

## THE TWO ELEMENTS IN MARCION'S DUALISM.

## I

IN the Dualism of Marcion two contrasts are discernible. The resultant is a single antithesis, but it is the outcome of his recognition of two separate distinctions.

In the first place, he sets Christianity in opposition to the Old Testament. He is strongly opposed to the Law, and exploits and expands the Pauline contrast between the Gospel and the Law. When the Christ of 'the good God' entered our world, there was a new departure, and the rent between the old and the new order was complete. Marcion will hear nothing of any continuity. For the new wine the old bottles are useless. So he severs the Gospel from the Law, the good God from the just.

The second contrast is not biblical. It has affinities with the Greek antithesis between matter and spirit, with the Gnostic subordination of the Demiourgos to the absolute Godhead, with the Persian opposition between Ormuzd and Ahriman. This element in his Dualism Marcion never worked out into systematic theory. It would, indeed, have been a task quite alien to his power to do so. But its influence is quite unmistakeable, albeit of a general character and undefined.

Harnack's valuable and illuminating chapter on Marcion<sup>1</sup> recognizes these two factors in his dualism, but pays no special attention to the question of their relative importance. Subsequent writers have expressed more decided views. Professor Bousset in his *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*<sup>2</sup> would discern the determinant element of Marcion's thought not in the scriptural contrast of Law and Gospel but in the more abstract, speculative, and oriental opposition of the good and evil principles. He will have it that Marcion's original teaching was 'ein schroffer Dualismus', that it was Persian in character, that he imported eastern theories into the biblical domain, and that his opposition of the New to the Old Testament is the outcome of speculative prepossession

<sup>1</sup> *History of Dogma* bk. i chap. v (Eng. Tr. vol. i pp. 266 sqq.). 'C'est M. Harnack qui nous a révélé Marcion... Pendant longtemps les vues de M. Harnack sur Marcion firent autorité'—E. de Faye *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme* p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> Göttingen 1907.

rather than of candid exegesis.<sup>1</sup> A very different estimate is to be found in M. Eugène de Faye's more recent work *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme*.<sup>2</sup> In the view of this authority the scriptural factor is the determining one. Marcion, he thinks, found his Dualism in the Scriptures and had no need to go to Persia for it. He was in short a biblicist, and, if speculative or philosophic influences come in, at least they are subordinate.<sup>3</sup> De Faye pays great attention to the reliability of our sources of information and seems to make good his charge that Professor Bousset, for lack of such criticism,<sup>4</sup> has been led to attribute to Marcion the later teaching of the Marcionite communities.

Here, then, are two clearly opposed views as to the relative importance of the two contrasts which are fused in Marcion's Dualism. Bousset believes the speculative influence was decisive; De Faye assigns this importance to the Scriptures. The point at issue is worth consideration, even though it is with probabilities that we must rest content.

## II

Chronologically it seems likely that Marcion first advanced towards his dualistic theories upon biblical grounds. The considerations which lead to this conclusion are as follows:—

(a) Marcion grew up under Christian influences, his father being Bishop of Sinope.<sup>5</sup> The probabilities are that in his earlier years he would learn much about the Scriptures and little about speculative philosophy. Epiphanius's account of his father, whatever may be its value, represents the Bishop as an earnest, rigid, somewhat conventional ecclesiastic,<sup>6</sup> who would be little likely to encourage his son's interests to roam beyond the ways of orthodoxy.

(b) Marcion's extraordinary knowledge of Scripture confirms this. He was not a literary person, as his treatment of the New Testament alone would shew, but he knew the Bible thoroughly and could quote

<sup>1</sup> Marcion, Bousset thinks, held the doctrine of two 'uranfängliche Wesen in absoluter Gegensätzlichkeit': he 'degradierte den Gott des alten Testaments zum Satan-Ahriman' (p. 329). See also pp. 109 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Paris 1913.

<sup>3</sup> 'Bref, Marcion est un bibliciste' (p. 130). De Faye speaks of 'l'origine toute biblique de l'hérésie de Marcion' (p. 134); and says 'le fondement de toute sa pensée est biblique' (p. 136); 'Marcion se montre essentiellement bibliciste' (p. 140), &c.

<sup>4</sup> p. 122 n., 'M. Bousset a omis de discuter la question des sources du gnosticisme. Grave inconvénient en ce qui concerne Marcion.'

<sup>5</sup> Πορτικός, Σινάπης δὲ πόλεως, υἱὸς ἐπισκόπου, Epiphani. *Haer.* xlii 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ἦν γὰρ αὐτοῦ ὁ πατὴρ δι' ὑπερβολὴν εὐλαβείας τῶν διαφανῶν καὶ σφόδρα τὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐπιμελομένων, διαπρέπων ἐν τῇ τῆς ἐπισκόπου λειτουργίᾳ . . . ἀξιόλογος γέρον . . . ὁ τίμιός σου πατήρ, *op. cit.* 1. 2.

texts in evidence with ready facility. Such knowledge is not hastily acquired.

(c) Conversely, there is nothing to shew that Marcion had ever received any training in the schools of philosophy. Doubtless Sinope had its lecture rooms, but he can hardly have been a frequent listener. Clement of Alexandria had the poorest opinion of Marcion's power to understand Plato.<sup>1</sup>

(d) Of the composition of the Church in Sinope it is not possible to speak with certainty, but that many Jews were settled in Pontus<sup>2</sup> is well known, though, on the other hand, it is generally held that 1 Peter was addressed principally to Gentile Christians.<sup>3</sup> Thus the adjustment of the Jewish and the Christian points of view might be an issue familiar to Marcion from his early surroundings.

(e) Marcion came to Rome about A.D. 141.<sup>4</sup> He was received by the Church and made a gift of money. There was no suspicion as yet that he held the unorthodox doctrine of two first principles. His final separation from the Church was the outcome of a controversy on purely scriptural grounds. What was the meaning, he asked, of the new wine and the old bottles, or of the new patch on the old garment? The Elders could not satisfy him. The narrative of Epiphanius<sup>5</sup> is singularly illuminating as to the form and character of his convictions up to the date in question.

Thus the probabilities are that it was at the biblical contrast that Marcion arrived first. The opposition between the Law and the Gospel, the dissimilarity between the harsh and just deity of the one and the good and gentle God of the other, impressed him more and more. He was content to break with the Church in order to assert the independence and new departure of Christianity.

### III

It is at this point that the influence of Cerdo upon Marcion becomes

<sup>1</sup> Οὐκ ἀσαφὲς δεδεῖχθαι ἡμῖν νομίζω τὰς ἀφορμὰς τῶν ξένων δογμάτων τὸν Μαρκίωνα παρὰ Πλάτωνος ἀχαρίστος τε καὶ ἀμαθὺς εἰληφέναι, *Strom.* III iii 21.

<sup>2</sup> 'Dwellers . . . in Pontus,' Acts ii 9; 'A certain Jew, named Aquila, born in Pontus,' xviii 2; cf. Philo *Leg. ad Caium* 36.

<sup>3</sup> 'To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus,' 1 Pet. i 1. 'St Peter had in his mind predominantly, though probably not exclusively, *Gentile* readers'—F. H. Chase in *H.D.B.* art. 'Peter, First Epistle'. The Epistle may have been taken by Silvanus first to Sinope. Bigg *St Peter and St Jude* Int. Crit. Com. p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> Μετὰ τὸ τελευτῆσαι Ἑγγίνον, Epiph. *loc. cit.* The death of Hyginus may have occurred in A.D. 141.

<sup>5</sup> The narrative probably came originally from Hippolytus. Philaster also gives it (*Div. Heres. Lib.* xvii). De Faye thinks it should be accepted. So, on the whole, Salmon *D.C.B.* art. 'Marcion'.

important. This is strangely minimized by De Faye.<sup>1</sup> Yet it is attested by many authorities, including Tertullian.<sup>2</sup> Cerdo was a Syrian Gnostic. He was already teaching in Rome when Marcion arrived there. When Marcion left the Church he attached himself to Cerdo, assimilated his teaching, and was said to have been Cerdo's successor in his school. His Dualism, in so far as it resulted from other than scriptural influences, seems to have come to him largely through this association.<sup>3</sup> Let us consider to what extent this second element in Marcion's doctrine is attested by the available evidence.

(a) His estimate of the Creator is consistently and arbitrarily adverse, shewing far more hostility than the Old Testament Scriptures could of themselves possibly justify. The God of the Law may be harsh and stern, but Marcion's Creator was a cruel and malignant divinity.<sup>4</sup> This attack profoundly shocked the orthodox. It was a new departure.<sup>5</sup> And it was far more than a matter of biblical exegesis. The determining influence came from elsewhere.

(b) Justin's evidence tends to shew that it was the Creator, rather than the Lawgiver, on whom Marcion principally made attack.<sup>6</sup> In other words he finds the dominant factor in Marcion's error outside

<sup>1</sup> 'Il se peut que Marcion doive quelque chose à ce Cerdon, venu de Syrie. Il est cependant fort étrange que Tertullien n'en dise rien. Il ne le nomme même pas' (p. 126). The last statement is surely not correct. Cf. 'Habuit et Cerdonem quemdam,' Tert. *adv. Marcionem* i 2; 'a Cerdone et Marcione,' i 22; 'nullo adhuc Cerdone, nedum Marcione,' iii 21; 'nec Marcion aliquid boni de thesauro Cerdonis malo protulit,' iv 17. These passages imply relation, even dependence.

<sup>2</sup> Κέρδωνα τῆς κατὰ Μαρκίωνα πλάνης ἀρχηγόν, Eus. *H. E.* iv 10; διαδεγόμενος αὐτὸν (sc. τὸν Κέρδωνα) Μαρκίαν ὁ Ποντικὸς ᾤξῃσε τὸ διδασκαλεῖον, Irenaeus i 27. 2; Κέρδων ὁ πρὸς Μαρκίανος, ib. iii 4. 3. ἐκ τοῦ προειρημένου Κέρδωνος τὴν πρόφασιν εἰληφώς (sc. ὁ Μαρκίαν), Epiph. *op. cit.* i. For Tertullian see preceding note.

<sup>3</sup> 'So far as Marcion ventured on such a speculation [sc. about the final causes of the contrast actually observed] he seems to have been influenced by the Syrian Cerdo' Harnack *H. D. E. Tr.* i p. 269. 'Unter engem Anschluss an den Syrer Cerdo' *Gesch. der altchr. Litt.* II i p. 310.

<sup>4</sup> According to Tertullian Marcion's Creator was *saevus*, *adv. M.* ii 11; *iratus*, v 13; *acerbissimus*, iii 4; *auctor malitiae*, ii 14 (cf. *malitia creatoris*, i 17, 22; ii 3); responsible for the *onera legis*, ii 19; iv 27; for the *morositas legis*, iv 35. Hence Marcion's attitude is that of the *destructor*, iv 39; *repudiator*, i 14; *derogator creatoris*, iv 29; *destructio operum creatoris* is his especial aim, i 13; 'blasphemavit creatorem, reprehendit auctorem,' ii 2; he thought the creator inferior to Moses, ii 26; iv 28. Marcion collected and perverted passages of scripture to the creator's dishonour, cf. 'distorques adversus creatorem', iv 1; 'quaecunque . . . colligitis ad destructionem creatoris,' ii 27.

<sup>5</sup> 'Facilius de filio haesitabatur quam de patre, donec Marcion . . .' Tert. *De Praescr. Haeret.* 34.

<sup>6</sup> Δημουργός, ποιητής, *Apol.* i 26. Cf. the quotation from Justin's lost *σύνταγμα πρὸς Μαρκίωνα* in Iren. iv 6. 2 αὐτῷ τῷ Κυρίῳ οὐδ' ἂν ἐπέισθη ἄλλων θεῶν καταγγέλλοντα παρὰ τὸν Δημουργόν.

Scripture. Possibly this element would more naturally attract the attention of a philosopher like Justin. Still, Justin was Marcion's contemporary, and his impression of the heresiarch's position is direct and early evidence.

(c) Clement's references are also those of a Christian philosopher. They are more numerous than Justin's, and they give clear prominence to the speculative element in Marcion's teaching.<sup>1</sup> De Faye allows great weight to Clement's testimony, though he rightly believes that Clement did not possess a copy of the *Antitheses*.<sup>2</sup> Yet the character of Clement's criticisms is hardly compatible with the theory that Marcion's point of view was biblically determined.

(d) The fact that Marcion's only known writings were exegetical or critical in character is not final or conclusive. The most speculative and philosophical issues were at this period debated in the form of discussions on Scripture; given a thesis it was usually supported by appropriate texts.<sup>3</sup> Marcion was quick to seize upon the passages that told in his favour—e.g. 'ego sum qui condo mala',<sup>4</sup> 'deus illius aevi',<sup>5</sup> and the like. But, like the devil, he quoted Scripture for his purpose. No man was further from 'letting Scripture speak for itself'. However much of a biblicist he might be in his arguments, his prepossessions and his conclusions often came from the school rather than from the book.

(e) Even Tertullian, upon whose evidence De Faye mainly relies for proof of the scriptural foundation of Marcion's thought, gives us hints of other influences. He knew Marcion had pondered over the origin of evil, and that other than biblical considerations had weighed with

<sup>1</sup> The following language, used by Clement in this connexion, is significant; ἵνα μὴ ὡς Μαρκίων ἀχαρίστος ἐκδέχεται τις τὴν δημιουργίαν κακὴν, *Strom.* iv 7. 45; κακὴν λογίζεσθαι τὴν ὕλην ἀφορμὴν οὐ παρέσχευεν τῷ Μαρκίῳ, *sc. δ Πλάτων*, iii 3. 19; Marcion is described as κατατρέχων καὶ τῆς κτίσεως καὶ τοῦ πλάσματος, and as actuated by ἀντίταξις πρὸς τὸν δημιουργόν, iii 4. 25; his followers κακὴν τὴν γένεσιν (cf. Tert. *adv. M.* iii 11) ἐπειλήφεσαν. Their attitude was ἀντιτασσόμενοι τῷ ποιητῇ, iii 3. 12; the whole question was one of ἀρχαί, iii 3. 13 and 21; it turned upon the ἐναντιότητες with which philosophers were concerned, iii 3. 21. Many of Clement's references are not to Marcion himself, but to the later Marcionites, who no doubt developed their founder's doctrine on more speculative lines. But there is quite sufficient evidence to shew that Clement regarded Marcion himself as more concerned with abstract principles than with Scripture. The Alexandrine Father noted, no doubt, what was most akin to the genius of his own mind.

<sup>2</sup> p. 124, cf. my *Clement of Alexandria* vol. i p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the Valentinian teaching as given in the *Excerpta ex Theodoto* and the *Eclogae Propheticae*; also Clement's own ambitious scheme of a summary of all knowledge, based on the Scriptures, *Strom.* iv 1; vii 1. Theodotus of Byzantium taught 'Psilanthropism' on Scriptural grounds, Eus. *H. E.* v 28; Epiph. *Haer.* 54.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. xlv 7. Tert. *adv. M.* i 2; ii 14, 24; iv 1.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. iv 4. Tert. *ib.* v 11, 17.

him.<sup>1</sup> He knew that the heretic had drawn deductions from natural catastrophes<sup>2</sup> and from the evils of the physical world.<sup>3</sup> He even held that Marcion's teaching might, without great distortion, be made to mean that the devil was the Creator.<sup>4</sup> Many of the points in Marcion's teaching which Tertullian criticizes most effectively, are speculations asserted by way of exegesis. They are far more than deductions from the text.

(f) Finally, there are other elements in Marcion's doctrine which clearly did not originate in Scripture. His Docetism, his Asceticism, his denial of a bodily Resurrection are the most notable. They are perhaps the 'Gnostic woof'<sup>5</sup> of his teaching. In any case they afford some presumption that his theory of the two gods and his attack upon the Creator were in part determined by influences which arose in the same quarter.

On the whole it seems as though M. de Faye had underrated the influence of speculative ideas upon Marcion's thought, much as Professor Bousset has underrated the influence of Scripture.

#### IV

Psychologically we are left upon the foregoing considerations with a consistent scheme of Marcion's religious developement.

We have the young and energetic layman, actively following his calling as a shipmaster and growing rich thereby. He has neither time nor interest for literature and philosophy, but he knows the Scriptures well and is specially arrested by St Paul's teaching, more particularly by the Epistle to the Galatians. Single texts greatly influence him, as they do all half-educated and sincere Christian natures. Christianity, with its liberty and redemption, is for him the complete and independent religion, and he would free it from the trammels of the legalistic Old Testament. Once started on this track he concludes impetuously<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Languens enim, quod et nunc multi et maxime haeretici, circa quaestionem Unde malum? . . . Ex aliis argumentis quae ita persuadent perverso cuique,' etc. Tert. *adv. M.* i 2.

<sup>2</sup> 'Ut concussions quidem referas ad creatorem, saevitiae scilicet deum,' *ib.* iv 39.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 'de isto huius mundi indigno', *ib.* i 13, and many other expressions.

<sup>4</sup> 'Si diabolus creator est, quis erit diabolus apud creatorem?' *ib.* v 18. Tertullian rejects the supposition, but clearly thought it a possible interpretation of Marcion's theory. Such passages go far to justify the critic of De Faye's book who speaks of Marcion's dualistic system as one 'qui n'est pas le dualisme perse, mais qui tout de même y ressemble'.

<sup>5</sup> Harnack *Hist. dogm.* i 272.

<sup>6</sup> None of Tertullian's many epithets is more appropriate to Marcion than that of *inconsiderantissimus*, *adv. M.* ii 29. Cf. Rhodon's criticism of Marcion and his kind: μη εὐρίσκαυτες τὴν διαίρεσιν τῶν πραγμάτων, ὡς οὐδὲ ἑκαίνοιο, ἐπὶ τὴν εὐχέριαν ἐτράποντο, *ap. Eus. H. E.* v 13.

upon the complete separation of the Gospel and the Law. Then there follows the breach with his father and his home, possibly on the ground of this very rejection of the ancient Scriptures. So he makes his way to Rome. His early association with the Church of the capital is characteristically enthusiastic,<sup>1</sup> but disappointment rapidly ensues: even in Rome they did not understand the greatness of the Christian redemption. Thus he breaks with the Elders. 'I will tear your Church'<sup>2</sup> are his parting words. And now the second influence comes in. Cerdo's Dualism has some affinities with the antagonism to the Law at which he had independently arrived, and where the two do not coincide, Marcion's impetuous thought has no qualms in enforcing agreement. The Scriptural antithesis is widened till it can be adjusted to that of eastern speculation, and, with the two contrasts fused in his mind, Marcion now compiles his critical and exegetical works, his *Gospel*, his *Apostolicon*, his *Antitheses*. The resultant theology is a strange blend, half Pauline, half Persian. It was a facile subject for Tertullian's criticism. But throughout the several phases of his religious development Marcion's nature preserves the same characteristics. There is the same profound conviction of the value of Christianity. There is the same rapidity of decision, the same vigour of action. There is the same impatience of compromise and adjustment. There is the same indifference to, even perhaps ignorance of, the points that could be urged on the other side. There is the same unhesitating grasp upon a few great religious verities. We follow a nature untrained, uncritical, sincere, alert, and born for action, making up by his religious earnestness what he lacks in theological acumen. That he should have profoundly alarmed the mediocrities of the Church is not surprising. The pity of it is, that the conditions of the time made it impossible for such men as Justin and almost impossible even for so generous a nature as Clement of Alexandria<sup>3</sup> to recognize his sincerity.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Et pecuniam in primo calore fidei catholicae ecclesiae contulit,' Tert. *adv. M.* iv 4; 'Marcion cum ducentis sestertiis, quae ecclesiae intulerat,' *De Praescr. Haeret.* 30.

<sup>2</sup> 'Εγὼ σχίσαι τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ὑμῶν, Epiph. *Haeres.* xlii 2.

<sup>3</sup> Clement called him θεομάχος γίγας, *Strom.* iii 4. 25, and used other hard language. But there is one kindly reference: οὐδὲν γὰρ καλύει πολλάκις τὴν αὐτὴν παρὰ τὴν εὐαγγέλιον εἰς ἐντροπὴν Μαρκίου, ἣν πως μεταβάλῃται πεισθεὶς, *ib.* iv 8. 66. Apparently Clement hoped for his repentance in another world, for Marcion must have been dead for many years when Clement wrote.

<sup>4</sup> There is an interesting article on Marcion by V. Ermoni in the *Revue des questions historiques* no. 87, 1910, pp. 1-33. The following passage is germane to the subject of this paper: 'Remarquons cependant que la critique historique n'a pu encore déterminer exactement les rapports de ces deux problèmes. Est-ce l'Antinomisme qui a conduit à la multiplicité des principes, ou la multiplicité des principes qui a conduit à l'Antinomisme? La première hypothèse paraît être la plus probable.'

## V

The interest of Marcion's Dualism need not be restricted to those who are students of Christian biography and of the phases of Gnosticism. Some years ago Dr Foakes-Jackson in his Hulsean Lectures<sup>1</sup> (1902-1903) suggested that Marcion has a relation to modern thought. To-day it is one of the theological outcomes of the Great War that earnest minds are being driven to suspect that more than one spiritual principle is operative in our world. We are compelled to ask again the question of Mill's *Essay on Theism*, whether the absolute goodness of God can be reconciled with the belief in His entire Omnipotence. We can ask no more profound question, and Theology is bankrupt if it cannot set about the enquiry for an answer. Under such conditions there is something to be learned from the mistakes and also from the convictions of this profoundly Christian Dualist, who was so acutely conscious of the discrepancies between common experience and the message of the Gospel.

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## RHYTHM AND INTONATION IN ST MARK i-x.

THE study of Greek prose rhythm has progressed much in recent years. The books of the New Testament, however, with the exception of the Epistle to the Hebrews and isolated passages, chiefly Pauline, discussed by Blass<sup>2</sup> and Norden,<sup>3</sup> are usually held to be free from rhythmical influence. Such authors have not, perhaps, sufficiently grasped that in so entirely musical a language as Greek,<sup>4</sup> and one in

<sup>1</sup> *Some Christian Difficulties of the Second and Twentieth Centuries*. Cambridge 1903.

<sup>2</sup> *Die asianischen Rhythmen* pp. 40 ff. Blass finds special rhythmical influence in (e.g.) 1 Cor. xv, 1 Thess. iv (note that these passages deal with the Resurrection, and see below p. 276 note 3), and concludes, on rhythmical grounds, that 1 Tim. i 5-11 stand apart from their context. With the Epistle to the Hebrews he concerns himself more fully, and has since published a text of the whole, in rhythmical *κῶλα*.

<sup>3</sup> *Die antike Kunstprosa* i pp. 480 ff. Preference, in the gospels, is given to Lk. Norden regards general evidence of style, &c., rather than of literary rhythm, and on this evidence sets apart certain sections of Acts as inferior work. Generally speaking, he denies to the Christian literature the *Formenschönheit* of secular Greek (see pp. 516 ff.).

<sup>4</sup> Of the musical nature of their language the Greeks were themselves very conscious. See citations in Norden, *op. cit.* pp. 53 ff, and Roberts *Dionys. de Comp. Verb.* Introduction III, p. 39 and chapter xi, text and notes.