal justice. To Marcion, however, formal justice can be seen as nothing but injustice and injustice as nothing but evil:<sup>47</sup>

It is not possible for evil to be repaid, without at the same time repaying this justice, moreover: one must eliminate all justice grounded on the repayment principle, for all who repay evil with evil cannot escape the devilish logic of evil. Therefore Marcion rejects justice and judgement by the good God. This God is not only fully indifferent to any violation of the law of the creator, he sets absolutely no new law at all.<sup>48</sup>

This creator god has created and perpetuates evil by giving a law, which he himself cannot escape, that causes evil and suffering. Noting that Marcion saw the god of the Jews as the cause of evil and as involved in judgment means that where Justin argues contrary to this, especially to Trypho who should not need convincing that this is not so, there is potential to see Justin's points as constitutive of a counterargument against Marcion concerning god's mercy, providence, and sovereignty, even where Marcion is not directly under discussion in the text. Below, in chapter 2 chiefly, attention will be paid to the instances and overall flow of Justin's claims for god's goodness and judgment to assess the footprint of Marcion as an interlocutor.

Before moving on, we must also consider Marcion's distinctive perspective on the Jewish Scriptures, because only then can we understand just how much Justin's use is contrary to Marcion's.

### Biblicism

Marcion was a biblicist. That is, his theology was informed by a very literal reading of the Old Testament texts.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, Marcion is not considered a philosopher or systematic theologian, rather more a

47. Norelli, "Marcion," 117.

48. *Ibid.*, 119 (my translation): *Das Böse läßt sich unmöglich tilgen, ohne diese Gerechtigkeit zugleich zu tilgen, noch mehr: man muß jede auf dem Entlohnungsprinzip begründete Gerechtigkeit beseitigen, denn alles, was Böses mit Bösem vergilt, kann der teuflischen Logik der Bosheit nicht entfliehen. Deswegen schließt Marcion beim guten gott Gerechtigkeit und Gericht einfach aus, Diesem Gott ist nicht nur jegliche Übertretung des Gesetzes des Schöpfers völlig gleichgültig, er setzt überhaupt kein neues Gesetz.*

49. Moll, *Arch-Heretic*, 78.

“biblical theologian,” who took for granted what the text reported.<sup>50</sup> In this regard, his attitude was uncritical and accepting. Marcion did not employ allegory in his interpretations and was suspicious of those who did. His approach in this regard drew the attention of Tertullian, who criticises him for it.<sup>51</sup> For the time, such a suspicion was very unusual, at least among Christians. That said, his contemporary and countryman Aquila,<sup>52</sup> took a similar literal approach to the Scriptures in his translation.<sup>53</sup> If Marcion’s background were Jewish then a close relationship between the two might be relatively likely; but the fact of Marcion’s attitude, in seeing the god of the Jews as a cruel tyrant, casts doubt that he could have a close relationship to an otherwise orthodox Jewish exegete. Therefore, it seems unlikely that the views of one man shaped the views of the other. Furthermore it does not seem to be the case that Marcion’s opponents objected as such to his literal methodology. Moll has pointed out that although Marcion was very literal in his interpretations, this only seems to cause conflict with regards to the messianic prophecies with reference to Christ who has come. Tertullian, when countering Marcion’s views on the creator, does not employ allegorical interpretation but argues that Marcion has misread what the text means in a simple sense. Neither does Justin argue allegorically for anything other than the messianic prophecies.<sup>54</sup> The rest, including the creator’s character, he simply states in a way that is contrary to Marcion’s understanding without exegeting it. The balance of understanding about the character of the god of the Jews is different between Justin and Marcion, but it is only with relevance to Christ’s relationship to this god that the former is allegorical and the later introduces a new antithetical tradition.

It is important to note that Marcion does not reject or discredit the Old Testament as such. He does not assume or suggest interpolations or

50. Heikki Raisanen, *Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma: Exegetical Perspectives on the Encounter of Cultures and Faiths* (London: SCM, 1997), 65.

51. Tertullian, *Marc.* 2.21.2; 3.5.4; 3.12.1. In 3.6.2 and 7.1 Tertullian associates Marcion with Jews on account of the lack of willingness of both to understand the manner in which the prophecies speak of Christ. Origen also has strong words concerning Marcion’s literalism in *Princ.* 2.5.2.

52. Indeed, they were from the same city.

53. Harnack, *Marcion*, 15.

54. Moll, *Arch-Heretic*, 81.

corruptions in the text but rather regards it as a trustworthy historical account of and for the Jews.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, far from rejecting it, the Old Testament is vital to Marcion's theological position as the antithesis of his other, good, god. It is for him "the book of the less-worthy Jewish god."<sup>56</sup> Despite what past scholars have maintained, it is neither the Old Testament nor the Jewish people that are rejected, but rather their god. He takes Scripture to be divinely inspired, accurate, and authoritative, and at the same time irrelevant for Christians.<sup>57</sup> This contrasts with his contemporary pagan philosopher Celsus who considered the entire tradition to be an invention and saw Christians and Jews as foolish.

The understanding Marcion had of the Old Testament is completely consistent with his theological position of two gods. Put simply, he believes the Old Testament to be a document, record, and prophecy of and for the Jews.<sup>58</sup> This is to be contrasted with the new covenant of Christ, which is from a different god and does not include the Jews. As Harnack has argued:

Marcion wanted to free Christianity from the Old Testament, but the church preserved it. He did not forbid his followers to pick up the book but even recognized that it contained material that was useful for reading. But he saw in it a spirit different from that of the gospel, and he wanted nothing to do with two different spirits in religion.<sup>59</sup>

These spirits were so antithetical that one did not know the other; the prophets of the creator god did not and could not know and predict the Christ from Marcion's god.<sup>60</sup> It was essential to Marcion that the god of this covenant was completely unknown and hidden before Jesus appeared and revealed him.<sup>61</sup> In fact, not only was this Jesus unknown in the world; he, and his father the second god, were unknown to the creator god. Therefore, he was unable to prophesy about him in the

55. Raisanen, *Mahatma*, 67.

56. Harnack, *Marcion*, 138.

57. Tyson, "Anti-Judaism," 207.

58. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.34.1; 4.35.15.

59. Harnack, *Marcion*, 133.

60. *Ibid.*, 67.

61. Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.2.3; 1.9.2.

Scriptures of his people. In this way, Marcion did not believe the Old Testament to predict Jesus.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, the Church for Marcion does not, and cannot, have any notion of being Israel or of being in relation to the god of the Jews, and cannot expect the prophecy of the Old Testament to have anything to do with them or their Christ.

To recap, Marcion believes:

1. In a god who did not create the universe and who is superior to the Demiurge;
2. That the god of the Jews is a cruel judge who toys with his own people;
3. In a son of the superior god, who is not the Christ predicted by the prophets;
4. That the Old Testament is accurate and complete for the Jews but that it does not concern Christians.

Anything in Justin's texts that denies any of these claims has the potential to be part of a project of differentiation and clarification concerning what is and is not Christian. Thus, when we find Justin's heavy insistences that there is only one god, the creator, that the Church is Israel, and that the prophets announce Jesus Christ Lord of all, we have to ask the question whether this is likely to have a particular relation to Marcion. The argument that follows will demonstrate that instances such as these coalesce to suggest Justin has Marcion in mind throughout far more of his work than has previously been noticed: not that he is targeting or attacking Marcion as such, but that he is trying to rule out positions that would count as Marcionite in the definition of what counts as Christian.

62. Harnack, *Marcion*, 79. See Tertullian, *Marc.* 3.1.2–3. Later in 4.36.11 Tertullian says that Marcion's Jesus was intent on destroying the law and the prophets; and Irenaeus had earlier confirmed Marcion's opposition to the prophets by reporting that the law and the prophets are null and void for Marcion (see Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.27.2).