

Markus Vinzent, *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels*, Studia Patristica Supplement 2, Louven, Belgium: Peeters, 2014. Pp. xii + 353. ISBN 978-90-429-3027-8. Paperback, € 78.00.

- [1] Early on in *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels*, Markus Vinzent bemoans “the separation of New Testament and Patristic Studies,” which, in his opinion, stemmed at least partially from “a fundamentalist, non-historical reading of the New Testament itself and the growing dominance of such reading at that time” (1). Against this state of affairs, Vinzent hopes that *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels* will “shed some more rational light on a still dark period of the beginnings of Christianity” (vii), namely, the time of Marcion and those he directly interacted with. In the process, Vinzent combines an examination of patristic material with text-critical concerns. Utilizing those two lines of study, together with a discussion of the Synoptic problem, he comes to the following conclusion: “All witnesses, including *Mark*, have integrated the one source Marcion... The comparison speaks strongly of Marcion as their common source” (274). Although Marcion did not necessarily create items wholesale, Vinzent argues that Marcion nevertheless essentially “created the new literary genre of the ‘Gospel’”; indeed, Marcion’s own work (which was subsequently copied and modified by others before Marcion’s own second edition) “had no historical precedent in the combination of Christ’s sayings and narratives to draw upon” (277). The following paragraphs will provide an overview of his chapters and argumentation, after which a few points of analysis will be offered.
- [2] *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels* consists of four chapters of varying length. The first chapter, “Marcion, His Gospel and the Gospels in the Sources,” is by far the longest section of the book. Within this chapter, Vinzent interacts with a wide range of key patristic and early church sources (with one important omission, as we will argue later), ranging all the way from the work of “An Unknown Asian Presbyter” (preserved only in Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*) to Justin Martyr’s writings that mention Marcion, to Irenaeus’s own work against Marcion. While examining these sources for any discussion of Marcion or the Gospels, Vinzent pursues a few key lines of argumentation. At certain points, he stresses that the concept of Marcion as a “mutilator” of Scripture only occurs significantly later (i.e., compared to earlier interactions with Marcion). Thus, for example, in his discussion of Irenaeus’s work, Vinzent argues that when Irenaeus cites the early source, the “Presbyter,” there is no indication that Marcion has “mutilated” or “circumcised” any part of Scripture; only when Irenaeus is on his own do we see the emergence of such arguments (69). Likewise, when discussing Tatian’s critique of Marcion, he stresses that “not a word, however, do we read about Marcion’s Gospel” (52). On the basis of his survey, Vinzent states, “In the early days, nobody knows of Marcion as having relied upon or altered an earlier Gospel” (133).
- [3] In a similar vein, when discussing Justin Martyr’s interaction with Marcion, Vinzent stresses that the earliest dialogue between the two reads more like “a theological debate, not necessarily in an open confrontation” (10). Yet Justin’s later works tell a different story; indeed, one can see in Justin’s writings “a development of the discussion of Marcion (and later also others) which proceeds from a critical address (*Ad Marcionem*), to a differentiating between others whom the Emperor should persecute and Justin’s own followers who should be

spared (*First Apology*), to grouping the Marcionites amongst other ‘heresies’ with Christians being in a state of divisions and schisms which are yet not unbridgeable, but where hope is shown for an overcoming of the divide (*Dialogue with Trypho*)” (45). Consequently, Vinzent states later, “Despite the existence of many diverse opinions . . . , we can still see the wish and the attempts to preserve a broad unity, despite the later heresiological repaintings. Only with Tertullian do we learn of a dismissal (or dismissals) of Marcion, and yet we are told that Marcion was recurrently ejected and reinstated” (133; see also 135).

- [4] Vinzent ends the first chapter (and the first half of the book) with an examination of “Marcion’s Gospel in the history of research on the Synoptic Question,” a section which leads naturally into chapter 2, “Dating the Synoptic Gospels: The *Status Quaestionis*.” Within this second chapter, Vinzent summarizes the various views on the dating of each gospel and then provides a look at the complicated mishmash of various solutions to the Synoptic problem. For his part, Vinzent questions any attempt at an early dating of any of the Gospels (e.g., see 177–80 for his discussion of Matthew) and also expresses his skepticism of the assumption that the Gospels can be clearly lined up in any sort of order of composition (213).
- [5] In chapter 3, “Re-dating the Gospels,” Vinzent begins by examining the earliest gospel manuscripts, arguing that none of them (including P⁵²) can be dated satisfactorily to a time before Marcion. Vinzent next examines the appearance of gospel citations in the early sources, arguing that no evidence exists to suggest that individual gospels were accepted as authoritative sources before the time of Marcion. He states, “How can we account for these negative findings of a non-reception of the Gospels, and most specifically of the Gospel narratives, if the later canonical Gospels were written before 100, or around 70, or, as some opt for, in the early 40s, and if they had already become authoritative readings in the community?” (252)
- [6] In the third and final section of chapter 3, Vinzent focuses on “Internal Evidence,” namely, a comparison between the Synoptics and a recovered Marcionite Gospel. Thus, following John Knox, Vinzent argues that “the Lucan verses that are present in Marcion are markedly different from the genuine Lucan ones and confirm that we are dealing with two different sets. If Marcion had abridged *Luke*, one would wonder why he would have taken predominantly verses that are in harmony with the other Synoptics, Gospels which, according to Tertullian, he had rejected. If, however, *Luke* had redacted Marcion, the high percentage of peculiar Lucan verses is no surprise, but rather what one would expect, while the higher percentage of Synoptic parallels with typically Marcionite verses is based, as we will see, on the fact that all Synoptics, not only *Luke*, depend on Marcion” (259). Vinzent follows this statement up with select comparisons of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and the reconstruction of Marcion’s Gospel. Shortly thereafter, the fourth chapter dovetails the research of this book with Vinzent’s previous work, coming to the conclusion that “the Gospel was removed from Paul and from Marcion and through combining prefaces of *Acts* and *Luke*, put under the name of *Luke*. *Luke* was complemented by *Mark*, *Matthew*, and *John*” (282).
- [7] On the one hand, the breadth of Vinzent’s research cannot be denied. His extensive interactions with a wide range of patristic sources is commendable, and this alone may be worth the price of the book (and Vinzent takes care to include in a footnote the complete Latin and Greek texts of the sources he cites).

Though lacking a discussion of 1 Clement (more on this below), Vinzent has nevertheless provided an incredible amount of information. Furthermore, his bibliography is staggering in its depth, although more dialogue with those who (like this reviewer) are skeptical of the Baur hypothesis would have been appreciated (e.g., Andreas Köstenberger and Michael Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010]), is barely mentioned in passing).

[8] Nonetheless, while his research is impressive, a few key omissions in the discussion considerably weaken his argument, in this reviewer's opinion. At the heart of the matter lies the very nature of *citation*, both that of the reconstructed Marcionite Gospel and that of citations of the four orthodox Gospels within patristic literature. Key to Vinzent's argument is his contention that "the Gospels are not quoted or referred to in Paul or in other early Christian literature prior to Marcion" (224); soon thereafter he favorably cites W. L. Petersen ("Textual Traditions Examined," in *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. A. Gregory and C. Tuckett [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005], 29-46) when discussing how most of the texts in the patristics that resemble the New Testament diverge considerably from the modern critical text of the New Testament (225). Yet one is forced to ask, how much exact replication is required before one can claim a clear New Testament citation? As an analogy, the New Testament authors themselves provide a wide range of "citation types" (quotation, paraphrase, echo, allusion, etc.) of both the Hebrew and the LXX, rarely with exact semantic or syntactical correspondence. While one could argue that there was some fluctuation regarding the Old Testament texts (or even some *Testimonia* that the church preferred to cite from), nobody to this writer's knowledge argues that there were no Old Testament written texts at all for the New Testament authors to draw on. Yet paraphrase and conflation of texts (and also mere echo) clearly existed in New Testament citation of the Old Testament; it is difficult to understand why this seems to be disallowed in patristic citation of the New Testament. In other words, should one truly expect exact or near *verbatim* citations of the modern critical text?

[9] This becomes all the more relevant when one considers the major omission in Vinzent's patristics study: 1 Clement (this text is only mentioned in passing a few times, e.g., p. 176, and not directly interacted with; Clement of Rome does not occur in the index, nor does 1 Clement, in contrast to Clemens Alexandrinus and 2 Clement, both of which are discussed). There are at least two places in 1 Clement that could easily be both a conflation and/or a paraphrase of written gospel material (this reviewer is utilizing the Greek text from M. Holmes's 1999 edition of *The Apostolic Fathers* [Grand Rapids: Baker]). To begin with, 1 Clem. 13:2 seems to be a conflation of a number of texts, though drawing heavily from Matt 7:1-2. In fact, five of the last seven words of 1 Clem. 13:2 correspond exactly to the last five words in Matt 7:2 (NA²⁷). What more could one ask for? At the very least, the following question must be addressed: how do we tell when text A is directly citing (*or paraphrasing*) text B? In the matter of Marcion and the Synoptic problem, this reviewer strongly suspects the answer would depend on one's presuppositions. Secondly, one could argue that 1 Clem. 46:8 is a paraphrase of Luke 17:1-2 (or perhaps a conflation of the two). Regardless, in this reviewer's opinion both texts show more than enough similarities with written gospel material to constitute a citation (especially in light of what scholars normally consider a New Testament citation of the Old Testament). If Vinzent wishes to declare that this is not a citation, then he needs to clearly

establish what constitutes a citation and what does not. Otherwise, Vinzent's argument becomes unfalsifiable, and no critical dialogue can be sustained.

[10] Vinzent could, of course, argue that 1 Clement is not early enough to be admissible evidence, but the point is that he does not interact with the material at all, and this is a surprising omission since most scholars would prefer to date Clement earlier than Marcion. (Naturally a wide range of opinion exists on this matter, with Adolf Harnack himself placing it squarely in the Domitian era while virtually nobody, including Laurence Welborn, goes beyond an absolute upper limit of 140; I am indebted here to the comprehensive survey in Michael Stover, "The Dating of 1 Clement," a ThM thesis at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary [March 2012]). In other words, two passages in 1 Clement have the potential to refute Vinzent's argument, yet he does not interact with them. Furthermore, the more texts one wishes to date post-Marcion (or at least roughly contemporary), the less convincing is the argument that pre-Marcion texts do not cite the Synoptic Gospels (and, as noted below, the fact that Paul does not seem to cite gospel material is not necessarily relevant to the discussion).

[11] Two minor points must also be brought up that illustrate how more clarity is needed on the matter of identifying and pinpointing citations. To begin with, on page 227, when interacting with Charles Hill on the *Epistle of Vienne and Lyons*, Vinzent makes the objection that "the minor differences are not the sole issue; the *Letter* quotes the Lord, not *John*, and it explicitly introduces a [sic] Lord's saying." This reviewer is somewhat puzzled as to how this is even relevant. If, for the sake of argument, the *Epistle* were in fact citing the Gospel of John, why should one necessarily expect the *Epistle* to say "John" instead of the "Lord"? One could easily expect either or both. Secondly, on page 224 Vinzent argues, "The fact that the Gospels are not quoted or referred to in Paul or in other early Christian literature prior to Marcion speaks in favor of adapting of these texts to the time of Marcion." We have already pointed out how Vinzent does not deal with 1 Clement on this matter. As to Paul, one is left wondering why anybody would expect Paul to be citing published gospel material when even the most confessional of scholars are content to consider the possibility of the Gospels being published after most of the Pauline material? How could Paul cite written texts that either were not published yet or not widely circulated?

[12] The issue of citation and paraphrase brings up another question that is essential to the discussion. How do we know that Marcion's Gospel can be constructed as precisely as Vinzent wishes (i.e., in direct quotation)? This is significant, for, on the one hand, Vinzent acknowledges that Marcion's work "can be recovered only partially from the glimpses that are given by his opponents" (2); yet, on the other hand, Vinzent's argument in chapter 3 (esp. 257–58 and 264–72) seems to hinge on knowing the *exact words* that Marcion used. How do we know, for example, that Marcion's opponents cared so much for the exact replication of Marcion's Gospel that they gave it the sort of precise attention they would not even give the New Testament texts (i.e., direct quote rather than paraphrase)? Furthermore, how does one know that the language and/or dialect of Marcion's opponents would not have altered their presentation of Marcion's Gospel? These are questions that, at the very least, need to be interacted with more extensively in light of the reliance of Vinzent's argument on our knowing the exact content of the sections he compares with the Synoptics. In other words, this reviewer contends that the sort of exact comparisons normally performed with Synoptic parallels cannot be done with Marcion if all we have is a reconstruction via his

- opponents' quotes and/or paraphrase.
- [13] Much of Vinzent's case stems from both an argument from silence (i.e., why are the canonical Gospels not quoted earlier?) and a late dating of various key sources (e.g., Papias). On this issue the reader will have to determine whether or not Vinzent's arguments are convincing. Yet, one must also, in the meanwhile, ponder the issue of why the Synoptic Gospel writers would be content to simply plagiarize and modify Marcion's own work; was Marcion the only one who could gather both written and oral sources (see p. 139 regarding Marcion's potential ability to gather sources)? Did they truly expect a plagiarized copy (and a pseudepigraphal gospel—see p. 278 regarding how the Synoptics were not “formally anonymous” [Martin Hengel's words]) to gain acceptance? At the very least a discussion on the acceptance (or not) of pseudepigraphal works would have been important at this point; otherwise one is left wondering how the Synoptic Gospels “won” over Marcion's Gospel simply by virtue of attaching the name of a key figure on the front.
- [14] Ultimately, this writer believes that how likely one is to be persuaded on Vinzent's main thesis (that Marcion wrote the first gospel) as well as the points stemming from his comparison of Marcion with the Synoptics on 264–72 will depend on the following factors: (1) one's view of the dates of 1 Clement, Papias, etc.; (2) one's view of the Baur hypothesis; and (3) one's view on the nature of the reconstruction of Marcion's Gospel to any significant degree of certainty.
- [15] On the one hand, Markus Vinzent's rigorous examination of the patristics and related matters of textual criticism would be a welcome addition to any library (academic or individual) concerned with such matters. Nonetheless, in this reviewer's opinion, the assumptions implicit within the reconstruction of Marcion's text, the many assumptions regarding the late dating of various texts, the lack of discussion on the nature of citation/quotation, and, especially, the passing over of 1 Clement with barely a glance render his thesis less than convincing.

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