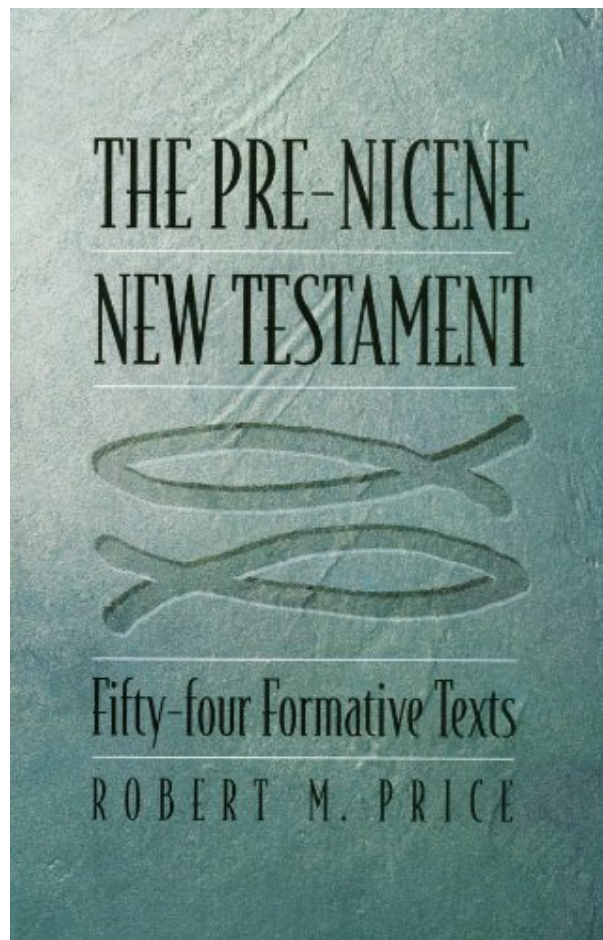
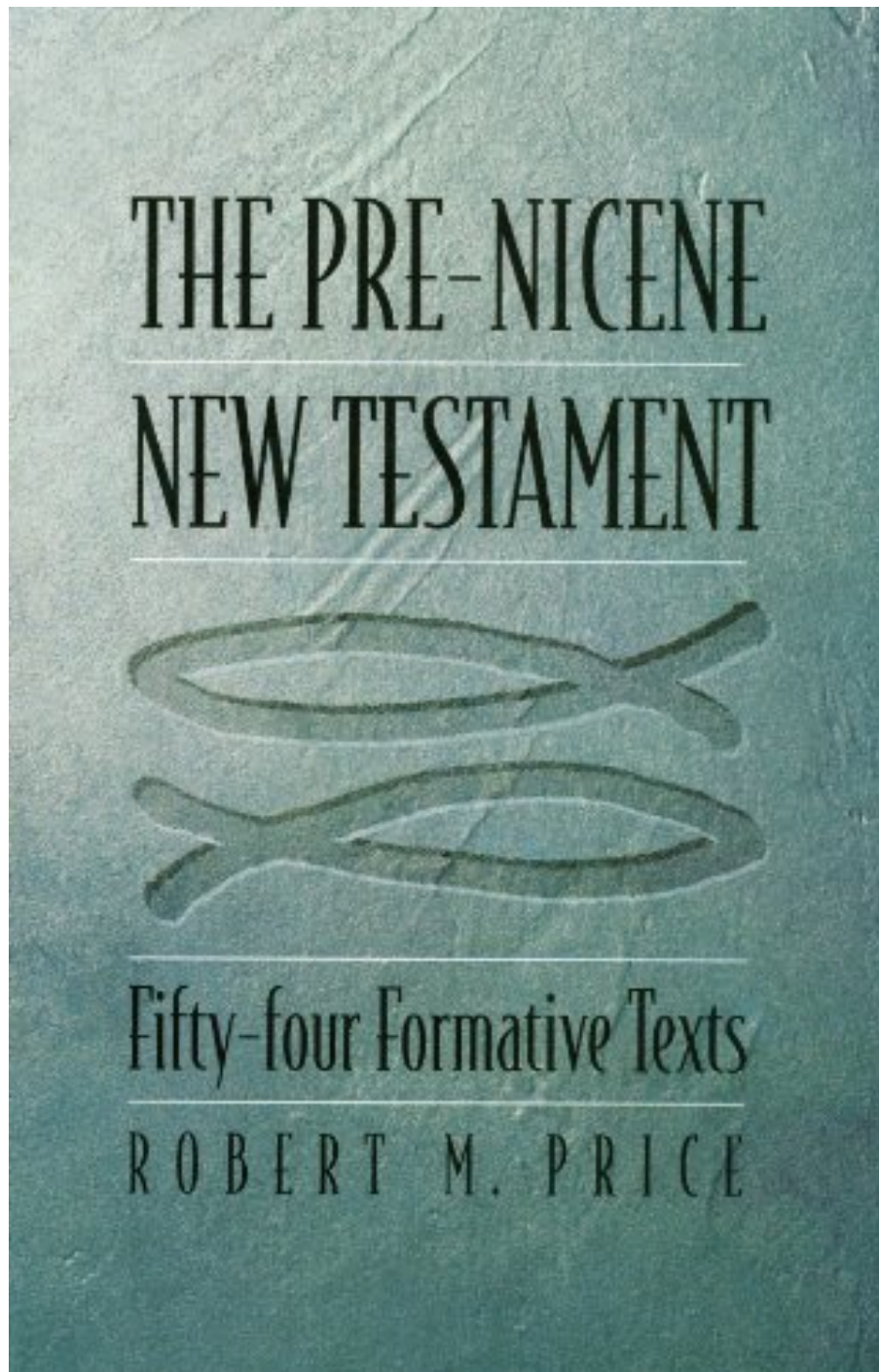


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## About the Author

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Marcion was the first Paulinist we know of. It would later be a matter of some embarrassment to the church fathers that the earliest readers and devotees of the Pauline epistles were the Marcionites and the Valentinian Gnostics. We know of no Paulinists before these second-century Christians. The mid-first century existence of Pauline Christianity is simply an inference, admittedly a natural one, from taking the authorship and implied dates of the Pauline epistles at face value as works representing a wing of first-century Christianity. But it is quite possible that the Pauline literature is the product of Marcionite and Gnostic movements in the late first and early second centuries. Even if most of the Pauline epistles are genuinely from the first century, the most likely candidate for the first collector of the corpus remains Marcion. No one else in the relevant time period would have had either the interest or the opportunity. No one was as interested in Paul as Marcion. Why?

It was because he shared with his theological cousins, the Gnostics, the belief that the true God and Father of Jesus Christ was not the same deity as the creator and law-giver God of Israel and of the Jewish scriptures. In this belief Marcion was perhaps influenced by Zoroastrian Zurvanism, a dualistic doctrine, as Jan Koester suggests. Marcion allowed that the creator God was righteous and just but also harsh and retributive. His seeming grace was but a function of his arbitrariness: Nero might render a verdict of thumbs-up or thumbs-down as the whim moved him, and so with the God of Israel. Marcion deemed the Jewish scriptures historically true and expected messianic prophecies to be fulfilled by a Davidic king who would restore Jewish sovereignty. But Marcion deemed all of this strictly irrelevant to the new religion of Christianity. In his view, which he claimed to have derived from Paul's epistles, Jesus Christ was the son and revealer of an alien God who had not created the world, had not given the Torah to Moses, and would not judge mankind. The Father of Jesus Christ was a God of perfect love and righteousness who would punish no one. Through Jesus, and by extension Paul, the Christian God offered humans the opportunity to be adopted as his children. If they were gentiles, this meant a break with paganism. If they were Jews, it entailed a break from Judaism and the Torah. Marcion preached a strict morality. All sex was sinful. Begetting children only produced more souls to live in bondage to the creator. Marcion believed Jesus had no physical birth but had appeared out of heaven one day in a body that seemed to be that of a thirty-year-old, complete with a misleading belly button, although not human at all: rather a celestial being. Jesus taught and was later crucified. His twelve disciples were to spread his gospel of an alien God and his adoption of all who would come to him. But things went awry: the disciples, as thick-headed and prone to misunderstanding as they appear in the Gospel of Mark, underestimated the discontinuity of Jesus' new revelation with their hereditary Judaism, thereby combining the two. This was the origin of the Judaizing heresy with which Paul deals in Galatians and elsewhere.

Marcion had noticed an oddity most Christians never notice as they read the New Testament: if Jesus had named the Twelve to succeed him and seemed satisfied with them, why was there a need for Paul at all? And why should he come to eclipse the others in importance? The Twelve are, for the most part, merely a list of names. By contrast, Paul wrote letters that formed the basis of much of the church's theology. Marcion saw a simple answer: the risen Jesus saw how far off the track his disciples would go and decided to recruit another who would get the message straight. This was Paul. To invoke a recurrent pattern in Christian history, think of Martin Luther, Alexander Campbell, John Nelson Darby, Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell, Victor Paul Wierwille, and others. All these believed that original, apostolic Christianity was corrupted by an admixture of human tradition, and they believed they had a new vision of the outlines of the original, true Christianity and could restore it. This is what Marcion thought already in the early second century. It should not sound that strange to us. Like these later men, Marcion would succeed very well in launching a new church, one that would spread like wildfire all over and even beyond the Roman Empire. Most noteworthy is the fact that the New Testament was his idea.

The emerging Catholic Church, which would develop into the medieval church, which then subsequently split into Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, was by this time employing the familiar authority structure of scripture and tradition. By scripture was meant the Septuagint, the Greek translation of Jewish scriptures, including the so-called apocryphal or deuterocanonical books of the Maccabees, Judith, Tobit, Sirach/Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom, Baruch, the Epistle of Jeremiah, 1 Esdras, and so on. This was "scripture." Tradition, on the other hand, was a growing body of sayings attributed to Jesus and stories about him, as well as the summaries of "apostolic" doctrine represented in such formulae as the Apostles Creed and similar summaries in the late second century by writers like Irenaeus and Tertullian, to name two. There were a number of early Christian writings of various kinds (gospels, epistles, apostolic acts, revelations, church manuals) that were written and circulated more or less widely, but these were at first more expressions of the faith than either the source or criteria for faith. That is not to say they were not important. Think of the writings of Calvin and Luther: they are important to Calvinists and Lutherans who still study them, but Calvinists and Lutherans would not consider the wise writings of their founders to be scripture on the same

level with the Bible. Admittedly, the difference in actual practice may evaporate, but that is just the technical distinction that is important here. The question that concerns us is precisely how the early Christian writings came to cross that line and join the category of scripture. The earliest Catholic Christians felt no need as yet for new scripture since they found the Septuagint Bible adequate to their needs as long as they could use allegory and typology to see in it a book about Jesus Christ and Christianity.

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Without the Septuagint as his scripture, Marcion felt the need to compile a new canon that would teach Christian faith and morals authoritatively. He accordingly collected the early Christian writings he felt served this purpose. These were paramountly the Pauline epistles except for the Pastorals, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus, because these did not exist yet, still waiting to be written in reaction to Marcion and other "heretics" in the mid-second century. Marcion had shorter, earlier versions of the texts than ours. Likewise, he had a book he knew simply as "the gospel" corresponding to a shorter version of our Gospel of Luke. Catholic writers decades later would claim he had edited and censored the texts, cutting out material that served to link Christianity with its Jewish background. Marcion no doubt did do some editing, textual criticism as it seemed to him, but it seems that Catholic apologists did much more in the way of padding the texts with their own added material, claiming their own versions were original and should be adopted instead of the Marcionite text. Marcion called his scripture the Apostolicon ("Book of the Apostle"). In his and his opponents' claims and counter claims, we begin to see the inevitable relation of the twin issues of text and canon—which versions of which writings are authoritative?

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In this monumental work, Professor Price offers an inclusive New Testament canon with twenty-seven additional sacred books from the first three centuries of Christianity, including a few of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi writings. Price also reconstructs the Gospel of Marcion and the lost Gospel according to the Hebrews. Here, for the first time, is a canon representing all major factions of the early church.

As an interpretive translation, Price's text is both accurate and readable and is tied more closely to the Greek than most previous translations. Price conveys the meanings of words in context, carefully choosing the right phrase or idiom to convey their sense in English. For words that had a specific theological import when first written, Price leaves the Greek transliteration, giving readers archons for the fallen angels thought to be ruling the world, paraclete for encourager, andpleroma for the Gnostic godhead.

Within the collection, each book is introduced with comments about the cultural setting, information about when a document was probably written, and significant textual considerations, which together form a running commentary that continues into the footnotes. The findings of scholars, documented and summarized by Price, will come as a surprise to some readers. It appears, as Price suggests, that most of what is known about Jesus came by way of revelation to Christian oracles rather than by word of mouth as historical memory. In addition, the major characters in the New Testament, including Peter, Stephen, and Paul, appear to be composites of several historical individuals each, their stories comprising a mix of events, legend, and plot themes borrowed from the Old Testament and Greek literature.

In the New Testament world, theology developed gradually along different trajectories, with tension between the charismatic ascetics such as Marcion and Thecla, as examples, and the emerging Catholic orthodoxy of such clergy as Ignatius and Polycarp. The tension is detectable in the texts themselves, many of which represent "heretical" points of view: Gnostic, Jewish-Christian, Marcionite, and proto-orthodox, and were later edited, sometimes clumsily, in an attempt to harmonize all into one consistent theology.

What may occur to many readers, among the more striking aspects of the narratives, is that the earliest, most basic writings, such as Mark's Gospel in inarticulate Greek, are ultimately more impressive and inspirational than the later attempts by more educated Christians to appeal to sophisticated readers with better grammar and more allusions to classical mythology and apologetic embellishments.

The critical insights and theories on display in these pages have seldom been incorporated into mainstream conservative Bible translations, and in many ways, Price has made the New Testament a whole new book for readers, allowing them, by virtue of the translation, to comprehend the meaning of the text where it is obscured by the traditional wording. Whatever usefulness teachers, students, and clergy may find here in terms of pedagogical and inspirational value, The Pre-Nicene New Testament is guaranteed to provoke further thought and conversation among the general public—hopefully toward the goal of more personal study and insights.

- Sales Rank: #653305 in Books

- Published on: 2006-11-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 2.10" w x 6.25" l, 3.45 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 1248 pages

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An impressive effort by a respected New Testament scholar

By Acharya S aka D.M. Murdock

The first word that comes to mind when reading Dr. Robert M. Price's opus "The Pre-Nicene New Testament: Fifty-four Formative Texts" is "massive." It is a massive undertaking, a massive amount of research and a massive volume of writing, comprising over 1200 pages. With TPNNT, Price has produced a book that could literally serve as a weapon in the pummeling of logic into the human mind. To review properly such an enormous and effective endeavor could in itself constitute the pursuit of a lifetime. Having said that - somewhat in jest - I have nonetheless put pen to paper to provide a proper analysis of a worthy effort.

There can be little doubt that Dr. Price is one of the leading luminaries in New Testament studies, bringing with him not only an impressive amount of erudition but also a fresh perspective of an old and festering dilemma, which is the probable condition of the New Testament prior to the First Council of Nicea in 325 AD/CE. Price does well to start off his exegesis of some 54 early Christian texts, both canonical and non, with a discussion of Christian bishop and Gnostic "heretic" Marcion (c. 110-160 AD/CE), as it is universally accepted that Marcion was the first producer of a "New Testament" canon. Indeed, in between Price's impressive translations of these texts, as well as in the footnotes, appear nuggets of material that help fill out the overall thesis of the work: To wit, the pre-Nicene New Testament essentially originated with Marcion, as was related in ancient times. This fact I also asserted in *The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold* (1999), following the scholarship of other individuals over the centuries. Using virtually entirely different sources, including foreign-language sources as well, Price comes to the same logical conclusion. Why? Because this fascinating area of study is evidently more widespread and these facts more well known than mainstream academia lets on.

When these facts are clearly understood, it becomes abundantly evident that, rather than representing a free-

flowing transmission of mystical and divine origin, the New Testament is a highly contrived text worked over numerous times for the specific purpose of establishing iron-clad dogma and doctrine. Fortunately, with this Marcionite recognition, the deconstruction and resurrection of the NT is all downhill from here, which is, of course, not to say that Price doesn't have his work cut out for him in disentangling centuries of intricately and often badly woven webs. Knowing such facts, one is struck by the gargantuan responsibility of possessing vision clear enough to see the project both as a whole and in its myriad details as well.

I did find myself perplexed at Price's definitive statements as to what Marcion thought, felt and believed as he created and circulated the first New Testament, particularly since we do not possess any original writings of the man in which he thus expressed himself. In my own studies, I did not gather several of the impressions Price did regarding Marcion, particularly since the pertinent data are not composed of Marcion's own writing and words but constitute reportage from his detractors and enemies. Hence, we are on shaky ground as to what Marcion truly thought, felt and believed. In any event, although I am uncertain as to these speculative conclusions, I was intrigued enough to let the evidence brought to light by Price speak for itself. Naturally, the pursuit is quite fruitful, as Price immediately steps into risky territory by making numerous other definitive statements that turn the orthodox history of the formation of the canon on its ear.

First of all, while discussing the non-canonical Christian texts that were presumably considered in some circles also to be divinely inspired, when Price emphasizes that the history of the formation of the New Testament canon is underestimated in importance, he is not exaggerating. For example, upon inspection the various Nag Hammadi texts must not be dismissed merely as the weird rantings of some bizarre Gnostic sect, as they were evidently as "orthodox" as any others prior to the decrees of Pope Athanasius of Alexandria in 367 AD/CE. These texts, then, must be factored into what constituted early Christianity, not just as examples of Gnosticism or even as "Gnostic Christianity." The fact that they were hidden indicates their concealers were squarely considered part of the Christian church and only "heretical" if they had belligerently retained these texts. Many of Price's conclusions, such as that the canonical Gospel of John itself was likely a Gnostic text, will come as a surprise to some, but such assertions are based on logic founded upon the evidence, not on irrational and prejudicial belief with no scientific basis. Concerning John's gospel, Price writes: "As for the vexing question of gospel authorship, we may immediately dismiss the claim that it was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus." (p. 667)

Other of Price's more interesting and surprising conclusions appear under the section exploring the date and authorship of the Gospel of Mark, concerning which Price states:

"Like the other gospels, Mark seems to come from the mid-second century CE. Probably the crucial piece of evidence for dating the book is the Olivet Discourse, or the Little Apocalypse as Timothee Colani dubbed it, constituting chapter 13 of the gospel. It appears to have been an independent apocalyptic pamphlet circulating on the eve of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. Mark picked it up and made it part of his text; but which destruction and which temple were portrayed? As Hermann Detering has shown, the warnings of dangers and dooms outlined in the text fit better the destruction of city and temple during the Roman campaign against the messianic King Simon bar-Kochba in CE 136 than in CE 70 as is usually assumed. This means that Mark has absorbed an earlier document that already stemmed from the third of the second century CE." (p. 69)

Thus, the suggestion arises that the gospel of Mark - considered by many to be the earliest of the canonical gospels - must have been composed after the destruction of 135 AD/CE. In supporting this late dating of the canonical gospels, Price cites various anachronisms within Mark, such as "the depiction of synagogues scattered throughout Galilee when in fact they seem to have been largely confined to Judea before 70 CE..." (pp. 69-70)

Dr. Price further makes the startling but logical connection between the "heretic" Marcion and the evangelist Mark. In his association of Marcion with Mark, Price comments:

"We may also note the clear Marcionite tendency of the gospel, with its unremittingly scathing portrayal of the disciples of Jesus as utter failures to carry on the Christian legacy. Indeed, it is not unlikely the subsequent choice of the ascription 'Mark' reflects the name of Marcion, the early-to-mid second century champion of Paulinism." (p. 70)

It is interesting that the word for "Mark" in Greek is "Markos" and in Latin "Marcus," the latter being the name of "three leading Gnostics," one of whom is depicted by Church father Adamantius (4th cent.) as a Marcionite defender. Moreover, in his "Dialogue" Adamantius concurred with the assertion of early Church father and bishop Papias (fl. c. 130 AD/CE) that the evangelist Mark had never heard or been a follower of Christ. (Catholic Encyclopedia, "St. Mark")

After discussing the connection and confusion between the New Testament characters Simon Peter and Simon Magus, Price clarifies this suggestion of a Marcionite derivation for the gospel of Mark:

"This need not mean that Marcion the Paulinist was himself the author of the present gospel, but it very likely does preserve the memory of the Marcionite/Gnostic milieu in which it was written. A better candidate for authorship would be Basilides, a Gnostic who claimed to be the disciple of Glaukias, interpreter of Simon Peter, unless this too was a confusion with Simon Magus/Paul." (p. 70)

This theory of Mark being a product of the early Gnostic Basilides (fl. c. 120-140 AD/CE), rather than Marcion himself, may explain why Marcion's Gospel of the Lord differs from that of Mark, possessing more of a connection to the gospel of Luke. Indeed, several scholars and researchers over the centuries have posited that, rather than Marcion having "corrupted" Luke, as was charged by Church fathers such as Irenaeus (fl. 180 AD/CE), the author of Luke interpolated and edited Marcion's gospel. In another surprising move, after discussing a possible root text for Luke, an "Ur-Lukas" that possessed the same function of its more famous cousin "Ur-Markus," Price mentions research demonstrating a possible authorship by the early Church father Polycarp (69-155 CE). (p. 498)

Hence, Price shows that the canonical gospels date from a much later era than is currently believed, from the mid-second century in his analysis - and that their authors were in no way eyewitnesses to the events, apostles or disciples of apostles, as they are purported to be. These facts are not only singularly astounding to the average person but, after examining all the evidence, they clearly represent the only sensible starting point from which we may progress in order to discover who really wrote the gospels.

Price thus lifts the New Testament puzzle out of its current historical milieu, where it has always been ill-fitting, and places it smack dab in the next century, where it fits much better. A few things are still out of joint, but unraveling such a phantasmagoria as the NT has always proved itself too much for any one individual, no matter the intelligence or erudition.

In reality, despite all the wishful thinking of conservative Christian scholars and writers, the fact will remain that the canonical gospels do not clearly emerge in the historical/ literary record until after the Marcionite New Testament around the middle of the second century, a fact that I have discussed in detail in my books *The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold*, *Suns of God: Krishna, Buddha and Christ Unveiled* (2004), and *Who Was Jesus? Fingerprints of The Christ* (2007).

As concerns his impressive and significant translations of the texts that make up the pre-Nicene New

Testament, Price employs an innovative and clever technique of translating the words "God" and "Lord" as, for example, "Adonai" and "El Elyon," so as to distinguish between God and Jesus. (p. 72) Moreover, Price's writing is witty and engaging enough that what could be deemed a dull subject matter becomes more interesting to many, especially specialists in New Testament history.

In the final analysis, Dr. Robert Price's translations of the pre-Nicene New Testament are important and worthy of study by all parties interested in the history of the New Testament, New Testament scholarship, and subtle but germane meanings associated with the "original" texts as best they can be reproduced.

All in all, I enjoyed reading "The Pre-Nicene New Testament: Fifty-four Formative Texts," as, again, in addition to Price's intriguing rendition of the NT texts themselves, the book possesses gems of interesting data in the commentaries and footnotes along the way. I was also pleased by the unusual "bibliographic essay" at the end - particularly since Price mentions me and my book *Suns of God: Krishna, Buddha and Christ Unveiled*:

"Acharya S ('Suns of God,' 2004) rehabilitated the older approach of boiling all mythology down to ancient sun worship and astrology as the only way of accounting for the global, ancient, spontaneous occurrence of the same mythemes, rituals, and symbols. It must have been a way of representing something everyone could see, not needing to borrow from other cultures. (p. 1179)"

While this synopsis of my work could use clarification, I appreciate the nod, Bob - and thanks also for the rest of your hard work in "The Pre-Nicene New Testament."

--D.M. Murdock is an independent scholar of comparative religion and mythology, and the author of *The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold*, *Suns of God: Krishna, Buddha and Christ Unveiled*, *Who Was Jesus? Fingerprints of The Christ* and *Christ in Egypt: The Horus-Jesus Connection*. Raised a Christian, she has been studying Jesus mythicism in multiple languages for some 20 years.

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I really appreciate all of the work R. M. Price put into this magnum opus of New Testament study. Modern people take it way too much for granted what books are in the New Testament, but Price shows that there were at least twice as many "books" available to the early church. It's fascinating to see how much was left out of current bibles.

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## Marcionite invasion

The history of a distinctively Christian scriptural canon begins with Marcion of Pontus in Asia Minor. Traditionally dated about 140 AD/CE, Marcion actually may have begun his public ministry earlier, just after the turn of the century. One ancient tradition makes Marcion the amanuensis (secretary) of the evangelist John at the end of the first century. That is probably not historically true, but no one would have told the story if they had not assumed Marcion was living at that time. It was a general tendency of early Catholic apologists to late-date the so-called “heretics” to distance them from the apostolic period in the same way apologists today prefer the earliest possible date for the epistles and gospels.

Marcion was the first Paulinist we know of. It would later be a matter of some embarrassment to the church fathers that the earliest readers and devotees of the Pauline epistles were the Marcionites and the Valentinian Gnostics. We know of no Paulinists before these second-century Christians. The mid-first century existence of Pauline Christianity is simply an inference, admittedly a natural one, from taking the authorship and implied dates of the Pauline epistles at face value as works representing a wing of first-century Christianity. But it is quite possible that the Pauline literature is the product of Marcionite and Gnostic movements in the late first and early second centuries. Even if most of the Pauline epistles are genuinely from the first century, the most likely candidate for the first collector of the corpus remains Marcion. No one else in the relevant time period would have had either the interest or the opportunity. No one was as interested in Paul as Marcion. Why?

It was because he shared with his theological cousins, the Gnostics, the belief that the true God and Father of

Jesus Christ was not the same deity as the creator and law-giver God of Israel and of the Jewish scriptures. In this belief Marcion was perhaps influenced by Zoroastrian Zurvanism, a dualistic doctrine, as Jan Koester suggests. Marcion allowed that the creator God was righteous and just but also harsh and retributive. His seeming grace was but a function of his arbitrariness: Nero might render a verdict of thumbs-up or thumbs-down as the whim moved him, and so with the God of Israel. Marcion deemed the Jewish scriptures historically true and expected messianic prophecies to be fulfilled by a Davidic king who would restore Jewish sovereignty. But Marcion deemed all of this strictly irrelevant to the new religion of Christianity. In his view, which he claimed to have derived from Paul's epistles, Jesus Christ was the son and revealer of an alien God who had not created the world, had not given the Torah to Moses, and would not judge mankind. The Father of Jesus Christ was a God of perfect love and righteousness who would punish no one. Through Jesus, and by extension Paul, the Christian God offered humans the opportunity to be adopted as his children. If they were gentiles, this meant a break with paganism. If they were Jews, it entailed a break from Judaism and the Torah. Marcion preached a strict morality. All sex was sinful. Begetting children only produced more souls to live in bondage to the creator. Marcion believed Jesus had no physical birth but had appeared out of heaven one day in a body that seemed to be that of a thirty-year-old, complete with a misleading belly button, although not human at all: rather a celestial being. Jesus taught and was later crucified. His twelve disciples were to spread his gospel of an alien God and his adoption of all who would come to him. But things went awry: the disciples, as thick-headed and prone to misunderstanding as they appear in the Gospel of Mark, underestimated the discontinuity of Jesus' new revelation with their hereditary Judaism, thereby combining the two. This was the origin of the Judaizing heresy with which Paul deals in Galatians and elsewhere.

Marcion had noticed an oddity most Christians never notice as they read the New Testament: if Jesus had named the Twelve to succeed him and seemed satisfied with them, why was there a need for Paul at all? And why should he come to eclipse the others in importance? The Twelve are, for the most part, merely a list of names. By contrast, Paul wrote letters that formed the basis of much of the church's theology. Marcion saw a simple answer: the risen Jesus saw how far off the track his disciples would go and decided to recruit another who would get the message straight. This was Paul. To invoke a recurrent pattern in Christian history, think of Martin Luther, Alexander Campbell, John Nelson Darby, Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell, Victor Paul Wierwille, and others. All these believed that original, apostolic Christianity was corrupted by an admixture of human tradition, and they believed they had a new vision of the outlines of the original, true Christianity and could restore it. This is what Marcion thought already in the early second century. It should not sound that strange to us. Like these later men, Marcion would succeed very well in launching a new church, one that would spread like wildfire all over and even beyond the Roman Empire. Most noteworthy is the fact that the New Testament was his idea.

The emerging Catholic Church, which would develop into the medieval church, which then subsequently split into Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, was by this time employing the familiar authority structure of scripture and tradition. By scripture was meant the Septuagint, the Greek translation of Jewish scriptures, including the so-called apocryphal or deuterocanonical books of the Maccabees, Judith, Tobit, Sirach/Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom, Baruch, the Epistle of Jeremiah, 1 Esdras, and so on. This was "scripture." Tradition, on the other hand, was a growing body of sayings attributed to Jesus and stories about him, as well as the summaries of "apostolic" doctrine represented in such formulae as the Apostles Creed and similar summaries in the late second century by writers like Irenaeus and Tertullian, to name two. There were a number of early Christian writings of various kinds (gospels, epistles, apostolic acts, revelations, church manuals) that were written and circulated more or less widely, but these were at first more expressions of the faith than either the source or criteria for faith. That is not to say they were not important. Think of the writings of Calvin and Luther: they are important to Calvinists and Lutherans who still study them, but Calvinists and Lutherans would not consider the wise writings of their founders to be scripture on the same level with the Bible. Admittedly, the difference in actual practice may evaporate, but that is just the technical

distinction that is important here. The question that concerns us is precisely how the early Christian writings came to cross that line and join the category of scripture. The earliest Catholic Christians felt no need as yet for new scripture since they found the Septuagint Bible adequate to their needs as long as they could use allegory and typology to see in it a book about Jesus Christ and Christianity.

This reinterpretation of Jewish scripture was not something Marcion was willing to undertake. He insisted on a literal, straightforward reading of the Septuagint, refusing to treat it as a ventriloquist dummy and make it seem to speak with Christian accents. Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428) had the same attitude, though he was no Marcionite. Read in a plain-sense fashion, the Jewish scriptures, Marcion realized, had nothing to do with Christianity. Even lacking his belief in two different biblical Gods, one can see his point when one thinks of the strained arguments needed in order to make various Old Testament passages sound like predictions of Jesus. And it is still common today to hear Christians contrast the severe God of Israel with the tender Father of Jesus. So Marcion repudiated the Jewish scriptures. It wasn't that he didn't believe them, because he did. He simply felt they were the scriptures of someone else's religion and didn't overlap with Christianity as he understood it. Nor was he anti-Semitic or even anti-Judaic. For him, Judaism was true on its own terms, just not the religion of Jesus Christ or of the apostle Paul.

Without the Septuagint as his scripture, Marcion felt the need to compile a new canon that would teach Christian faith and morals authoritatively. He accordingly collected the early Christian writings he felt served this purpose. These were paramountly the Pauline epistles except for the Pastorals, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus, because these did not exist yet, still waiting to be written in reaction to Marcion and other "heretics" in the mid-second century. Marcion had shorter, earlier versions of the texts than ours. Likewise, he had a book he knew simply as "the gospel" corresponding to a shorter version of our Gospel of Luke. Catholic writers decades later would claim he had edited and censored the texts, cutting out material that served to link Christianity with its Jewish background. Marcion no doubt did do some editing, textual criticism as it seemed to him, but it seems that Catholic apologists did much more in the way of padding the texts with their own added material, claiming their own versions were original and should be adopted instead of the Marcionite text. Marcion called his scripture the Apostolicon ("Book of the Apostle"). In his and his opponents' claims and counter claims, we begin to see the inevitable relation of the twin issues of text and canon—which versions of which writings are authoritative?

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