

The Root of the Corruption

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2 – Introduction

In another of my articles (*Introduction to the Marcionite Bible*) I have presented evidence that the gospel of *Luke* has been deliberately altered, and that the *Marcionite Gospel* was much closer to the original. I also presented evidence that the Marcionite version of the epistles of Paul were also much closer to the originals than the traditional Catholic / Protestant / Orthodox version. I did not however address the question of how and why the second century “Catholic” branch of Christianity came to be in such a corrupt state, with such distorted scriptures; that is the question I shall address in this article.

The epistles of Paul describe a conflict between Paul, and false apostles who combined Christian teaching with the Jewish law¹. It has traditionally been assumed that those problems were successfully overcome in the first century, and that the “Catholic” branch of Christianity was the continuation of the church founded by Peter and Paul. This view that is based largely on *Acts of the Apostles*; however that book was written by the same person who wrote the gospel of *Luke* (see *Luke* 1:1-4 and *Acts* 1:1-3). Having shown that *Luke* is corrupt, I must now question the version of history presented in *Acts*. In my view Paul was not successful in dealing with the false teachers, and authentic Christianity survived in only a few places. I believe that the teachings of the “circumcision party” came to be merged with the teachings of the gentile Christians in many areas, resulting in a hybrid form of Christianity; this hybrid form of Christianity incorporated the scriptures of the previous groups (with alterations of-course) and came to be known as “Catholic” (Latin for “universal”) Christianity. I will present the evidence for this in the following stages:

- The foundation of my argument is the idea that the traditional New Testament is a mixture of scriptures from two rival forms of Christianity. One of which believed that the Old Testament Law were corrupt and had been abolished; the other believed that the Old Testament Law was an uncorrupted and eternal Law. I will demonstrate this by comparing several passages from different New Testament books.
- The second section of this essay will demonstrate that some parts of the New Testament deliberately challenge the Old Testament texts. The verses which deliberately criticize and challenge the Old Testament are not subtle; it amazes me that Christians have missed/denied this for so long.
- The *Gospel of John* records that overturning the teaching of the Old Testament was a key part of Jesus’ mission on earth. I will examine this theme in section three.
- To provide further evidence that some books of the New Testament have to be interpreted as being in conflict with one another I will examine the tension that exists between the epistles of Paul and the book of *James*.
- After demonstrating that many of the books of the New Testament came from radically opposing sources, I will discuss the process by which the beliefs of these two opposing groups were merged and hybridised. I will focus on the book of *Acts*, and present evidence that it is a forgery.

1 E.g. *Galatians* 2:5-12, 5:2-3, *1 Corinthians* 9:1-2, *2 Corinthians* 11:5, *Philippians* 3:2-6

- I will discuss the corruption of the Epistles of Paul, and will discuss how, when and why the alterations were made.

3 – The Two Gospels

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have **not come to abolish** them but to fulfil them.... **not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law** until all is accomplished. Therefore **whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments** and teaches others to do the same will be called **least in the kingdom of heaven**, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, **unless your righteousness exceeds** that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
Matthew 5:17-20

The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. Yet it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.
Luke 16:16-17

Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you **workers of lawlessness.**’
Matthew 7:21-23

For he [Jesus] is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having **abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances**; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;
Ephesians 2:14-15, see also
Romans 10:4 and
Colossians 2:14

The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. Yet it is easier for the heaven and the earth to pass, **just as the law and the prophets**, than for than one tittle of **my words** to fail.
The Marcionite Gospel

yet we know that a person is **not justified by works of the law** but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and **not by works of the law**, because **by works of the law no one will be justified.**
Galatians 2:16

(For convenience and simplicity all of the quotes of Paul are from the Catholic/traditional version of his epistles rather than the Marcionite version. Throughout the rest of this essay I will always be quoting from the traditional version of the New Testament unless I make it clear that I am quoting the Marcionite version.)

Christian theology is a fabric of “harmonisations” which seek to reconcile numerous contradictions on issues of fundamental importance. Evangelical Christians boast that they can twist any scripture enough to make it compatible with all others. This is hardly a good thing, but none the less they are capable of this feat. Their particular strategy for twisting the scriptures above is by saying that “the law” means one thing when it is described as eternal in *Matthew*, and has another meaning entirely when it appears in verses that talk of it being abolished. They divide “the law” into two sections, the “moral law” which is eternal and is mentioned in verses on the left side of the table above, and the “ceremonial law” which was temporary and was abolished at the

resurrection. The bible itself does not describe this division - it is a human interpretation imposed upon the bible; it is a way to cover over contradictions like those above. *Luke 16:16-17* is particularly troublesome, as it tells us quite clearly that the Law which passed away in the time of John is the very same one from which not one dot nor iota can pass, not to mention the fact that even the “ceremonial law” should surely have lasted until it’s fulfilment at the crucifixion.

There is an alternative way of studying the bible. Rather than twisting verses to make them consistent with one another, we can allow each individual book to explain its own teaching to us. In this way it possible to recognise that many of the books are fundamentally in conflict with one another, as I shall shortly explain.

The various books in the New Testament can be divided into three groups. Some (Like *Matthew*) teach that the Jewish Law is still valid; others (such as *John*) teach that the Jewish law has been abolished (I will explain *John’s* teaching shortly). Many books are a hybrid between these two positions, particularly the *Gospel of Luke* and the epistles of Paul; this is the result of editorial activity. Before we attempt to understand what the New Testament has to say about this subject, let us first remind ourselves of what the Old Testament says.

4 – The Corrupt Old Testament

According to traditional Christian beliefs, the Hebrew Scriptures (also know as the “Old Testament”) with all of their rules and regulations are the eternal and uncorrupted words of God. The Gospel message and the Law are seen as being fundamentally in harmony with one another. The very term “New Testament”, used to describe the covenant (agreement) that God made with humanity through Christ, is contrasted by the “Old Testament”; the previous covenant that God made with Israeli on Mount Sinai (*Exodus 19, 34:10*). According to traditional Christian beliefs the New Covenant builds on this Old Covenant as a house is built upon a foundation.

The Marcionites on the other hand believed that the Hebrew Scriptures and Gospel are fundamentally in conflict with one another (because they came from different Gods). I do not believe that the Old Testament is from a different god, but after contemplating this issue I think that there is some merit in the idea that the teachings of Jesus and the apostles deliberately challenge corrupt teaching in the Old Testament.

There is a common misunderstanding among Christians that before Jesus the Laws of Moses provided a path to God. This is unbiblical; the rewards and punishments for keeping or breaking the Mosaic Law are listed in *Leviticus 26* and *Deuteronomy 28*; you will notice that neither eternal life nor hell can be found among them - every single reward and punishment is described as taking place during this earthly life. Let us instead review what the Hebrew Scriptures actually do say:

God’s interactions with humanity have been structured by a series of covenants (agreements) that have been made between humanity and God. The Hebrew Scriptures contain details of numerous such covenants, but only three of them are particularly

relevant to the current discussion:

- 1) God made a covenant with Noah (*Genesis 9:1-17*); Noah's family and descendants (the whole of humanity) and "every living creature of flesh" are included in the Covenant. Details of the covenant:
 - God blesses them and tells them to populate the earth,
 - he places all animals under human command,
 - permits that all animals may be eaten (including pigs!),
 - but forbids the eating of meat that this has life (blood) still in it,
 - forbids murder, and states that murderers will die by human hands,
 - he promises never again to destroy humanity in a flood,
 - he creates the rainbow as a symbol of the covenant.
- 2) God made a covenant with Abraham (*Genesis 17:2-9*), Abraham's descendants are included in the covenant which is also described as eternal (verse 7). Details of the Covenant:
 - God promises to multiply Abraham, and make him the father of many nations,
 - he promises to give Abraham's descendants the promised land (described in *Genesis 15:18-21*)
 - he commands that all male children shall be circumcised as a symbol of the covenant (verse 11).
- 3) The Mosaic covenant (also known as the Sinai Covenant or Old Covenant) was made between God and the tribes of Israel (including their descendants):
 - God promises to make them his special possession, "a holy nation";
 - this means they will have special privileges and responsibilities, the rewards and penalties of obey or breaking the covenant are described in *Leviticus 26* and *Deuteronomy 28*,
 - Many of the laws associated with this covenant may seem strange, and pointless (e.g. the food laws); but, they make sense if one realises that they are focused on classifying and segregating things².
 - The covenant is described as eternal, and the Sabbath is the symbol of the Covenant (*Exodus 31:15-17*).

These covenants do not override or replace one another. Rather they are complementary, building upon one another like stories of a house. When God made the Covenant with Abraham it did not change the fact that Abraham (and everyone else on the planet) was still under the covenant of Noah, with all of its associated responsibilities and privileges. Similarly when the tribes of Israel entered their covenant with God and became a "special treasure", "above all people" (*Exodus 19:5*); the rest of

2 The purpose of many of the Laws is to set Israel apart from the rest of humanity (ie a special possession of God). The rules about hair cuts and clothing do this by visually making the Jews different from others (*Leviticus 19:27, Deuteronomy 22:12*); other Laws emphasise that Jews must be kept separate from non-Jews (*Deuteronomy 7:2-4*). This principle of not mixing kinds of things is even emphasised in rules about fabrics and crops (*Leviticus 19:19, Deuteronomy 22:9-11*). The concept of cleanness in the food laws arises because different animals belong in different categories; those that neatly fit into an easily defined category can be eaten, whilst those that are unusual and don't fit in are unclean (*Leviticus 11* and *Deuteronomy 14*). If these rules had applied to all of humanity, they would have been pointless - they were intended to symbolically separate the Jews from the Gentiles.

humanity were still under the covenant of Noah; the Jews just had additional responsibilities and privileges.

Now that we understand the teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures, we are ready to look at the “New Testament”. Most people are already aware the Jesus frequently overrules the commands given through Moses, and replaces them with much older teachings and instructions. For example Jesus forbids divorce, referring to the state of affairs in the Garden of Eden. Jesus’ teaching on food (*Matthew 15:16-17, Mark 7:18-19*) mirrors this exactly; the teachings of Moses (*Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14*) are overruled, and the previous command (given to Noah in *Genesis 9:3*) is reaffirmed³. Jesus’ teachings on the Sabbath (“the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath”, *Mark 2:27*) are linked with the Creation account (God rested on the seventh day as an example to humanity); whilst the teaching given through Moses portrays the Sabbath rules as a holiness issue⁴, just like the Pharisees of Jesus day.

This idea that Jesus challenges and undoes teachings associated with the Sinai Covenant (i.e. everything that was took place from Moses day until Jesus) is supported by numerous verses, indeed it is written into the fabric of several books of the New Testament.

Elijah answered the captain of fifty, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.
(*2 Kings 1:9-10*)

“If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. As in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean.
(*Leviticus 15:25*)

The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day... for the Lord fought for Israel.
(*Joshua 10:13-14*)

Clouds and darkness are round about him... (*Psalms 97:2a*) He sent darkness, and made it dark... (*Psalms 105a*). He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. (*Psalms 78:49*)

when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” But he turned and rebuked them. (*Luke 9:54-55*)

And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. (*Luke 8:43-44*)

“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry
(*Ephesians 4:26*)

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (*Ephesians 6:12*)

3 On an interesting side note; Genesis 9:4 forbids eating meat that still contains blood, whilst according to Acts 15:29, James commanded gentile Christians to avoid blood and meat which had been strangled (i.e. still contained blood).

4 For example, see *Numbers 15:32-36*, in which a man is stoned to death for picking up sticks on the Sabbath.

You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there. (Psalm 68:18)

"When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." (Ephesians 4:8)

I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord Yahweh do all these things. (Isaiah 45:7)

"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. (Luke 6:43-44) God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5b)

For I the Lord God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the third and fourth generation of them that hate me. (Exodus 20:5) ...for the Lord, Whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God (Exodus 34:14).

Love knows no jealousy... Love is never rude, never irritated, never resentful (1 Corinthians 13:4-5)

He is a Jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake the Lord, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you... (Joshua 24:13-14)

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven. (Matthew 18:21-22)

No one whose testicles are crushed or whose male organ is cut off shall enter the assembly of the Lord. (Deuteronomy 23:1)

For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 19:12)

Eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot... (Exodus 21:24)

To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also (Luke 6:29)

And he sent out his arrows and scattered them; he flashed forth lightnings and routed them. (Psalm 18:14)

In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one (Ephesians 6:16)

While the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation. They put him in custody, because it had not been made clear what should be done to him. And the LORD said to Moses, "The man shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp." And all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones, as the LORD commanded Moses. (Numbers 15:32-36)

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.
(Mark 2:27)

I thank thee O lord, that thou hast not created me a heathen, a slave, or a woman. (ancient Orthodox Jewish prayer⁵)

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

the ministry of death written and engraved on stones (2 Corinthians 3:7)

5 This is not found anywhere in the Bible, and so does not directly support my argument, but I included it as an interesting side note. Jesus and the apostles were challenging Jewish culture as a whole in the same manner, as well as their scriptures.

There are some places in the “Old Testament” where the corruption is self evident:

Then they brought the captives and the plunder and the spoil to Moses... And Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, who had come from service in the war. Moses said to them, Have you let all the women live? Behold, **these, on Balaam’s advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the Lord in the incident of Peor**, and so the plague came among the congregation of the Lord. Now therefore, **kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man by lying with him. But all the young girls who have not known man by lying with him keep alive for yourselves.**

Numbers 31:12-18

This is a classic example of scapegoating - blaming the sins and hardships of the Israelites on others. We are lead to believe that God and the Israelites held the captives in contempt, and then having psychologically denied the humanity of their prisoners felt free to commit hideous abuses against them. Naturally there are people who like to twist this scripture and read their own beliefs into it; Christian apologies frequently argue that the instruction of keep the virgin girls “alive for yourselves” is an act of mercy, motivated by a desire to save their lives. However the text itself tells us who this action is intended to benefit; there are kept alive not, for their own sake, but “for yourselves” - for the benefit of the Israelite soldiers.

5 – Gospel of John and the Hebrew Scriptures

The 6th chapter of *John* has some fascinating teaching that is relevant to our discussion of the Old Testament. The scene mirrors the events at the beginning of the Sinai covenant. Jesus has crossed the Sea of Galilee (verse 1, this means he has left Galilee and is now in a foreign land) and climbed a mountain (verse 2) and a great multitude have followed him; this mirrors the scene of Moses and the Jews at mount Sinai, when they had not yet entered the Promised Land. The events also take place near the time of the Passover (verse 4), closely associated with the exodus of the Jews from Egypt. Next the Multitude become hungry, and Jesus provides food; mirroring the manna from heaven provided by Moses (*Exodus* 16:4). The first message of this passage is that the bread of Jesus surpasses the manna of Moses; Jesus instructs them to gather up the leftovers - twelve baskets of food are filled (verse 13); whilst the manna in *Exodus* would spoil if it was gathered and stored⁶. Next Jesus withdraws into the hills alone, just as Moses climbed Sinai alone (*Exodus* 19:3).

The next step in this chain of events is when Jesus and the disciples to cross the sea once again on their way back to Galilee (leaving the foreign land). Moses was able to part the waters of the Red sea (*Exodus* 14:15-16) on the journey out of Egypt. The superiority of Jesus over Moses is demonstrated again in the fact that Jesus doesn't need to part the waters; in verses 18-19 he effortlessly walks across them, in the dark and during a storm! Next, notice the dialogue that takes place when the crowd came and find him on the other side:

Do not labour for the food that perishes [the manna of Moses], but for the food that endures to everlasting life... what sign will you perform then, that we may see it and believe you?...our fathers ate manna in the desert: as it is written: **he gave them bread from heaven to eat**

Then Jesus said to them “Most assuredly I say to you, **Moses did not give you bread from heaven**, but my father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world.

John 6:27-33

The people begin complaining about Jesus amongst themselves (verses 41-43), just as they once complained about Moses (*Exodus* 14:12, 16:3, 17:3). My analysis of *John* has not so far raised any controversial issues; mainstream Christians are quite comfortable with the fact that Jesus and the “New Covenant” surpass Moses and the “Old Covenant”. My analysis so far of *John* 6 has served only to set the context of the following pivotal verses:

I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread coming down from heaven, which one may eat of and not die. I am the living bread, having come down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. But the bread that I will give is my flesh on behalf of the life of the world.

John 6:48-51

⁶ *Exodus* 16:20-21, though storing some for the Sabbath was an exception to this rule.

Having created so many parallels between the current scene, and the events when the Sinai covenant was established, he now draws a direct contrast between the bread of Moses, and that of himself. The bread of Moses is associated with death, in contrast to his own, which can give life. Let us focus particularly on the last verse; imagine for a moment the reaction of an orthodox Jew of the first century, being told to eat human flesh. The statement is obviously figurative, but even so it is vile! The concept of eating human flesh is disgusting even to Gentiles⁷, imagine the reaction of Jews, who would have carefully eaten only certain types of animal in the name of cleanness. But Jesus is just getting started:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man **and drink his blood** you do not have life in yourselves. The one **eating⁸ my flesh** and **drinking my blood** has life eternal, and I will raise him up in the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. The one **eating my flesh and drinking my blood** abides in me and I in him. Just as the living father sent me and I live through the father, also the one eating me will live through me. This is the bread having come down out of heaven, not just as the fathers ate and died.

The one eating this bread will live to eternity.

John 6:53-58

It is hard to imagine anything more carefully calculated to offend a devout Jew. At the very centre of the Torah's rules for kosher food is the prohibition of consuming blood:

If any man of the house of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, no person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood.

Any man also of the people of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them, who takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust. For the life of every creature is the blood of it; therefore I have said to the people of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.

Leviticus 17:10-14 see also Deuteronomy 15:23

Does this offend you? - *John 6:61*

Even if an animal was clean, it had to be killed by bleeding it to death, to remove all blood from its body; any animal that died any other way could not be eaten. The parallels between this rule, and the salvation offered by Jesus are obvious; the life is in the blood, the blood atones for sin. But under the Sinai Covenant this blood was to be

7 Obviously Christians do not react in this way, because we understand the symbolism and we are used to this image. Try to put yourself into the shoes of someone who had never heard of Christianity before and think about the images "cannibalism" is likely to conjure up.

8 The Greek word for eating here is "τρωγω" which would perhaps be better translated as "chew" or "gnaw"; its connotations are very physical, emphasising the imagery of Jesus' statement.

poured out; never was it to be consumed! It is hard to imagine an arrangement more carefully designed to challenge his listeners' loyalty to Moses and the Torah. The very act with which the "New Covenant" is symbolised is a graphic rejection of the most sacred rules of the "Old Covenant"; Jesus' listeners are forced to definitively choose between the bread of Moses and that of Christ - they cannot have both! To an orthodox Jew the choice of symbolism would seem nothing less than satanic. The reaction of the Jews to this is given in *John 6:66*; it is precisely the reaction we would expect:

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked with him no more.

It is also worth noting that the Jews whom Jesus was dealing with that day were not scribes or Pharisees. The crowd were common people of Galilee; before he had said these things this crowd had been people who loved him; just a short while ago they had proclaimed him to be a prophet, and had wanted to make him king (*John 6:14-15*).

Emphasising the tension between the ministry of Jesus and Judaism is one of the key themes of the *Gospel of John*. Consider for example the following verses:

suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire... and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven (<i>2 Kings 2:11</i>)	No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. (<i>John 3:13</i>)
The Jewish prophets were said to have seen and heard God: <i>Genesis 26:2, 32:20, Exodus 24:9-10, 33:20-23 and Amos 9:1</i>	no one has ever seen God (<i>John 1:18</i>) The Father who sent me bears witness of me. Ye have never heard his voice nor seen his shape. (<i>John 5:36-37</i>)

In *John*, Jesus tells us directly that he rejects the Law of Moses. When he was talking to the Pharisees he refers the Torah as "your law" *John 8:17, 10:34 and 15:25*; if he recognised it as the law of God, then "our law" or "Gods law" would have been the appropriate designation; these words were not chosen by accident.

John 10:8 contains an even stronger rejection, this time a rejection of the Jewish prophets when Jesus makes a comparison between them and the false prophets who will come in the future:

All those who came before me are robbers and thieves - *John 10:8*

This is yet another verse in *John* that traditional theologians must twist or ignore to pretend that it doesn't contradict their beliefs. But I must emphasise again, Jesus did not say this by accident, this is a consistent theme running right through the *Gospel of John*.

The Marcionite Research Library has three fascinating articles about how the *Gospel of John* is in conflict with Judaism and supports Marcionite beliefs on several issues. I recommend that you read them if you are interested in that gospel as they provide a boarder look at that gospel than my own analysis and provide a different perspective to my own.

<http://library.marcionite-scripture.info/turm1.htm>

<http://library.marcionite-scripture.info/turm2.htm>

<http://library.marcionite-scripture.info/turm3.htm>

Obviously I do not agree with the view that Marcion himself wrote the *Gospel of John*.

Some of the traditional texts of the New Testament affirm the Hebrew Scriptures; others are in conflict with them. It could be argued that some of the New Testament texts (such as *John*) present the gospel as abolishing the Sinai covenant and building instead upon much older relationships between God and humanity. An alternative interpretation is that these texts are drawing our attention to corruption in the Old Testament.

The bible itself records a conflict in the first century, between pro-law and anti-law factions of Christianity. The passages that we have looked at are fossilised relics of that conflict. The reason why such radically conflicting views are both recorded in the New Testament is because the traditional form of Christianity emerged as a hybridisation of these two opposing groups. This hybridisation process lies at the heart of much of the corruption in the New Testament. In the next section I will show you one last fossil of the conflict; then in the following sections I will describe the hybridisation process in more detail, and explain how it relates to the alterations made to the texts that would later become part of the “New Testament”.

6 – The Argument Between Paul and James

G = Galatians, R = Romans, J = James

Paul (and the editors ⁹)		Epistle of James (possibly fraudulent)	
R6:18: Works indicate salvation.		J2:18: Works indicate faith	
G2:16&R3:28: Justification is by faith not works of the Law.		J2:24: Justification is by works not faith alone	
G3:6&R4:3: Quotes Genesis 15:6, Faith made Abraham right with God.		J2:22-23: Quotes Genesis 15:6, his faith and deeds worked together	
G3:20&R3:30: God is one.	J2:14-19: You believe God is one, good but even demons believe that!		
G3:23: We were captive under the law.		J1:25: The law makes people free	
G5:18, R8:2 & R10:4: We're not under the law.	J2:10-13: We will be judged according to the law, but there is mercy for the merciful		
R5:20*: God sent the law to increase sin R7:9: law caused sin and death		J1:13-15: God temps no-one, desire causes sin which causes death	
G5:10-12: The one troubling you will bear the penalty, no matter who he is		J4:11: He who judges his brother, judges the law	
G1:12-16, 2Cor.12:1-7*: Paul didn't learn from the other apostles but by direct revelation from Christ above		J3:14-15: If you're jealous & ambitious don't boast & lie. This isn't the wisdom that comes down from above.	
G1:20*: before God, I do not lie!	J5:12: Do not Swear an Oath, let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no		
1Cor9:15*, 2Cor10:14-15*, 11:21-23*, 2Cor12:11-12*, Phil3:8-9*, 1Thes2:7-12*		J3:5: Don't Boast!	
G1:8-9: Paul curses the one preaching "a different Gospel"		J3:9: Don't curse!	

You foolish man! – James 2:20

Galatians and *Acts* tell us that Paul had a significant disagreement with James, John and Peter. Some people have used this, and the disagreements highlighted in the table above to argue that Paul corrupted Christianity, and that James and the disciples of Jesus were the very people referred to as "false apostles" in the epistles of Paul; this is of-course absurd, we have already seen that the *Gospel of John* is even more opposed to the Sinai covenant than the *Marcionite Gospel* or any of the writings of Paul. Peter's gospel (ie *Mark*¹⁰) is also perfectly compatible with Paul's views. Even *Matthew*, the

9 I have used red into indicated which passages are by Paul and which are by the editors. In places where I do not yet know whether or not a passage is corrupt, I have marked the passage with an asterisk "*".

10 The early Catholics believed that Mark was Peter's assistant, and that "Mark's gospel" was telling events from Peter's point of view. We have no solid evidence for or against this; but the gospel of Mark does focus very much on Peter, so this is believable.

gospel that most strongly mirrors the beliefs of the pro-law faction contains statements that support a Marcionite/Pauline world view¹¹. It is likely that all four of the gospels had a phase in their editorial history when they strongly opposed the Sinai Covenant and proposed as an alternative to Judaism rather than a continuation of it.

We don't know what mistakes or misunderstandings divided the first Christians against one another, but in the end that majority of them were in good agreement. Also remember that James¹² was merely a blood relative of Jesus, and not chosen as an apostle¹³, all four of the gospels warn us against automatically trusting Jesus' brothers (*Matthew* 12:46-50, *Mark* 3: 31-35, *Luke* 8:19-21, *John* 7:3-5), so even if Paul and James did remain in opposition to one another it is James would have to be rejected rather than Paul.

The conflict between the pro-law and anti-law preachers, and the tension between Paul and the other apostles is described in numerous passages of the "New Testament" (for example *Acts* 11:1-18, 15:1-29, *1 Corinthians* 9:1-18, *2 Corinthians* 11, *Galatians* 1:6-2:21, 4:9-10, 6:12, *Philippians* 3:2-6, 3:18-19) however be aware that many of these passages have been re-written by editors, especially *Acts*. I will discuss in detail how the confusion and conflict in the early church caused the corruption of the scriptures in the next section.

11 *Matthew* 11:27, for example, suggests that the father of Jesus was unknown prior to ministry of Jesus.

12 Assuming, for the sake of argument, that the Epistle of James is genuine.

13 There was an apostle by the same name, but that is a different person.

5 – Hybridisation and Corruption of the Scriptures

I will start this section by drawing your attention to two important facts. Firstly, I have already argued that *Luke* is a corrupted version of the *Marcionite Gospel*. The book *Acts of the Apostles* was written by the same person as *Luke* (see *Luke* 1:1-4 and *Acts* 1:1-3), and so we must immediately suspect that it too is a forgery.

Second, the Paul who we find presented in *Acts* bears no resemblance to the Paul who we find in the epistles. First let us examine the simplest and least significant of the differences first, the travel movements of Paul, as described in *Acts* and *Galatians*.

Paul's journeys and independence

Paul of the epistles was autonomous and acted independently of the other apostles. For example, immediately after his conversion he sets off on a missionary expedition to Arabia (*Galatians* 1:17¹⁴), without even meeting the other apostles to tell them about his conversion. He demonstrates bold independence again when he confronts the false apostles (*Galatians* 2:4-5), and then even Peter (*Galatians* 2:11-14). The epistles indicate that Paul himself was the main person responsible for establishing the Gentile churches (*2 Corinthians* 3:1-3); he does not mention that Peter deserves any credit.

This is all in stark contrast to the Paul whom we find described in *Acts of the Apostles*. The author of *Acts* goes to great pains to stress that Paul has no autonomy or independence from the other disciples. The first thing that happens after his conversion, is that he is “brought” (*Acts* 9:8) to Damascus by his companions. After being healed, and starting to preach the Gospel the disciples “took” him (*Acts* 9:25, 30) out of Damascus; when he reaches Jerusalem he is “brought” by Barnabas to see the apostles (*Acts* 9:27). Paul re-enters the plot of *Acts* in verse 11:25-26, when he is “brought” to Antioch by Barnabas, his next journey is recorded in 11:30 when he and Barnabas are sent with aid to the elders in Judea. Paul doesn't go on his first missionary journey until 13:3, it should come as no surprise that he was “sent” on this journey; he is still not making autonomous decisions about his movements. In 16:4 the author tells us more about the nature of their mission, or at least part of it - they are delivering decrees that must be kept, decrees that had been decided by the apostles in Jerusalem. *Acts* then continues to undermining Paul's autonomy when describing his travel; Paul is “sent away” from Thessalonica to Berea (17:10) then “sent away” by sea and “brought” to Athens (17:14-15) in response to a command from Timothy.

14 For the sake of simplicity I'm basing my argument on the traditional version of the epistles of Paul throughout this section; though the Marcionite version supports my argument even more strongly.

The Apostleship of Paul

The book of Acts credits Paul with many great miracles; it describes him as a skilful preacher and a successful missionary. Yet, behind this there is a more subtle message in *Acts*, a message that places Paul in submission to the other apostles.

The word apostle can be used in two ways. Its most literal meaning is simply “messenger”; however in a Christian context the word is also used as a title, designating members of the tiny handful of pivotal disciples whom Jesus choose to establish Christianity. In this more specific sense the apostles are the eleven disciples (Judas Iscariot doesn’t count) plus Paul.

The name Paul appears in 128 verses of the book of *Acts*; yet, there is only one single verse in which Paul is referred to as an apostle. That verse (*Acts* 14:14) mentions “the apostles Barnabas and Paul”, since Barnabas is not an apostle in the more specific sense of the word, even here the author is not acknowledging Paul’s status as an apostle.

In contrast the epistles of Paul repeatedly emphasise that Paul is an apostle. Paul’s status as an apostle is stated in *Romans* 1:1, 1:5, 11:13 *1 Corinthians* 1:1, 4:9, 9:1-2, 9:5, 15:9, *2 Corinthians* 1:1 12:12, *Galatians* 1:1, *Ephesians* 1:1, *Colossians* 1:1, *1 Thessalonians* 2:6. *1 Timothy* 1:1, 2:7, *2 Timothy* 1:1, 1:11, *Titus* 1:1 also emphasise that Paul was an apostle, though I regard these last three epistles as fraudulent. His tone is, in places somewhat defensive, it’s almost as though people were questioning or denying this aspect of his calling.

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 9:1-2

Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles.

2 Corinthians 11:5

The conflict over circumcision and the law

For before certain men came from James, he [Paul] was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

Galatians 2:12

Galatians 2 describes a dispute between Paul and Peter around the issue of whether or not Jews should eat with Gentiles. Yet according to *Acts* 10:9-29, Peter had already established the answer to this question, and had openly and confidently confronted the circumcision party on this very issue; the circumcision party even agreed with him and changed their views! This is described in *Acts* 11:2-18 note that this incident supposedly occurs before Paul begins his missionary work, and therefore (supposedly) before *Galatians* was written.

Galatians 2 describes a tense confrontation with Paul on the one side and Peter, James and John (who “seemed” influential, 2:6, 9) on the other; as well as between Paul and “false brothers”. We see Paul’s bold independent style yet again in verse 2:5: “to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you”. The outcome of the discussions with James are described as a victory for Paul; they agreed with what he said and ask nothing of him, except that he remember the poor, which he was eager to do anyway (*Galatians 2:10*).

Acts 15 describes the same scene very differently; all tension between Paul and the other apostles is swept under the rug and glossed over. The decision which they come to is dictated entirely by Peter and James; Paul takes not part in the discussions (except to tell of the success of the preaching among Gentiles), and doesn’t even offer an opinion on whether Gentiles should live under the law.

The book of *Acts* is a halfway house between the views of the “circumcision party”, and the views of Paul. It represents a compromise between two groups. On the issue of circumcision, James and Peter are portrayed as agreeing that the Gentiles don’t need to be circumcised, but asking them to follow a small subset of the Jewish Law; whilst Paul himself takes the orthodox Jewish Nazirite vow¹⁵ (implied by *Acts 18:18* & *21:23-24*), and even circumcises his companion Timothy (*Acts 16.3*). This symbolic act, for the sake of acceptance among the Jews is quite out of character for the Paul who wrote *Galatians*:

For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Galatians 1:10

Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.

Galatians 5:2-3

to them [false brothers] we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

Galatians 2:5

But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?

Galatians 5:11

There is one final anomaly in *Acts* concerning the Law. In *Acts 10:9-16*, Peter sees a vision in which the Lord tells him to kill and eat unclean animals. When Peter refuses he

¹⁵ The Nazirite vow is described in Numbers 6:1-21; a person who takes the vow swears that for a specified period of time they will abstain from alcohol allow their hair to grow and avoid funerals and corpses. When the period of time comes to an end the person releases themselves from these rules by cutting their hair (as in *Acts 18:18*). The vow is also brought to a conclusion in a ceremony at the temple in Jerusalem, which Paul was unable to do until *Acts 21:23-24*. This ceremony at the temple would have involved animal sacrifice as a sin offering, which raises interesting theological questions; is it appropriate for a Christian to make an animal sacrifice for sin after Jesus' on the cross?

is told: “What God has made clean, do not call common.”

Many people interpret this as affirmation that the food laws had been abolished, but this interpretation does not take into account the context of the passage. Firstly, why is Peter so confused by this command; even after receiving the direct instruction three times he still doesn't understand it and goes away puzzled (*Acts 10:17*); this doesn't make much sense if just a year or so earlier he had heard Jesus' clear teaching on this subject (*Matthew 15:16-17, Mark 7:18-19*). This becomes clear however if we remember that the author of *Acts* is also the Author of *Luke*; nowhere in *Luke* does Jesus relax the food laws; in the mind of that author, Peter has never heard that instruction, and **the food laws are still in effect!**

Now look at the situation which the vision addresses, and the interpretation which Peter finally gives it (*Acts 10:17-29*); this is not about what he should eat, it is about who he should eat with. The clean and unclean animals represent people (Jews and Gentiles), and the final interpretation is that God has made the Gentiles clean! This interpretation is re-iterated again in *Acts 10:34-48*, and again in *Acts 11:1-18*, even the “circumcision party” accept it!

I suspect that this vision originally came from an older document, and I believe that in its context in that document, the vision probably did indeed address the food laws. However the author of *Acts* and *Luke* has placed it into a new context, and twisted the interpretation of it; he wants to argue that, for the Jewish Christians, the food laws are still in effect.

Paul's Epistles

From Paul's epistles we get the impression that his letter writing was a large part of his ministry. He frequently refers the reader to other letters he has written (e.g. *1 Corinthians 5:9, 2 Corinthians 2:4, 7:8-9, Ephesians 3:3-4, Colossians 4:16*). Paul uses letters to respond to situations when he cannot come in person. Given Paul's challenging and confrontational style I think it is safe to say that his epistles were quite a threat to the “circumcision party”.

The Acts of the Apostles forgets to even mention that Paul ever wrote a single epistle! Instead of writing his own epistles, Paul is delivering the letter written by James and the Jerusalem Apostles (*Acts 15:22-23, 16:4*)!

Summary and conclusions about Acts

The key tensions between Acts and the Epistles of Paul are summarised in the table below.

Circumcision Party	<i>Acts of the Apostles</i>	Epistles of Paul
The circumcision party undermined Paul legitimacy as an apostle, and may even have openly denied it. We know this from Paul's defensive reaction to them (<i>1Cor.9:1-2</i> , <i>2Cor.11:5</i>).	Paul is very much a team player, his importance as a missionary is acknowledged, but he is denied the title apostle, and is portrayed as subservient and submissive to Peter and James (See previous discussion).	Paul is very dependant of the other apostles (<i>Gal.1:11-12</i>) and quite confrontational (<i>Gal.2:4-5</i> , <i>11-14</i>); he fiercely defends his status as an apostle (<i>1Cor.9:1-2</i> , <i>2Cor.11:5</i>); he even downplays the importance of Peter and James (<i>Gal.2:6</i> , <i>9</i>).
The food laws are in place and Jewish Christians must stay separate from gentile Christians (<i>Gal.2:11-12</i>)	The food laws are still in place for Jews, but Jewish Christians can mix and eat with Gentile Christians (<i>Acts 10:17-11:18</i> , explained previously)	The food laws are abolished, as is the whole of the law (<i>Eph.2:14-15</i> , <i>Rom.10:4</i> and <i>Col.2:14</i>). No difference between Jews and Gentiles (<i>Gal.3:28</i>).
Gentile Christians must be circumcised and must obey the Mosaic Law	Circumcision is unnecessary, but a symbolic circumcision is carried out by Paul on one of his companions (<i>Acts16.3</i>).	Paul does not seek the approval of men (<i>Gal.1:10</i>), does not yield for an instant (<i>Gal.2:5</i>), and emphasises that gentile Christians must not be circumcised (<i>Gal.5:2-3</i>) But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? (<i>Gal.5:11</i>)

The Acts of the Apostles attempts to harmonise the position of the views of the circumcision party, the views of the Jerusalem apostles and the views of Paul into a single harmonious compromise. However this compromise is not faithful to the true positions of any of these three groups. The author of *Acts* takes the three competing and squabbling Christian factions and combines them into a single "Catholic" (universal) position. This is the process by which the first Catholics shaped their beliefs in the midst of numerous rival groups. Because of its willingness to compromise on many issues this "Catholic" form of Christianity would spread quickly and eventually become dominant.

The Marcionites and the Gnostics regarded Paul as their apostle, the founder of their branches of Christianity. The author of *Acts* takes the Paul, remodels him as the assistant of Peter, and transplants him into Catholicism. He attempts to woo Paul's supporters by heaping praise on Paul and crediting him with many miracles and accomplishments. He also tries to woo the descendants of the circumcision party by making Paul utterly subservient to the Jewish apostles, and seeks to persuade them that Paul is not really a threat to their beliefs (*Acts 21:20-21*). The circumcision party and

their descendants later came to be known as the Ebionites, they continued to teach that people must be circumcised and live as Jews in order to become Christians; they also hated Paul and claimed that he was a false teacher.

On an interesting side note, the author of *Acts* even communicates to us (symbolically) the process of transforming Paul-the-Heretic, into Paul-the-obedient-Catholic. The “false teacher” Simon Magnus¹⁶ (*Acts* 8:9-14) represents Paul-the-Heretic, whilst “Paul” represents Paul-the-Catholic. If you try to combine the names “Simon” and “Paul” you get “Saul”, the name of Paul before his conversion. Saul “persecuted the church” (i.e. he opposed the circumcision party and argued with the Jerusalem apostles). Saul is blinded by God (*Acts* 9:3-8); this symbolically represents spiritual blindness, but *Galatians* hints that Paul also had physical sight problems (*Galatians* 4:15, 6:11), which this may also be a reference to. Saul’s blindness is healed by Jewish Christians, and he becomes one of them. Next in *Acts* 13:4-12 the newly converted Saul confronts another magician (also representing his former self); Saul rebukes the magician, and strongly repudiates him (*Acts* 13:9-10); this is the very sentence in which “Saul” begins to be called “Paul”. Symbolically the transformation from heretic to catholic is now complete, and in the very next verse the blindness that had previously come upon Saul descends upon the magician.

There is a great deal more to be said about the connection between Paul and Simon Magnus, however I have only been able to touch upon this topic very briefly here. There is considerably more evidence outside the bible, for example in the pseudo Pseudo-Clementine literature. For further information on this topic you may want to consult the book “Der gefälschte Paulus: das Urchristentum im Zweilicht “ (The Falsified Paul: Early Christianity in the Twilight) by Hermann Detering, published by Patmos Press, Düsseldorf, in 1995. An English translation can be found in *Journal of Higher Criticism*, Volume 10, No. 2 (2003), ISSN 1075-7139. Detering’s discussion of Paul and Simon Magnus starts on page 142 of the translation, or page 169 of the original. A copy of the translation can be found online at his website:

<http://www.hermann-detering.de/FabricatedJHC.pdf>

Obviously I do not agree with the view that Marcion himself wrote the epistles of Paul.

16 The early church fathers regarded Simon Magnus as a Gnostic, and the root of Gnostic and Marcionite Heresies. *Acts* records that Simon attempted to buy the Holy Spirit, and the sin or Simony (trying to pay for influence in the Church) is named after him. It is likely that this is how Paul’s enemies perceived his collection of money for the Jerusalem Church (*1 Corinthians* 16:1-4, *2 Corinthians* 9:12, *Romans* 15:26).

6 – The Corruption of Paul’s epistles

In this section I will not present any more arguments that the New Testament is corrupt, but will rather attempt to explain the motivation and historical setting in which the alteration of Paul’s epistles took place. To a certain extent my conclusions in this section are tentative; it will probably never be possible to know exactly who made the changes or why; but I will examine the evidence, and answer as best I can.

I don't think it's possible to know whether the alterations to the epistles of Paul were made before or after the creation of *Acts*. If the author of *Acts* knew of a version of the epistles of Paul that he accepted he would no doubt have mentioned them; but it is still possible that the long version of the epistles of Paul already existed elsewhere in another proto-Catholic community prior to the existence of *Acts*.

I do not believe that all of the alterations were made at the same time, or by the same person. The majority of them were probably made independently, resulting in a progressive lengthening of the text as individual scribes saw opportunities to “improve” and “correct” the text (i.e. smooth over the bits that challenged their beliefs).

The inserted passages do not consistently show the same agenda, but rather several. In some, such as *Romans* 3:31-4:25, the editor argues that the Law and the gospel are in harmony with one another and closely linked. This is a similar agenda to that of the author of *Acts* and *Luke*. Elsewhere the fraudulent passages attack Gnosticism (e.g. *Romans* 1:2-6) and put down women (e.g. *1 Corinthians* 11:2b-16); themes that are not so prevalent in *Acts* or *Luke*; though obviously there are verses in *Luke* that attack Doceticism .

1st set of Alterations to Paul’s Epistles

I suspect that the forgeries and alterations occurred in two broad waves. The first wave occurred during the initial synthesis of Gentile and Ebonite Christianity, during roughly the same period as the forgery of *Luke* and *Acts*. The insertion of *Romans* 3:31-4:25 is an example of one of these passages. My instinct is that this happened very early in Christian history, in the immediate aftermath of the conflict between Paul and the false teachers; though admittedly there are many critical scholars who disagree with me on this, and argue that *Acts* was written well into the second century (e.g. John Knox, J. T. Townsend, Burton Mack, J. C. O'Neill, Joseph B. Tyson).

2nd set of alterations to Paul's epistles

I believe that the second wave of insertions occurred later, in the late first or early second century. It was during this period that the church begun to encounter Gnostic ideas for the first time:

Christ was of David's line. He was the son of Mary; he was really born, ate and drank, was really persecuted under Pontius Pilate ...

Ignatius, *Epistle to the Trallians*, written around 107AD (if genuine).

It is clear from this that Ignatius is aware of people who believed in Jesus, but regarded him as a mythical figure like Hercules or any other Greek god; this is one of the key components of Gnosticism. Scholars interpret this (and other passages in Ignatius' epistles) as evidence that disputes between Gnostics and Catholics were taking place at that time¹⁷. The Pastoral Epistles do not go to any lengths to stress that the Old Testament and the Gospel are in harmony with one another, leading me to conclude that they were written after the synthesis process associated with Acts was complete (hence my distinction between "first wave" and "second wave" alterations). The Pastoral epistles address a number of themes:

- attacking Gnostic and Marcionite beliefs (*1 Timothy* 1:4, 1:8, 4:1-4, 4:7, 6:20, *2 Timothy* 2:18, 2:23, 3:16, 4:1, 4:4, *Titus* 1:14, 3:9),
- praising and commending certain people, especially Timothy (*1 Timothy* 1:2, 1:3, 1:18, 4:14, 6:20, *2 Timothy* 1:2, 1:5-6, 1:13-14, 1:16-18, 2:7, 3:10 3:14-15, 4:1-2, 4:11-12, *Titus* 1:4, 1:5),
- condemning certain people and groups (*1 Timothy* 1:3, 1:6-7, 1:19-20, *2 Timothy* 1:15, 2:17-18, 4:10, 4:14-16),
- directions for organising the church hierarchy (*1 Timothy* 3:1-13, 5:17-20 *Titus* 1:6-9),

The primary purpose of the Pastoral Epistles is to assist the forger in challenging certain "false teachers" and strengthening his position if they challenge him. He might have been called Timothy, or he may have been a former disciple of someone called Timothy; his agenda (in *2 Timothy* especially) is to strengthen "Timothy's" reputation, and emphasise that Timothy had a calling to fight false teachers (*1 Timothy* 1:3, 1:18, 6:20, *2 Timothy* 1:13-14, 4:1-2). It is impossible to judge whether or not this Timothy was the same person mentioned as Paul's companion in the real epistles of Paul¹⁸, but the forger certainly wanted to create the impression that Timothy was close to Paul and trusted by him.

The individuals whom are attacked in the Pastoral Epistles are (to my knowledge) not

¹⁷ In my article *The Origin of the Marcionites* I provided evidence that Catholic Christians also came into conflict with Marcion during the period in which the epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp were written.

¹⁸ *Romans* 16:21, *1 Corinthians* 4:17, 16:10, *2 Corinthians* 1:1, 1:19, *Philippians* 1:1, 2:19, 2:22, *Colossians* 1:1, *1 Thessalonians* 1:1, 3:2, 3:6, *Philemon* 1:1; Timothy is also mentioned in the pseudepigraphic *2 Thessalonians* 1:1.

known to history. They were presumably the Gnostic / Marcionite opponents of the forger, or perhaps the forger's opponents were former students of those people.

I also have no idea why the forger bore such a racist grudge against the inhabitants of Crete (*Titus* 1:5-16), presumably he was involved in a teaching dispute there, or one of his adversaries may have been from Crete. His comment that "all in Asia have turned against" Paul (*2 Timothy* 1:15), is much easier to interpret; this is the area where the predominant form of Christianity was Marcionite Christianity, and the forger was no-doubt unsettled that in such a large geographic region Christianity could be so wildly different to his own beliefs. There are several other passages in *1* and *2 Timothy* which are a very deliberate attack on Marcion, including:

- *1 Timothy* 4:1-4 - The Marcionites were strict vegetarians, and believed that all should remain celibate.
- *1 Timothy* 6:20: "Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions (antithesis) of what is falsely called knowledge (Gnosis)", is a reference to a document by Marcion called *Antithesis* (which means "contradictions" or "controversies"); it contained a list of contradictions between the New and Old Testament to demonstrate the incompatibility of the two. When I wrote the list of contradictions in section four I was imitating that document to a certain extent. The Marcionites did not believe in "Gnosis" (secret knowledge); however the Catholics did not take the time to understand the views of their opponents; they frequently lumped the Marcionites and the Gnostics into the same category.
- *2 Timothy* 2:18 - The idea that the resurrection had already happened (i.e. in a spiritual sense, the moment a believer receives the Holy Spirit) is central to both Gnostic and Marcionite teaching. Interestingly this idea is taught by even the traditional version of the epistles of Paul (*Colossians* 2:12, 3:1, *Ephesians* 2:1, 2:5-6)

The forger of the Pastoral Epistles also put a number of extra passages into the genuine epistles of Paul. Others made similar changes to them, probably during the same period, and for similar reasons.

Once in circulation the longer copies of the text would inevitably displace the shorter version. It is interesting that the first Catholic writer who mentioned Marcion¹⁹ did not accuse him of altering the scriptures, that allegation wasn't made until Irenaeus (in the late second century). By the late second century the long version of the epistles must have finished spreading through Catholic circles; and the changes had occurred sufficiently far in the past that Catholics could start accusing Marcion of altering his copies of the scripture.

The epistles of Paul were not widely distributed or read in Catholic circles until the late-second century²⁰. Justin Martyr never mentions them or quotes from them, and so the only evidence that they were accepted by Catholics prior to Irenaeus is the epistles of

¹⁹ Justin Martyr, in the first apology, chapter 26 (this is usually dated to around 151-155AD)

²⁰ This is discussed in more depth in another of my articles, *The Origin of the Marcionites*.

Ignatius and *1 Clement*. In “[the Falsified Paul](#)”²¹ Hermann argues that all of the epistles of Clement and Ignatius are fraudulent; he also suggests many of the alterations to the epistles of Paul were made by Justin Martyr, or someone with very similar theological views to Justin.

21 “Der gefälschte Paulus: das Urchristentum im Zweilicht “ (The Falsified Paul: Early Christianity in the Twilight) by Hermann Detering, published by Patmos Press, Düsseldorf, in 1995. An English translation can be found in *Journal of Higher Criticism*, Volume 10, No. 2 (2003), ISSN 1075-7139. A copy of the translation can be found online at Hermann Deterings website: <http://www.hermann-detering.de/FabricatedJHC.pdf>

7 – Summary and Conclusions

In this article I have covered a range of topics. I started by arguing that early Christians were divided, with some regarding the Gospel and the Jewish Law as being in harmony, and others who considered the Gospel and the law to be mutually incompatible. I have presented evidence that the New Testament contains books that originated with both of these groups, and so we see considerable conflict between different parts of the New Testament.

Next I discussed the process by which these two radically different versions of Christianity were merged into a single religion; one which adopted an intermediate position between the views of the two original groups. During this hybridisation process the books of *Luke* and *Acts* were written; *Acts* contains a re-telling of history which provided the hybrid faith with a foundation, and a claim to be the true legacy of all of the apostles. This hybrid form of Christianity came to be known as Catholicism, and spread fast because of its ability to win followers from both of the previous forms of Christianity, whilst smoothing over the conflict between them.

Within Catholic circles changes were made to the epistles of Paul; his statements about the relationship of the Gospel to the Law were made compatible with the beliefs of the hybrid church. Meanwhile unaltered copies of Paul's epistles survived in Asia, within Pauline Christian communities that had resisted the hybrid teaching. These Asian churches were later fertile ground in which Marcionite teaching could take root.

I believe that as Catholicism came into conflict with Marcionite Christianity (and Gnosticism) the Catholic copies of the epistles of Paul underwent a second major re-write. This time the intention was to steer readers away from the Marcionite interpretation of the epistles, and to provide teaching that would strongly counteract Marcionite and Gnostic influences; that Pastoral Epistles were forged as part of this process. By the later half of the second century these edited copies of the epistles of Paul had spread throughout the Catholic communities of the Roman Empire; they were never accepted by the Marcionites however, who remained true to the original version of Paul's epistles.

Thank you for taking the time to read this article. If you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact me:

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Written: 2008-2010

Last updated: 22/August/2010