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978-1-107-02904-0 - Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century

Judith M. Lieu

Excerpt

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Introduction

It is the retrospective view that identifies the most formative moments of the past, the individuals, ideas, movements and events. Different moments, therefore, will attract attention as the point from which the viewer looks back itself moves. In recent years, the second century has emerged as decisive for the shaping of what would become the Christian Church. It is no longer seen as the period of the incubation of later institutions or when the fronts against threatening opposition from the familiar triumvirate of Judaism, paganism, and heresy were secured. Instead, it appears as a time rich in discontinuities, when straightforward development is difficult to trace or to predict, and as a time of experimentation, when ideas, structures, and patterns of behaviour are being explored. As yet, there are few securely established boundaries, even though, in one of the many contradictions characteristic of the period, a sense of sharp differentiation is being widely evoked in the literature. Among the key figures who people this landscape of opportunity or, perhaps, who are prominent in this journey of exploration stands Marcion.

MARCION IN RECENT IMAGINATION

It is not only within this new appreciation of the second century that Marcion has found a place. His significance has long been recognised; the person who did most to promote him in the modern period – and in whose shadow almost all subsequent accounts lie – was Adolf von Harnack. Harnack's earliest prize-winning publication, written before he was twenty, hailed Marcion as 'the modern believer, the first reformer'.¹ Nearly sixty

¹ Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion. Der Moderne Gläubige des 2. Jahrhunderts, der erste Reformator, Die Dorpater Preisschrift* (1870) (ed. Friedemann Steck; TU 149; Berlin: de Gruyter,

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years later, in a posthumously published article, he claimed that whereas on the whole a modern psychology cannot hope to truly understand the religious phenomena of the distant past, 'with Marcion that is not the case'; defending his patronage of Marcion to the last, he challenged contemporary systematic theologians: 'The most minor servant of Jesus Christ, who preaches exclusively the fatherhood of God and the forgiveness of sins, proclaims with this preaching the message of the Gospel, while the theologian with his weighty, complex and sophisticated language about God, even if he appeals to Paul, Luther and Calvin, stands in serious danger of obscuring and limiting the Gospel.'²

However, for Harnack, Marcion had a more immediate historical impact: He was to be credited as the first to conceive 'the idea of placing Christendom on the firm foundation of a definite theory of what is Christian', and of 'establishing this theory by a fixed collection of Christian writings with canonical authority'.³ Marcion was the first to adopt a serious historical-critical analysis of earlier Christian tradition and thus to make possible any subsequent historical understanding of the period as well as of his own undertaking. Moreover, 'he was a man with an organising talent, such as has no peer in the early Church', and he established churches of his own, marked by their canon, by their 'fixed but free organisation', and by their strict discipline, long before the Catholic Church achieved any such solidity. Forced to defend itself against Marcion, the Catholic Church had to develop measures which in fact it had learned from Marcion himself, thus inspiring the subtitle of Harnack's most fundamental work, 'a Monograph on the History of the Foundation of the Catholic Church': These were a 'New Testament' made up of Gospel and Apostle, a formulation of teaching which could be protected from external influences or subjective interpretation, a way of understanding the place of the Old Testament and of reading it, as well as structures, discipline, and authority.⁴

2003). On the importance of Marcion for Harnack, see Wolfram Kinzig, *Harnack, Marcion und das Judentum. Nebst einer Kommentierten Edition des Briefwechsels Adolf von Harnacks mit Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (Arbeiten zu Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte 13; Leipzig; Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2004).

² Adolf von Harnack, 'Die Neuheit des Evangeliums nach Marcion [1929]', ed. Axel von Harnack, *Aus der Werkstatt des Vollendeten* (Giessen: Topelmann, 1930), 128–43, 143. The irony of the final words is that Harnack repeatedly compared Marcion to Luther.

³ On this and what follows, see Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma 1* (trsl. from the 3rd German edn; Neil Buchanon; London: Williams and Norgate, 1894), 277–84.

⁴ Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: das Evangelium vom Fremden Gott; eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Gündlegung der katholischen Kirche* (2nd corrected edn printed with *Neue Studien zu Marcion*; TU 45; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924), 209–15.

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Certainly, elements and emphases in Harnack's account of Marcion changed in emphasis or nuance during his long engagement with him, and this was equally true of his core perception that Marcion's single starting point was Paul and Paul's proclamation of what is new in Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5.17).⁵ One dictum, however, is often (mis-)quoted as belonging to the essence of Harnack's portrayal: 'Marcion was the only Gentile Christian who understood Paul, and even he misunderstood him.'⁶ The context of this statement, routinely ignored, is that Paul's theology was specific to Paul's own context and that it depended on the Old Testament or Judaism in a way that subsequent interpreters, especially Gentile Christians (such as Marcion was), could not hope to understand. Thus, for Harnack, Marcion was proof of the repeated need to 'reconstruct' Paulinism if it was still to inspire the Church.⁷ Yet it is his account of Marcion's religious experience of the goodness and mercy of God, and of his 'opposition of faith and works, Gospel and Law', as the driving forces of his 'reforming', most fully set out in the significantly entitled *Marcion: The Gospel of the Stranger God*, that has done most to fix the reputation of the Marcion recovered by Harnack as a radical disciple of Paul.⁸

Although Harnack was reacting to earlier accounts of Marcion, as his prize-winning essay demonstrated, it is his work and, in particular, this last-named detailed comprehensive account that has shaped all subsequent studies. The continuing fascination with Marcion, 'without a doubt one of the most interesting and important figures of church history of the second century', is a fascination with the Marcion whose portrait Harnack drew and redrew across his career.⁹ Even overt attempts to offer a new approach almost inevitably find themselves formulating the key questions in terms defined by his judgements.¹⁰ These include, firstly, whether Marcion indeed can be

⁵ This is much more muted in *Der Moderne Gläubige*, 17, 128–30, than in 'Die Neuheit'.

⁶ *History of Dogma* 1, 89; quotations frequently omit or fail to realise the importance of the epithet 'Gentile Christian'.

⁷ *History of Dogma* 1, 282–4.

⁸ See Harnack, *Marcion*, 198–209, where he argues that Paul would in part have recognised Marcion as a genuine disciple but would have repulsed him in horror. For the translation 'Stranger', see below, pp. 328–30; this is preferred to 'alien' as translated by John E. Steeley and Lyle Bierma, *Marcion. The Gospel of the Alien God* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1990) (which does not include the vital appendices of the original).

⁹ The quotation is from Wilhelm Schneemelcher, 'Paulus in der griechischen Kirche des zweiten Jahrhunderts', *ZKG* 75 (1964), 1–20, 10.

¹⁰ Gerhard May, 'Marcion ohne Marcion', ed. Gerhard May and Katharina Greschat, with Martin Meiser, *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung/[Marcion and His Impact on Church History]: Vorträge der Internationalen Fachkonferenz zu Marcion gehalten vom 15.-18. August 2001 in Mainz (TU 150; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 1–7; David L. Balás,*

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understood independently of his historical context and can be celebrated for his grasp of an essential religious idea or insight, namely as ‘one of the world’s great religious geniuses’, as some interpreters, then and since, have done.¹¹

Similar, although set within a very different confessional framework, is the debate whether Marcion can be described as a genuine disciple of Paul and as truly grasping the heart of Pauline theology, understood as ‘Gospel versus Law’ or as the Gospel of God’s free grace – whether or not Harnack’s cautions about Paul’s untranslate-ability are heeded.¹² An affirmative assessment may take the form of a historical judgement about Marcion’s primary inspiration, locating him within a ‘radical anti-Jewish Paulinism’ of the educated circles, opposing the ‘catholic law-Christianity of naïve conservative communities’ of the second century.¹³ It may also be more consciously value-driven, implying a negative judgement on the theological trends of the post-apostolic period or on their echoes in subsequent Church history;¹⁴ to this end, Marcion has been described as belonging to the “logical and consistent” Paulinists who cannot call on a native Jewishness to save them from the quicksand of one-sided romanticism’ or even as having instigated the ‘first “protestant” schism’.¹⁵

Harnack was adamant that Marcion’s message was fundamentally a ‘biblical theology’ and that he had no truck with ‘the wisdom of the mysteries or with any philosophy’;¹⁶ but on this point no consensus has

‘Marcion Revisited: A “Post-Harnack” Perspective’, ed. W. Eugene March, *Texts and Testaments. Critical Essays on the Bible and Early Church Fathers. A Volume in Honour of Stuart Dickson Currie* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1980), 96–108.

¹¹ Pierre Louis Couchoud, *The Creation of Christ: An Outline of the Beginning of Christianity* (2 vols.; ET. C. Bradlaugh Bonner; London: Watts, 1939), I, 124, who goes on to draw a contrast between Marcion’s exalted if almost unachievable understanding and ‘average Christianity’.

¹² John W. Marshall, ‘Misunderstanding the New Paul: Marcion’s Transformation of the *Sonderzeit* Paul’, *JCS* 20 (2012), 1–29, attempts to set the ‘new perspective’ on Paul and Marcion’s account (largely dependent on Tertullian) in dialogue with each other as an exercise in exploring the nature of reception.

¹³ Hermann Langerbeck, ‘Zur Auseinandersetzung von Theologie und Gemeindeglauben in der römischen Gemeinde in den Jahren 135–65’, *Aufsätze zur Gnosis. Aus dem Nachlaß herausgegeben von Hermann Dörries* (AAWG Phil.-hist. 3.69; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 167–79, 173–5.

¹⁴ P. G. Verweij, *Evangelium und neues Gesetz in der ältesten Christenheit bis auf Marcion* (*Studia Theologica Rheno-Traiectina* 5; Utrecht: Kemink, 1960), 349, argues that the importance of the Gospel and apostolic authority was recognised by the earliest Church but indeed lost in the post-apostolic period.

¹⁵ J. Louis Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 58; Edwin C. Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence* (London: SPCK, 1948), 3.

¹⁶ Harnack, *Marcion*, 93; cf. idem, *History of Dogma*, 285, ‘One thing they [the Church Fathers] could not learn from him ... was how to make Christianity into a philosophical system’.

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been reached, and others have located Marcion firmly ‘under the spell of the God of philosophy’ or at least as driven first and foremost by the challenges of a philosophical understanding of God and the world.¹⁷ More complex has been whether to describe Marcion as a gnostic or to trace a historical relationship between his ideas and those of ‘gnosticism’, a debate which has been refigured as definitions of gnosticism itself have been reconceived, particularly in the wake of the discovery of the Nag Hammadi texts more than two decades after Harnack’s death.¹⁸

A further arena of controversy has been over Marcion’s historical significance. Did he indeed have a major, if not unparalleled, influence on subsequent Church doctrine, on the canon, and on ecclesial structures? Few would go so far as an unqualified affirmation; more common has been a carefully balanced attempt to question whether he had any ‘direct influence on the development of the doctrine of the Great Church’ while still acknowledging his considerable significance for the second century.¹⁹ Here, still, however, it remains contested whether Marcion merely crystallised what was perhaps already inevitable, either forcing into the open the ‘latent crisis of the Church’ or prompting the consolidation of structures that were then in their infancy or still unstable.²⁰ Perhaps most important here has been whether Marcion instigated the idea of a ‘canon’ through his selection of a Gospel and apostolic corpus and whether he provoked the Church into its own, somewhat expanded, alternative.²¹

¹⁷ E. P. Meijering, *Tertullian contra Marcion: Gotteslehre in der Polemik Adversus Marcionem I–II* (Philosophia Patrum 3. Leiden: Brill, 1977), 160–8; Jörg Woltmann, ‘Der Geschichtliche Hintergrund der Lehre Markions vom “Fremden Gott”’, ed. Ernst C. Suttner and Coelestin Patock, *Wegzeichen: Festgabe zum 60. Geburtstag von Prof. Dr. Hermengild M. Biedermann*, O.S.A. (Das Östliche Christentum NF 25; Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1971), 15–42.

¹⁸ Ugo Bianchi, ‘Marcion: Theologie biblique ou docteur gnostique’, *VC* 21 (1967), 141–9; see also Barbara Aland, ‘Marcion: Versuch einer Neuen Interpretation’, *Was ist Gnosis? Studien zum frühen Christentum, zu Marcion, und zur kaiserzeitlichen Philosophie* (WUNT 239; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 291–317 (= *ZThK* 70 [1973], 420–47), 300–16.

¹⁹ Aland, ‘Marcion’, 307.

²⁰ The first quotation is from Gerhard May, ‘Markion in seiner Zeit’, ed. Katharina Greschat and Martin Meiser, *Gerhard May: Markion. Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz 68; Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2005), 1–12, 11, referring to tension between the scriptural view of God and that of Greek contemporaries, and the variety of norms. For the second, see, for example, Alain Le Boulluec, ‘Le Problème de l’extension du canon des Écritures aux premiers siècles’, *RSR* 92 (2004), 45–87, 58–71, on Marcion’s impact on the language and idea of an authoritative Gospel.

²¹ This is argued in John Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament: An Essay in the Early History of the Canon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), and has been taken up by many since.

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These last debates have enjoyed renewed energy in recent decades. Through them, the classic model of heresy as a deviation from and a distortion of the original truth of the Gospel and of the unity of its articulation becomes open to scrutiny, to demonstration, or to fatal challenge, if not inversion. Indeed, Marcion and the history of his movement might seem to be a model of the debate over ‘orthodoxy and heresy’ sparked off by Walter Bauer and of its heirs in contemporary celebrations of the diversity of early Christianity.²² Over against Harnack’s ‘first reformer’ – on the assumption that such a role is to be positively understood – stands the ‘arch-heretic’.²³

Inevitably, such debates again bring Marcion out of his second-century context and invite assessment of his continuing significance. This indeed was why Harnack’s work prompted such heated responses – one such protesting ‘His strength did not lie in his character as a metaphysician or a prophet ... he was a man of action and a leader.... His Bible was a mutilated one; his theology was weak and inconsistent, and nevertheless this new sect started with tremendous energy, set out to conquer the world, and engaged in a fierce war against the Church.’²⁴ Most importantly, Marcion has come to be associated in particular with giving voice to the enduring and deep-seated ‘question of the Old Testament’ for Christian thought. Some have attributed the anti-Jewishness of much Christian theology to the convoluted efforts of the Church to retain some role for the Old Testament and a way of reading it in conscious response to Marcion’s supposed rejection of it; others have recalled Harnack’s own conclusion that while the preservation of the Old Testament may have been right in the second century and inevitable in the sixteenth, in the nineteenth it was ‘the consequence of a religious and ecclesiastical paralysis’.²⁵ Since then, Marcion has retained his role as a vehicle through which the issue can be repeated, and the older solutions can even be declared no longer viable.²⁶

²² Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (ET ed. from the 2nd German edn by Robert Kraft and Gerhard Krodel; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

²³ Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* (WUNT 250; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), describes Marcion as ‘the first actual outcast from the Church’ and the ‘*first actual heretic*’ (p. 44; original italics).

²⁴ J. Lebreton, *Gnosticism, Marcionism, and Manichaeism* (London: CTS, 1934), 18. That Marcion had skills as a church organiser is denied by Verweij, *Evangelium und neues Gesetz*, 349.

²⁵ Harnack, *Marcion*, 217.

²⁶ Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence*, 123; Raymond Schwager, ‘Der Gott des Alten Testaments und der Gott des Grekruzigten: Eine Untersuchung zur Erlösungslehre bei Markion und Irenäus’, *ZKTh* 102 (1980), 289–313, who argues that Irenaeus did not fully understand or satisfactorily address the insights of the shortcomings of the ‘God of the Old Testament’ and who takes recourse in the work of René Girard.

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This exploration of Marcion's importance has been undertaken by means of a journey through the scholarship of the last century or more because the evidences of the impact that he made – in his immediate context and subsequently – are the only means of measuring that importance. We do not have available, either by direct transmission or by fortuitous discovery, any writings direct from Marcion's hand; he is glimpsed only through the lens of the words of others, who are for the most part engaged in an ever more heated and vigorous polemic against him. It is his shadow as much as his presence that determines the future. That this should be so is not surprising, for in one sense, any current investigation has to be content with a shadow: The Marcion who is encountered is the Marcion transmitted by those who wrote against him; possible echoes of an 'authentic' voice are always subject to testing by those cadences transmitted and probably distorted by his opponents. That the indicted Marcion is to be discovered far and wide is, as shall be seen, of little help, for the multiple voices of his opponents do not form a harmonious choir and their accounts do not always paint the same picture.

WHOSE MARCION?

As has already been indicated, the sources for Marcion and for his teaching come almost exclusively from those who opposed them. In what follows, the most significant of these shall be explored: the initial notices by Justin Martyr, the only near-contemporary of Marcion whose comments survive; Irenaeus, writing perhaps within twenty or thirty years of his death; and Tertullian, who represents the most extensive and systematic engagement with what he understood Marcion to teach, albeit now in Latin dress. With these figures, a tradition is established, but this does not prevent other writers from shaping new pictures of Marcion – whether or not these are founded on independent sources. Moving from the second to the third century, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Hippolytus, and the author of the *Refutation of All Heresies* are the most important and witness to an expanding geographical spread. In the fourth century, Epiphanius included a long chapter on Marcion in his compendious 'medicine chest' (*Panarion*) against heresies, which was to have a decisive influence on the continuing heresiological tradition of the Church. Perhaps earlier than him but difficult to place is the anonymous *Dialogue of Adamantius* which includes among its protagonists two Marcionites as well as two followers of Valentinus and a follower of Bardaisan of Edessa. The last-named points to an eastern setting; Marcion undoubtedly did have a lasting and extensive influence in

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Syriac-speaking areas. Ephraem combines Marcion with Bardaisan and with Mani in his polemics, reflecting a period when the character of the dominant form of Christianity in the region was still hotly contested; his rich poetry, together with his prose writings, paints a distinctive picture of that influence as well as of Marcion's system. Soon after him, Eznik of Kolb is forced to differentiate between their and 'our' 'covenanters', while even in the fifth century, Theodoret of Cyr still speaks of whole villages that he identifies as 'Marcionite'. Indeed, the influence of Marcion's thought can be traced further into Armenian and Arabic sources, as well as, perhaps, nourishing a new and successful religious movement: Manichaeism.

For the most part, however, this survey will finish in the fourth century. In part, this time limit can be justified by the assumption that new memories of the 'historical Marcion' are unlikely to appear thereafter; in part, it reflects the evident fact that while authentic references to Marcionite communities continue, independent accounts of their beliefs dwindle. However, the former reason is misleading if it suggests that those earlier writers are a transparent source of trustworthy memories. Study of the antiheretical literature of the early Church reveals the deceptiveness of its apparently straightforward accounts of individuals and their systems; merely to paraphrase their reports, often after collecting and harmonising them – as sometimes still happens – is wildly misleading. It was not the task of polemicists to give an unbiased account of the ideas and practices of those against whom they wished to warn their audience – at least not in this period. As shall be seen, the distinctive tradition of the description of groups deemed heretical has long roots before Epiphanius – perhaps originating with Justin Martyr himself. Within that tradition, an armoury of weapons and strategies quickly evolves; the purpose of these is to create and to present as self-evident and as incontrovertible the boundaries between 'right belief' and that being opposed, to confirm and strengthen the former far more than to refute the latter by any exercise of logic, to identify as 'outside' and as genetically illegitimate all opposing ideas, to give some explanation of their existence and origin, and to reinforce the picture of an unbroken tradition of 'right belief' and of the people and institutions which uphold it. These strategies are consistently adopted but are also adapted, as those who deploy them seek to meet their own needs and often to address issues within their own context. Meanwhile, outside this heresiological tradition, polemic against alternative views may be used to buttress the development of an exegetical argument or to help address a theological or philosophical problem, although these goals do not necessarily foster a more accurate presentation. The Marcion of Irenaeus and of Tertullian, as of Clement of

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Alexandria or of Origen, has to be located within the framework of the different overarching theological templates with which each of them works.

Any picture of Marcion relies, inevitably, on those works against him that did survive. Yet in addition to these were numerous others who, at least as reported chiefly by Eusebius, did write against him but whose efforts are lost and, in many cases, were already lost in Eusebius' own time.²⁷ Justin Martyr himself is credited with such a compilation either against Marcion or against a wider group of 'heresies'; this and others, such as that attributed to Theophilus of Antioch, may have exercised considerable influence on their successors, although tracing such influence is a matter of guesswork. Their mere enumeration does, however, testify to the extent of influence exercised by Marcion's ideas and the concern these provoked – at least initially. In due course, however, citing Marcion as an arch-heretic may have become a standard *topos*, independent of any contemporary pressure; this situation is similar to the polemics 'against the Jews', which do not always prove the existence of any engagement with 'real Jews'.

What is evident in all this is that the Marcion who is met on the pages of his various opponents is a Marcion constructed by the rhetoric of each author. At the same time, through them, a tradition – or perhaps more than one – about Marcion becomes established and provides what subsequent writers 'know' about him, regardless of whether they also have access to any writings by him or by his followers, and even if they do have such, it cannot be assumed they will give them priority. Sensitivity to the strategies in use may encourage appropriate caution – a hermeneutic of suspicion – but it will not thereby ensure that the 'real Marcion' can be recovered. The Marcion who can be uncovered and described will necessarily be Irenaeus' Marcion, Tertullian's Marcion, Ephraem's Marcion....

MARCION IN HISTORY

It might be thought that to recover 'Irenaeus' Marcion' (and so on) is enough; after all, it was their perception of the implications of his teaching that inspired the responses that may (or may not) have led to the formation of a canon of Gospel and letters, to the idea of a New Testament alongside a preserved but interpreted Old Testament (and so on). Yet, if the effect of this is merely to reinscribe the developments that did ensue, little has been gained. The second century is fascinating because it was a period of

²⁷ See Meike Willing, *Eusebius von Cäsarea als Häresieograph* (PTS 63; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 188–203.

experimentation; as already noted, even if the terminology of ‘heresy’, if not yet ‘orthodoxy’, is beginning to be used in polemic and defence, it is inappropriate simply to reproduce it in any historical account and evaluation of the period. This is not only because there were no means of identifying and enforcing any such separation but also because the effort to view the period through a template of self-conscious and identifiable bounded groups distorts the actual fluidity that can be repeatedly encountered. Moreover, if some ideas, some patterns of life, and some structures did become marginalised, this may not have been because they were intrinsically flawed; neither, however, need it have been because it was only political power struggles that forced them out. Both such explanations can be and have been forwarded, but they suffer from the tendency to constrain the real complexities within rigid templates of preunderstanding. The recovery of those alternative patterns of belief and practice does not only enrich any understanding of the past, but it may also serve a fresh understanding of the present – as has been the case in studies of the representations of women and their roles. Sometimes, a clearer perception of the consequences of an excluded alternative may guide later decisions about whether to reinforce or to reconsider that alternative. It is the perceived pivotal role that Marcion has been accorded in the second century – whether as threat or as catalyst – that invites the attempt to recover his actual place therein, what he stood for, and whence he drew his inspiration. Thus, if Marcion is to make sense anywhere, it must be on the map of the second century; equally, without him, that map is incomplete.

MARCION AT THE CROSSROADS OF THE SECOND CENTURY

There are, therefore, two Marcions to recover or, rather, two stages in his recovery. First will be the Marcion who is offered by those who wrote against him. Each writer presents a different Marcion, although there are obvious continuities between them and, sometimes, literary dependence. It would be a mistake to conflate them into a single picture or to create an identikit image from chosen elements of each; to do so would suppose that what they offer are partial glimpses of the ‘historical Marcion’, which together, as if from independent witnesses, might create a reliable whole. Instead, it is their distinctive profiles that should attract our attention, shaped as they are by the lens of their separate authors’ own concerns and perceptions of the Christian message. Identifying that lens does indeed make it possible to correct some of the distortion it creates. Equally, examining the impact Marcion has made on them may illuminate each author’s own sensitivities