The Marcionite Romans:
General Purpose Translation

(*Romans* 1:1-5:11)

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Preface

Rough draft

This reconstruction of *Romans* is unfinished and is a rough draft. It presently only includes the first few chapters of *Romans*. Before publishing the complete and finished version of the reconstruction it is likely that I will make changes and corrections, as I refine and check my work.

If you notice any errors or mistakes I would be very grateful if you could let me know; my e-mail address is:

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Introduction

The Marcionites were an ancient Christian group whose beliefs and bible were radically different to those of modern Christians. The Marcionites were persecuted out of existence, and all known copies of their bible were destroyed during the transition between ancient times and the Medieval era. The Marcionite bible is much older than the conventional bible; it was compiled by the Marcionites a full two centuries before the conventional bible was established. The Marcionite bible contains many of the same documents that are in the conventional bible; however, the Marcionite version of several of those documents is much shorter than the conventional version. There is substantial evidence that the Marcionite version is the closer to the original and that numerous fraudulent passages were added to the conventional version[1].

No copies of the Marcionite bible are known to have survived to modern times; however, it is possible to restore the Marcionite bible in spite of this. Several ancient Catholic writers examined the Marcionite bible; they quoted from it extensively in their writings as they argued against Marcionite beliefs. In some places they even described the differences between the Marcionite bible and their own scriptures. By examining their quotes and descriptions, it is possible to reconstruct the documents that made up the Marcionite bible. There are many places where we have no quotations or descriptions of the Marcionite

1 Many of the scholars and historians that have studied this field in detail have concluded that the Marcionite version of the gospel and epistles of Paul are closer to the originals than the conventional version of the same documents. See for example:-

- the work of Paul-Louis Couchoud (www.hermann-detering.de/couch_engl.htm),
- the work of Charles Waite (http://webspace.webring.com/people/ou/um_6968/wait2.htm),
- the work of Hermann Detering (www.hermann-detering.de/FabricatedJHC.pdf),
- A Lost Edition of the Letters of Paul by John J. Clabeaux
- Marcion and the New Testament by John Knox (published 1942).

My own analysis of a small cross section can be found in articles on one of my websites: www.Original-Bible.com

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version, but in such places it is probable that the two versions were the same, and the text from the conventional Bible can be used to “fill in the gaps”.

In a previous work *The Marcionite Romans: Interlinear with Reconstruction Notes* I reconstructed part of the Marcionite version of the book of *Romans* in Greek. This present work is intended as a straightforward translation of that text, aimed at the ordinary reader. My previous work contained a full set of references to the sources used and discussion of the reconstruction process. I have left those references and discussion out of this version of the translation, except in a few places where there are particular uncertainties about the content of the Marcionite version of *Romans*[2]. Any reader who is interested in the detail of the reconstruction process should consult the previous work[3].

In this translation I have coloured text black or grey depending on our level of knowledge of the Marcionite *Romans*. Text which is coloured black corresponds to areas where the Marcionite version is known directly from the quotes, descriptions and discussions of the ancient Catholic writers; text which is coloured grey corresponds to areas where we do not directly know the Marcionite version, and must use text from the conventional version to fill in the gaps.

In ancient times neither the Marcionite nor the conventional version of the bible had verse divisions. For convenient referencing, I have included verse divisions in this translation, these are the same as the verse numbering of the corresponding text in the conventional bible. Since there are a great many passages which exist only in the conventional bible you will notice that there are breaks in the verse numbering in this version.

Translation approach

When translating a text, the objective is to communicate the message of the original both as accurately as possible, and as clearly as possible. These objectives are of critical importance when translating sacred writings; however they are also in conflict with one another. It is impossible for any English translation to be both perfectly clear, and perfectly precise; attempts to follow the original text as precisely as possible inevitably compromise the clarity of the translation, whilst attempts to express the original message in natural “every day” language come at a cost of precision and accuracy. Like all translators of the bible I have thought carefully about how best to strike a balance between precision and clarity, to get the best of both worlds, as far as that is possible.

I believe that consistently using the same English word for any Greek word can often greatly obscure the meaning, because in Greek, as in English, a word can have several dramatically different meanings in different contexts. Excessively literal translations, though intended to be precise, therefore run the risk misrepresenting the original meaning by failing to properly respond to the context of each word. None the less, I feel constructing English sentences so that they precisely match the grammar of the

2 There are some places where there is evidence of variation within different copies of the Marcionite version or *Romans* (e.g. *Romans* 1:29-31), and places where the sources from which the Marcionite version is reconstructed can be interpreted in different ways (e.g. *Romans* 3:21-22). In such places this translation still contains a brief description of the the issues in the footnotes.

3 It is available online: www.Marcionite-Scripture.info

corresponding Greek sentence is important. Even the most well-intentioned of translators run the risk of subtly interpreting the Greek text through the lens of their own beliefs, and then writing that interpretation into their translation. As a result, paraphrased translations can make the reader very dependant on the translators interpretation of the text.

The approach that I have decided upon therefore is not particularly literal in the sense that I frequently translate Greek words according to their figurative and idiomatic meanings (as dictated by context); however, at the same time I have endeavoured to be very precise regarding sentence structure and more general use of language. There are a few places where it is simply impossible for a translation to be both clear and precisely match the original sentence structure, and so I occasionally use a footnote to provide an alternative translation that is either clearer or more precise. In a small number of places the translation is slightly paraphrased; italics are used to mark out the paraphrased text, and a more literal translation is given in the footnotes.

No translation can ever perfectly reproduce every nuance and shade of meaning of the original text. A particular problem occurs when three or four words in one language correspond to only one in word in another. For example consider Jesus' words in *Luke* 9:24:

> Whoever would save his life will lose it, but however loses his life for my sake will save it.

Let us consider for a moment the word life. Inevitably the English word does not perfectly match the connotations associated with the Greek; but to compound the issue, in Greek there are three words for life. The sentence above contains two of them and both have been converted to the same English word, losing the contrast in their meaning.

In order to address this translation issue I have selected a number of key Greek words; these are words of particular significance to Christian teaching, and words for which there is a significant danger of some of the meaning being lost in translation. When one of these words appears in the Greek text, I mark the corresponding English word with a Greek letter or two (in superscript) to indicate which Greek work it has come from. The Greek words are:

Greek Word	English Translation	Meaning
ἀγάπη agape	love$^{\alpha\gamma}$	Love, but a particular type of love, contrasted by “φιλέω”.
φιλέω phileo	love$^{\varphi}$	Love, but a particular type of love, contrasted by “ἀγάπη”.
ἁμαρτάνω hamartano	trespass$^{\alpha\mu}$, err$^{\alpha\mu}$	“ἁμαρτάνω” literally means to “miss the target”, but was often used figuratively to indicated that someone has failed to meet the required standard in a moral sense. It has traditionally been translated “sin” (or “synn” in middle English), which once had a very similar meaning to the Greek word; it literally meant to

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		miss a target. The English language has changed since then and the word “sin” now has strong negative connotations of condemnation and irreconcilable guilt for many people. As a result I feel it is no longer appropriate to translate “ἁμαρτάνω” as “sin” and will use less loaded terms instead.
ζωή zoE	life$^{\zeta}$	Holistic, interdependent, connected, collective; e.g. “life” as in “all life on earth”. This is often the word used to talk about eternal life, though it can be used to refer to physical / mortal life as well. In the Greek language it is contrasted by “ψυχή” and “βίος”.
ψυχή psyche	life$^{\psi}$	Individualistic, an individual manifestation of life / consciousness, or intellect / mind. It is contrasted by “ζωή” and “βίος”.
βίος vios	life$^{\beta}$	Everyday life, physical life, means of subsistence, property, goods, etymologically connected to the word “biology”. It is contrasted by “ζωή” and “ψυχή”.
πίστις pistis	faith$^{\pi\iota}$, belief$^{\pi\iota}$ or trust$^{\pi\iota}$	Like the English word “faith”, the word “πίστις” can refer to either believing it to be true or having trust in something. The translation “belief” does a poor job of capturing this second meaning, but must be used in some grammatical circumstances.
δικαιοσύνη dikeosunE	righteousness$^{\delta}$ or justice$^{\delta}$	There are two English words which I have frequently used as translations of this Greek word, due to it's double meaning. As a result, the translated text may appear as if it is treating two separate concepts which are actually closely related in Greek.

If you are interested in studying the teaching of the Marcionite version of *Romans* in depth then these markings and their associated footnotes may be of interest to you.

Final comments

My knowledge of Greek and Latin is very limited. I am taking on the task of reconstructing the Marcionite version of *Romans* not because I am particularly qualified or suited it; but rather, because I feel it is of the utmost importance that detailed reconstructions of the Marcionite scriptures be made freely available to people as soon as possible, and in spite of my limitations and flaws I believe that my efforts will be better than nothing.

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The Marcionite Prologue

The Romans are in the region of Italy. They had been reached first by false apostles, and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ they were lead into the law and the prophets. They are called back by the apostle, to the true evangelical faith, writing to them from Corinth.

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[Paul's Epistle] to the Romans

[Greeting]

[1:1] Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, called [to be] an apostle, set apart for the Gospel of God;

[1:7] to all who are in Rome, beloved[αγ] ones of God, called [to be][1] saints: grace to you and peace from God our father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[1:8] First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ on account of all of you, because your faith[πι] is celebrated throughout the whole world. [1:9] For God is my witness, (whom I serve in my spirit in the Gospel of his son), that unceasingly I make mention of you, [1:10] always in my prayers, asking if somehow now, sometime [I may] succeed, (by the will of God), in coming to you.

[Purpose of the letter]

[1:11] For I long to see you, that I may share some spiritual gift [with] you, for you to be strengthened. [1:12] That is that we may be comforted together, among you, through the faith[πι] that is in each other, both yours and mine. [1:13] Now I do not want you to remain ignorant brethren, that often I intended to come to you (and was hindered until the present) that I might have some fruit among you too, as also among the other Gentiles. [1:14] I am a debtor both to Greeks, and to barbarians, to both the wise and the simple. [1:15] So then, what is preferable for me is to preach the Gospel to you, the ones in Rome, also.

[Jews and Gentiles equally in need of the Gospel]

[1:16] For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to all the faithful[πι], to both Jew and Greek. [1:17] For the righteousness[δ] of God is revealed in it[2],

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αγ The Greek root word here is "ἀγάπη", a type of love.

1 The English words "called saints" could mean two things; (1) labelled or named saints, or (2) appointed or invited to be saints. The Greek word corresponding to "called" here is "κλητοῖς"; unlike the English word, it can only mean "called" in the sense of appointment (meaning 2) so I have added the words "to be" to remove the ambiguity of the English word, and steer readers away from interpretation 1. Unfortunately there is a risk that by doing so I may have introduced a different translation error to the text as the words "to be" might incorrectly be interpreted as indicating that the readers are called to become saints in the future. To clarify: the readers are called to be saints now, at this present time, not merely become saints at some point in the future. These points are also relevant in verse one, where the word "called" is translated from "κλητὸς", and the words "to be" should be interpreted in the same way.

πι The Greek root word here is "πίστις", which can mean faith, trust or belief.

δ The Greek root word here is "δικαιοσύνη", which can mean either justice or righteousness.

2 The Greek version of this sentence is slightly ambiguous, because the word "αὐτῷ" can mean either "it" or "him". If it means "it", then it refers back to the Gospel; if it means "him" it could refer to a member of "the faithful", or it could refer to God himself. The double meaning of "δικαιοσύνη"

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from faith[πι] to faith[πι 3]. [1:18] Wrath from heaven is also revealed, upon the irreverence and unrighteousness[δ] of men, who by their unrighteousness[δ] suppress the truth,

[4]

[1:29] having been filled with all unrighteousness[δ], wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, of murder, of strife, of deceit, bad character, gossips, [1:30] Slanderers, haters-of-God violent/insulting, proud boasters inventors of evil [things] disobedient to parents, [1:31] without-understanding, covenant-breakers, without-affection, without-mercy.

[2:2] Thus/But[5] we see that the judgement of God is on the basis of truth. [2:11] For [there] is no favouritism with God. [2:12] Whoever transgressed[αμ] without the law shall also perish without the law, and whoever transgressed[αμ] with the law shall be judged through the law. [2:13] For [it's] not the hearers of the law [that are] righteous[δ] before God, but the doers of the law [who] shall be justified[δ], ([2:14] For when Gentiles (those without the law) by nature may do the [things] of the law, these [ones] without the law are a law to themselves. [2:15] They show the work of the law written in their hearts[6], their conscience testifying with them, their thoughts accusing or even defending them.) [2:16] on the day when God shall judge people's secrets, through Christ, according to my Gospel.

(righteousness or justice) compounds the uncertainty.

3 The statement "from faith to faith" (ΕΚ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ ΕΙΣ ΠΙΣΤΙΝ) is rather hard to interpret (in both the Marcionite and the traditional version of *Romans*). Numerous possible interpretations have been suggested, a few possible interpretations / translations are as follows:

1) beginning and ending in faith (as translated by the *New International Version*)

2) from [God's] faithfulness to [our] faith

3) from [the] faith [of the preacher] to [the] faith [of the hearer]

Or perhaps Paul is simply reminding us that the faith with which we begin our Christian journey must be continued if we are to deepen and continue our walk with God.

δ The Greek root word here is "δικαιοσύνη", which can mean either justice or righteousness.

4 <1:29-31> Tertullian's quotation of the Marcionite version of *Romans* (in *Against Marcion* 5:13:3) indicates that in the Marcionite version, verse 2:2 followed shortly after verse 1:18; this means that most of 1:19-2:1 must have been absent from the Marcionite text. It is also apparent from the text of the long version of *Romans* itself that 2:2 must originally have followed shortly after 1:18. Whilst I am certain that 1:19-1:28 and 1:32-2:1 are interpolated, I am less certain about 1:29-31; perhaps this small portion of text can sit between 1:18 and 2:1 without disrupting the flow of those two verses; then again, perhaps 2:1 should follow immediately after 1:18. I have included 1:29-31 in brackets because of this uncertainty.

5 The corresponding Greek word here is "δέ"; a common word which can be translated to numerous English equivalents depending on the context: thus, and, yet, but, therefore, however... Unfortunately it is impossible to know how best to translate this word without knowing whether verses 1:29-31 were present in the Marcionite text.

αμ The root word here is "ἁμαρτάνω"; it literally means to "miss the mark"; it was also used in a figurative sense to mean that someone had morally fallen short of a required standard.

6 This could be interpreted as an allusion to *Jeremiah* 31:32.

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[False security in the law and circumcision]

[2:17] Yet if you are called a Jew, and rely on the law, and are boasting in God, [2:18] and know [God's] will, and discern the important [things], being taught out of the law, [2:19] [if] you also have confidence that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those in darkness, [2:20] an instructor of the ignorant, a teacher of babes, having the appearance of knowledge and of the truth of the law, [2:21] the one then teaching another, are you not teaching yourself? The one preaching not to steal, are you stealing? [2:22] The one saying not to be committing adultery; are you committing adultery? The one detesting idols; do you *commit sacrilege*[7]? [2:23] Who boasts in the law; do you dishonour God through the violation of the law? [2:24] For "the name of God is blasphemed"[8] because of you, even as it has been written.

[2:25] For circumcision is indeed beneficial, if you keep the law; but if you may be a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. [2:28] For the one [merely] outwardly appearing [to be] a Jew is not [truly a Jew], nor is [true] circumcision in outward appearance (in the flesh). [2:29] But the one [truly] a Jew is [so] inwardly, (and [true] circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit not the letter), whose praise is not from men, but from God.

[Righteousness through Christ instead of the law]

[3:19] Now we know that what the law says, it speaks to those under law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become liable. [3:20] Therefore by the works of the law all flesh will not be justified$^{\delta}$ [; for through law comes an-acknowledgement of transgression$^{\alpha\mu}$][9] .

7 Literally: Do you rob temples?

8 *Isaiah* 52:5

αμ The root word here is "ἁμαρτάνω"; it literally means to "miss the mark"; it was also used in a figurative sense to mean that someone had morally fallen short of a required standard.

9 <3:20> Verse 3:19 and the first half of verse 20 state that the purpose of the law is to convict the entire world, and that no one can be justified through the law; the Marcionites no-doubt interpreted this as describing the methods by which the creator or lesser god held the world in bondage. It is unlikely that their version contained the words enclosed in square brackets "through the law comes an acknowledgement of transgression", and I strongly suspect that Tertullian and Epiphanius would have quoted them if they had been present. If this passage originally expounded Marcionite (or proto-Marcionite) theology then these extra words are a classic example of an interpolation that sought to explain and re-interpret a statement that was challenging to a non Marcionite scribe.

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10

[3:21] But now the righteousness[δ] of God without the law is manifested, [3:22] even righteousness[δ] of God through [the / our] faith[πι] of / in Christ[†].

[3:21] Formerly the law, [3:22] now righteousness[δ] of God through [the / our] faith[πι] of / in Christ[†].

[5:1] So having been justified[δ] by faith[πι], let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, [5:2] through whom we also have access by faith[πι] into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God.

10 <3:21-22> *Against Marcion* 5:13:8:

> It was once the law; now it is "the righteousness of God which is by the faith of (Jesus) Christ." What means this distinction? Has your god been subserving the interests of the Creator's dispensation, by affording time to Him and to His law? Is the "Now" in the hands of Him to whom belonged the "Then"? Surely, then, the law was His, whose is now the righteousness of God. It is a distinction of dispensations, not of gods.

The passage above can be interpreted in two ways. Rev. Peter Holmes, the translator my English copy of *Against Marcion*, interpreted only the words “the righteousness of God which is by the faith of (Jesus) Christ.” as a direct quotation of the Marcionite text; he did not regard the words “It was once the law; now it is” as being part of the quote. The alternative interpretation of *Against Marcion* 5:13:8 is to regard the entire sentence (“It was once the law; now it is the righteousness of God which is by the faith of Christ.”) as a direct quote from the Marcionite text, corresponding to verse 3:21 as well as 3:22. I have therefore prepared two reconstructions of these verses based on these two possibilities.

Also, the name “Jesus” in brackets in the quote above was added by the translator as is absent from the Latin text.

δ The Greek root word here is “δικαιοσύνη”, which can mean either justice or righteousness.

πι The Greek root word here is “πίστις”, which can mean faith, trust or belief.

† The Greek form of this clause reads “ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ”; the word “Christ” is in the genitive case. An ambiguity is created by the fact that this can be interpreted as a subjective genitive (“[the] faith **of** Christ”) or as an objective genitive (“[our] faith **in** Christ”). I do not believe that a translator should allow their theological views to influence their translation of such a text; I leave readers to consider this issue for themselves.

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[11]

[5:3] Yet not only [that], but also we boast in [our] afflictions, knowing that:-

- affliction produces endurance,
- [5:4] and endurance: trustiness,
- and trustiness: hope.

[5:5] Now hope is not put to shame, because the love[αγ] of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit [that has been] given to us.

[5:6] For while we were still weak Christ died, *at the right moment*[12] on behalf of [the] impious. [5:7] For scarcely on behalf of a just person will anyone die, though on behalf of the good, possibly someone might even dare to die. [5:8] But, God shows his love to us in that [while] we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [5:9] By much more then, having been-justified now [by] his blood, shall we be saved through him from the wrath. [5:10] For if being enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his son, by much more [then], having been reconciled, we shall be saved [through] his life[ζ]. [5:11] Yet not only [that], but also [our] boasting [is] in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we [have] now received reconciliation.

11 <5:3-5:5> This passage is a possible interpolation; notice how verse 5:6 continues the flow of thought from verse 5:2. Regardless of whether or not this passage is interpolated, we have no reason to believe it was absent from the Marcionite version of the text. Even if it is an addition to the text of *Romans* it seems benign.

αγ The Greek root word here is "ἀγάπη", a type of love.

12 Literally: in accordance with the season

ζ The Greek word here is "ζωή"; one of several Greek words for "life". The word "ζωή" means life in a holistic, interdependent, connected, collective sense; e.g. "life" as in "all life on earth".

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[My reconstruction of *Romans* is not yet compete; 5:12 onwards is not included in this version.]

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