In this thread I’ve started to talk about the relationship of Jesus to the Law of Moses. I’m
going to get to the issue by means of a circuitous route, by talking about how that
relationship was understood by followers of Jesus living a hundred years after his day. The
reason for starting there is that we have a clearer idea what these followers thought than
we do, say, of Jesus’ followers a decade after his death. Those earlier followers left us no
writings and they are not directly discussed (in terms of their theological views) by
extensive other sources (except the book of Acts). We do know about later Christians and
their views, however, even if our sources of information for these are also partial and
imperfect.

There were strikingly distinct positions taken by Christians in the middle of the second
century with respect to Jesus and the law. One extreme position was taken by the teacher-
philosopher Marcion, who was eventually declared the arch-heretic of the church but who in
his day pronounced a view that was highly attractive to a large number of Christians. It was
a view, in fact, that remained popular in wide swathes of the church, for some centuries
afterward.

Marcion was active around 140-150 CE. He was, above all else, a devotee of the apostle
Paul, who, for him, was the only apostle who really and truly understood the full meaning of
the gospel of Christ. Paul, as you know, differentiated between the “law” and the “gospel.”
Paul insisted that a person was made right with God not by following the Jewish law but by
believing in his gospel message about Christ. Marcion pressed this differentiation to what
he saw to be a logical extreme. The law of the Jews and the gospel of Christ were
fundamentally at odds with one another.

And that, for Marcion, was because the God who gave the law in the Old Testament was not
the same god who provided the gospel of salvation through Jesus. There were, in fact, two
different gods. Literally. The God of the Old Testament...

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The Arch-Heretic Marcion’s Theology