

The Gnostic Hall of Infamy

Marcion

by Roger Samsel

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Marcion taught that the God of the Old Testament was the author of evils, delighted in war, was weak, and was self-contradictory. He called this God, *Cosmocrator* ("the ruler of this world"). Jesus came to abolish the Law and the Prophets and to destroy the works of *Cosmocrator*.

Marcion is particularly infamous for corrupting the text of Scripture. Irenaeus writes that he "multilates the Gospel which is according to Luke... dismembered the Epistles of Paul... and passages from the prophetic writings." He "furnished [his disciples] not with the Gospel, but merely a fragment of it." Irenaeus further wrote of Marcion that he was "the only one who has dared openly to mutilate the Scriptures." It is significant that Irenaeus accuses Marcion primarily of deleting portions of Scripture rather than adding to them, although doubtless he was guilty of both.

He taught, like other Gnostics, that salvation is of the soul only, and only those souls which had learned his doctrine. The body, because it was taken from the earth, was incapable of sharing in salvation. He taught that Cain, the Sodomites, the Egyptians, and all others who walked in all sorts of abomination were saved by the Lord when he descended into Hades because they ran to him and welcomed him. But Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and the other righteous men of the Old Testament and all the prophets were not saved because they were accustomed to being tempted by their God and supposed that when Christ came, this was yet another temptation and did not believe his announcement.