Presented with the overall theme of this volume, my thoughts turned immediately to Marcion and his followers as a particularly intriguing example of boundary crossing. On both social and ideological levels they have classically been seen as a radical group—distinctive, dangerous and divisive. On the one hand, after a period of rapprochement with ‘mainstream’ Christians, notably in Rome, they hived off to form a separate community with a unique constellation of practices and commitments. On the other hand, following their creative and original founder, they discarded widely-held Christian beliefs in favor of a raft of innovative ideas in such areas as the nature of god, scriptural authority, apostolic history, christology and the relationship to Jews and their tradition. According to this way of looking at Marcion he was both a boundary maker and a breaker—a maker because he defined a new set of ideological and social commitments, and a breaker because, in doing so, he discarded many of the common markers of Christian identity. In the light of recent studies it is worth reflecting on the accuracy of this depiction as well as on the factors that may have provoked him to take the path that he eventually chose.

1 I am delighted to be included in a volume that honors Alan Segal, a good friend for many decades, a constant source of intellectual stimulation and, it must be said, of invaluable information about where to dine! It also gives me an opportunity, after a gap of some twenty years, to alter and refine my earlier views on Marcion in the light of recent studies. See Stephen G. Wilson, Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70–170 CE (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 207–21. The final version of this paper (completed in 2011) benefited from comments by Paula Fredriksen and John W. Marshall. Many thanks to them.

1 Community Life

We have no evidence for Marcionite communities in Asia Minor prior to Marcion's move to Rome. In Rome (ca. 140–160 CE) he allied himself with other Christians and was not initially considered a renegade (Tertullian, *Marc. 1.1.6, 4.4.3–4*). The decision to establish distinctively Marcionite communities, following the failure of his discussion with the elders of Rome (usually dated to 144 CE) was probably Marcion's own. Moreover, while there is evidence that the Christians in Rome could act collectively on occasion—in supporting the poor, for example—they were essentially a loosely-organized group of house churches with no central authority enjoying the power to legislate or excommunicate. In a situation that encouraged diversity and tolerance it could thus be argued that Marcion did not break communal boundaries or challenge existing authorities, because neither of them was at this time firmly established.

Was he thus like Valentinus, his contemporary in Rome (ca. 135–155 CE) who, despite his later reputation as an arch heretic, seems to have worked relatively undisturbed, merely establishing separate enclaves for worship and instruction? Not quite. Marcion was more confrontational. He encouraged, even insisted on, a public discussion of his views with other church leaders, perhaps motivated by a belief that he had found the key to the gospel and by

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6 Thomassen ("Orthodoxy," 244) notes that Tertullian at one point implies expulsion (*Praescr.* 30.2), but later implies that Marcion and Valentinus left of their own accord (*Carn. Chr.* 1.3).