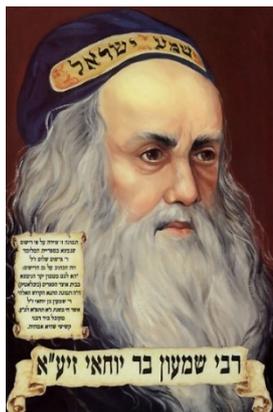


14. A SPIRIT OF ERROR II. MARCION

ANOTHER REVOLT

When Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD, well over a million Jews perished. Sixty years later, another terrible revolt erupted in Palestine. Bar Kokhba was its leader. He claimed to be the Messiah, and tens of thousands of Jews believed and followed him.



Bar Kokhba ??-135 AD
World Bibliographical
Encyclopedia

At that time, Hadrian was emperor over the immense Roman empire (117-138). He cruelly suppressed that new revolt of the Jews, causing much bloodshed. His armies destroyed fifty Jewish cities, flattened about a thousand villages, and killed more than half a million Jews in that horrible war. The fanatic Roman soldiers cleared

entire provinces of Jews so that hardly a Jew was left alive in those regions.

Bar Kokhba's claim to be the Messiah fueled the hatred against all Jews. Every Roman city held its Jewish population in great contempt.



Emperor
Hadrian
117-138 AD
Wikipedia

No-one was kind to them.

They abused and insulted them. I mention this history for a better understanding of what follows.

MARCION ARRIVES IN ROME

As you know, there was a Christian congregation in Rome. Nero and Domitian had cruelly persecuted these Christians. Many of them had died a martyr's death at the time, but now they

enjoyed some reprieve under emperor Hadrian. He did not persecute the Christians.

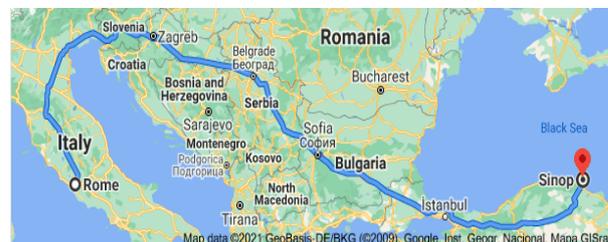
Rich?

No, the congregation at Rome was not wealthy. That was impossible, for the Roman soldiers had confiscated their possessions during the time of persecution.

One day, there was great joy in Rome's congregation, especially among the elders and deacons. They had received a large sum of money as a gift. That money was very welcome and could be put to good use.

Now the deacons could again provide for the poor and purchase other necessary items. Yes, that money came at the right time. Who had given them that money?

Well, the congregation at Rome had received a new member. His name was Marcion. He came from the city of Sinope, a city in Asia Minor near the Black Sea, almost 30000 kilometres from Rome.



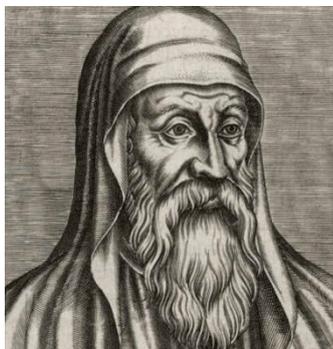
The father of Marcion was bishop at Sinope, and Marcion was a shipping merchant. He owned many ships, which he sent all over the known world to buy and sell merchandise. The ships of Marcion sailed across the Black Sea and beyond. His business flourished, and Marcion earned lots of money and became very wealthy.

Marcion had left his residence at Sinope and shifted to Rome. Soon every Christian in Rome knew Marcion because he was the man who had made the congregation happy with a generous gift.

Everybody greeted him respectfully. Whenever Marcion entered the church-building, parents would point him out to their children. In the

homes of the poor, they spoke of Marcion with appreciation and respect. In short, everyone was happy that Marcion had come to Rome.

MARCION'S FALSE DOCTRINES



Marcion 85-160 AD
<https://publicorthodoxy.org/>

But that joy did not last long, for it was soon evident that Marcion had some very strange ideas. When he talked with the elders or deacons, they shook their head and looked at each other. No, what Marcion told them

was so strange that they disagreed with him. They refused to believe the things he taught. Marcion taught an entirely new doctrine!

He said: "There are two Gods.
The one God is the Jewish God.
He is the God of the Old Testament.
The Jewish God created the world.
The Jewish God is imperfect.
The Jewish God is inferior.
The Jewish God wants to be a just God, but He is unable to, and therefore the Jewish God is cruel!

But thankfully, there is another God.
That is the good God.
That good God is compassionate.
That good God has sent the Lord Jesus to deliver the unhappy people out of their misery."
When Marcion talked like this, the elders at Rome looked at each other and shook their heads. Marcion would then say with emphasis: "Yes, really, that's how it is! And do you know what happened then? No? Then I will tell you.
The Jewish God had the Lord Jesus nailed to the cross.
The Jewish God had the Lord Jesus, the Son of the good God, killed by his followers.
The Jewish God did this because He was jealous of the good God.
But the good God shall be victorious over the Jewish God, and the Jewish God shall perish. Not only will the Jewish God be defeated, but the Jewish people who believe in that God will be lost.

But all those who believe in the good God will be saved and redeemed."

That was the new doctrine Marcion taught. Therefore, it was not surprising that the elders of the congregation at Rome were greatly puzzled when Marcion talked like that and told him that he was wrong.

They refuted Marcion by telling him: "We read nothing in God's Word about a Jewish God and a good God."

Then a faint smile would curl the lips of the rich Marcion, as he answered them: "That's why I do not believe in the Old Testament.

I want nothing to do with the Old Testament. It does not belong in the Bible.

Away with it!

Nor do I want to have anything to do with the Jews.

Away with them!"

It was understandable that the congregation at Rome was no longer happy with Marcion's presence, for what that rich man taught was wicked and unscriptural. There is no Jewish God as well as a good God. There is but one God. And that almighty, eternal God created heaven and earth out of nothing, and His creation was good, very good, perfect!

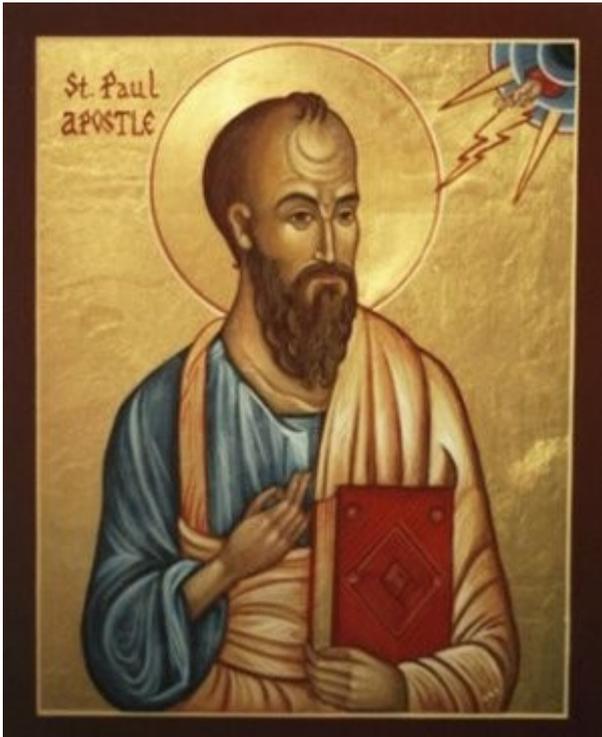
Heaven and earth proclaimed God's honour and majesty! Everything sang to His praise and extolled His wisdom! But through sin, death, misery, and destruction came into the world. Through sin, God's entire creation groans. But already in Genesis 3, the first book in the Old Testament, God promised that one day a Deliverer would come, the Lord Jesus. With His blood, He would ransom His people from the power of sin. The Old Testament certainly is part of the Bible.

No, Marcion, what you teach is not correct! The Lord Jesus *has* come.

He died the accursed death on the cross. He took on the curse which was on us and so removed the curse from His people.

One day He shall come again on the clouds of heaven to judge the living and the dead.

But to those arguments, Marcion would passionately answer: "Oh, no, I don't believe any



Marcion's shorter readings of Paul
<http://peterkirby.com/>

of that. The Lord Jesus will not return upon the clouds of heaven. That is nonsense!"

How terrible!

How did he dare to say that!?

Marcion didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead either. According to him, the Lord Jesus only came to deliver the soul. The body had to deliver itself. Marcion would not accept most of the Bible texts the elders showed him. He refused to accept the whole Bible as the inspired Word of God. Marcion's Bible was very thin. Only the gospel of Luke and the letters of Paul were in his Bible.

Do you see that Marcion was not a true Christian? He was a foolish and wicked man who tried to destroy the Church of God.

This situation could not continue. The congregation at Rome could no longer acknowledge Marcion as a member. They refunded all the money he donated and which they had been so glad to receive. They admonished him:

"We do not believe your strange ideas. You are not allowed to teach such things. Abandon those foolish teachings."

MARCION ESTABLISHES NEW CONGREGATIONS.

When Marcion noticed that they did not accept his new doctrine, he became angry. That is often the case with such people; this was the case in Marcion's days and is often the case today. He wanted it to go *his* way. Do you know what he did? He established new congregations everywhere. But what about the church buildings?

Oh, that wasn't a problem! Marcion had plenty of money! Everywhere he had new churches built, which he paid for with his own money. Soon Rome also boasted one of his beautiful new churches.

Marcion's teachings split the congregation of Rome in two. Many members followed the thousands who believed the new teachings of Marcion.

Marcion hated the Jews, and many people followed him because they also hated the Jews.

The Jewish revolt, under the leadership of Bar Kokhba, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, fuelled this hatred even more! This hatred caused many church-members to break with Christianity and follow Marcion's teachings as this satisfied their feelings of hatred. The timing of Marcion's teachings could hardly have been worse.

Almost everywhere where there was a Christian congregation, a church of Marcion was also established. Sadly, many Christians allowed themselves to be deceived and joined them. Where love and unity had prevailed, there was now strife and discord, hatred and envy. Oh, the devil is so crafty. By sowing discord and anger, he tried to destroy the Christian congregations. Don't we see this time and again throughout history? These events show that the devil never changes.

But God watched over His people, and the true Church rejected the terrible error of Marcion. True, that did not happen by itself. It cost much strife and trouble.

MARCION'S DEATH

Finally, Marcion died, and he had to appear before God.

Then he learned that there are *not* two Gods. Then he saw that there is but one almighty God, Who is also righteous. Then he saw that he had been wrong.

Then it was too late for him.

Then the time of grace, the time for repentance, was past, past *forever*.

And the churches which he had established everywhere?

Well, they continued for a while, but eventually, they all disappeared. The churches of Marcion no longer exist, but the Church of God remained. Yes, the true Church still exists and will endure till the end!

From this history, we learn that not the devil, but God is victorious. Yet, that false doctrine of Marcion has been very destructive. The faithful often prayed for the Lord to help them in that severe struggle. The Lord answered those prayers. God *did* help, for the devilish teachings of Marcion have disappeared, but the pure Word of God remains. God's Word stands forever.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was Bar Kokhba?
2. How did Hadrian punish the rebellious Jews?
3. Who was Marcion, and where did he come from?
4. List the errors of Marcion about God.
5. What conclusion did Marcion reach about the Old Testament?
6. What error did Marcion teach concerning Christ's return on the clouds?
7. Why did Marcion reject so much of God's Word?
8. What were the goals of the devil in promoting the errors of Marcion?
9. Why is this weapon of Satan a more powerful one than the weapon of persecution?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Read Psalm 133. How should God's people dwell together? Does this mean that they should ignore error? Read Amos 3:3. Explain how this text and Psalm 133 can harmonize.