

MARCION'S BOOK OF CONTRADICTIONS.

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DR. HORT, to whom I am personally more deeply in debt than to any other of the great scholars whom it has been my privilege to know, disagreed with me strongly in the estimate which we made of the value of Tertullian and his writings. He disliked Tertullian, thought him unfair in his arguments, which was one thing that Hort, with an almost morbid sense of justice, could not forgive; I, on the other hand, adored Tertullian, not so much for his power of putting a nascent theology into crystalline form, as because of his wit and his epigrammatic power; it was like the newly-invented artillery in the battle in the heavens in *Paradise Lost*,

“That whom they hit, none on their feet might stand”;

and my own temptation is still, to sell my soul to the devil for a good epigram, just as Mr. Chesterton is reported to have sold his for an unlimited and unequalled power of Paradox. Dr. Hort, however, cared nothing for epigrams, even when they were used in the service of Truth; he distrusted them, and this distrust made his own work often to be lacking in colour and in contrast. I do not think, however, that he liked Marcion, who was Tertullian's butt, and was commonly, but erroneously, supposed to be almost as stupid as Tertullian was witty, and as wanting in colour as Tertullian, who was almost like Turner the artist in this respect, was surcharged with it. There again we differed, for I could not help thinking that Marcion's portrait is one of the standing injustices in ecclesiastical history, and that he was and is one of the most misunderstood of men. Perhaps he shares this misrepresentation with his contemporary Valentinus, who appears to have been a very Johannine type of Christian, if the shade of Irenæus will allow me to say so without protest. I think Dr. Hort dreaded what is now imminent in certain theological circles, a return to the Marcionite attitude

with regard to the Old Testament. Here again, I did not share his fears. The Old Testament can take care of itself : Christianity is not yet nearly detached from Judaism. On the contrary, it is always gravitating back into it again. A great war is a powerful stimulus in that direction. It is sure to make us either Jews or Moslems.

But to return to Marcion. What do we really know of himself or his works, except from the hands of his unfriendly critics ? I have often searched both East and West for that lost book of *Antitheses* or *Contradictions*, in which Marcion expounded the fundamental want of accord between the Old Testament and the New. He could not have been the dull dog that he is commonly taken for, when he drew the two companion pictures, one of Elisha sending the she-bears to eat up forty-two naughty children, who had called him an old gentleman ; and the other of Jesus, extending arms of welcome and saying "Suffer little children to come unto me". So I made some unsuccessful quest for the lost book, which had these two pretty pictures of infant life on opposite pages. If all the book was like that it would have been worth finding, but this is the proper point to use the language of the fox in the fable and say that "the grapes are sour". For they are still out of reach.

If, however, we cannot predict a great harvest of striking contrasts between the Old and the New, we can pick up here and there many scattered instances, and we may at least be sure that a great movement such as the Marcionite propaganda must have had behind it the driving power of great ideas, with some adequacy of expression. It won't do to repeat the Church calumnies and say that there was once, far away in uncivilized Pontus, a stupid shipmaster who was the first-born of Satan. For Marcion divided the allegiance of the Church of his day and of many days after. There was, in that age, no "quod ubique, quod ab omnibus" ; his company were just as much a Catholic Church as any other, for they were commensurate in extent with, and rivalled in intensity the Christian communities of the great cities, and that is a sufficient proof that there has been a campaign of misrepresentation on the part of those who appropriated and ran off with the title of Catholicism.

Is there any way in which we may arrive at a more just idea of Marcion and his work ? Let us try if we can add something to the existing knowledge of the theologian and the ecclesiastical historian.

One of the most interesting and important of the anti-Marcionite works is that which goes under the name of the *Dialogue of Adamantius*. Attention was early drawn to it on account of a fallacious identification of the Adamantius who appears in the *Dialogue* with Origen himself. The name might be his, but the arguments and involved beliefs are certainly not his, and the Origenian identification has long been abandoned. All that we know of the Adamantius referred to is that he is the orthodox protagonist in a great debate with a certain follower of Marcion named Megethius, and that he turns like Plato in the *Republic* when he has despatched Thrasymachus to dispute with a second Marcionite named Marcus, who acts the part of Glaucus in the Platonic *Dialogue*. Marcus is a somewhat harder nut to crack, but presently he also is disposed of. A third disputant appears who is said to be a follower of Bardesanes; his name is Marinus (probably a Syrian) and he raises the whole question of the origin of evil and of human free-will. When Marinus is despatched a fourth heretic enters the arena; his name is Droserius and he says that he comes forward to defend the dogma of Valentinus.

Valentinus, whom he describes as a most orthodox person, will be able to tell us convincingly whence the devil came and how evil arose. The judge who has been arbitrating in the previous cases encourages Droserius (who, by the way, is not a fictitious person) to go into the arena and have it out with Adamantius. We at once are introduced to some very important matter, professing to be Valentinus' own statements, and commonly supposed to come from a lost work of that great heresiarch. This matter is what we want to draw attention to. The rest of the *Dialogue* contains, in its fifth dispute, a confutation of the Docetists, who deny the reality of the Lord's appearance, and especially of His passion. With this part we are not concerned at present; what arrests the attention is the statement of Valentinus, which is officially read in the debate. It is *not* presented as an oral statement; the judge says definitely, "Let the dogma (*or* opinion) of Valentinus be read". Droserius then undertakes the defence of the Valentinian writing. It must be clear, to any one who is interested in ancient documents, that unless the *Dialogue* has misrepresented matters, we have here some pages of a lost book, ostensibly of Valentinus. Certainly it is no ordinary writer that has produced the

document which is supposed to be read in the debate : nor is it surprising that an attempt has been made to identify the book quoted with a lost *ōpos* (or *definition*) of Valentinus. Before we come to the actual quotation, we may at once get rid of this last supposition. The supposed "definition" is only the way in which the author of the *Dialogue* introduces the matter : he had used the same trick at the beginning, when he was describing the struggle with Megethius the Marcionite ; Megethius must make a "definition". This is, however, a mere critical trifle ; for it appears that the whole of the supposed extract from the works of Valentinus has been transcribed from the treatise of Methodius on the *Freedom of the Will*, which is also a *Dialogue* between an Orthodox Believer and a Valentinian. So we can replace, as far as the supposed Valentinus doctrine goes, the authority of Adamantius, who is a post-Nicene writer, by the authority of Methodius, who is an ante-Nicene writer. The extract is acquiring a flavour of antiquity.

The next thing we notice is that the Adamantius *Dialogue* has only transcribed the latter part of the quotation in Methodius. We might have guessed something of the kind, for it opens with a reference to what went on yesterday, and does not tell us what really occurred. With the aid of Methodius we restore a whole section, evidently the beginning of a book, be it of Valentinus or whatever it may be. It does not seem to be Methodius himself ; the suggestion at once arises that he, like Adamantius, has been borrowing. He writes the opening section of his *Dialogue*, and then introduces someone who is said to be Valentine or a Valentinian, who speaks in another style, if we may judge of styles and of men by their styles.

We are not yet at the end of the preliminary questions of Authorship ; for the section which follows in Methodius on *God and Matter* is said by Eusebius to come from Maximus, and to have been written, therefore, in the last ten years of the second century. This difficulty is commonly got rid of by assuming that Eusebius, animated by spite against Methodius for his opposition to the teachings of Origen, has falsified the authorship of the extract which he quotes. For our part, we think nobly of Eusebius, and in no wise approve the suggestion of such treachery. It seems easier to suppose that the extract referred to has been circulating anonymously, or with various ascriptions of authorship. In that case, the treatise of Methodius may very well

contain earlier matter, outside what has been suspected to have a Valentinian origin.¹

Now let us make a brief summary of the contents of this Prologue to an unknown work upon which we have stumbled. The writer begins by saying that it was but yesterday that he was walking on the sea-shore, and contemplating the Divine Power and the Divine Art in the tossing waves. It was like the scene upon which Miranda gazes in the *Tempest*, where the art of her father has put the wild waters into a rage and roar. It was such a scene, says the writer, as is described by Homer, when Boreas and Zephyrus rage together on the main. The waves mount to the welkin's cheek. It seemed as if the whole earth, including the speaker, would have been whelmed (ἐπικλυσθήσεσθαι). But when he sought for a safe-standing ground, or tried to descry Noah's Ark in the offing, he saw that the waves did not transgress their proper limits; they were servants who dreaded their master and were under orders.

From this contemplation, the writer passed in thought, after the fashion of the early Christian Apologists, to consider the orderly sequence of the sun and moon, of night and day, and hence to infer the existence of some power which overrules and maintains the order of the world. This power is God² and the writer went on to reflect that there cannot be a second cause, but that there was a First Cause,

¹ Gaisford, in his note on Euseb., *Praep. Ev.*, vii. 21 reminds us that Routh, who revised the passage in Eusebius and wrote a comment upon it, thought that Methodius had been borrowing from Maximus. He quoted, however, the protest of Jahn (*Meth. opp.* ii. 125) against the idea that Methodius, that subtle and ingenious imitator of Plato, had been copying from Maximus, and he referred to the fact that "Dr. Armitage Robinson (*Philocalia* xlvi.) and the late Dr. Hort independently suggested that Maximus is the name not of an author, otherwise unknown, but of the interlocutor described by Methodius as Orthodoxus". It is difficult to believe that Eusebius would have spoken of Maximus as "a man not undistinguished in the Christian life" if he had only been the lay figure of a dialogue.

Gaisford is wrong in referring the explanation given above to Dr. Hort: as we shall see presently, it was Zahn's suggestion, reported by Hort to Robinson; not quite the same thing.

² We may compare the argument at the beginning of the *Apology* of Aristides: "I comprehended that the world and all that is therein are moved by the influence of another, and I understood that he that moveth them is God" (*Ap.*, c. 1.)

one and only. So at the end of the day he went home in peace with the faith in supreme order and goodness established in his mind.

Next day came the backwave of Unfaith. He went out and saw something different from the stormy sea that keeps its Maker's limits. He saw stormy human beings quarrelling and threatening one another ; he saw robbers at work upon graves, exposing the buried corpses to the pariah dogs. Here a man was smiting his fellow with a sword and stripping him, and here was a man who robbed his neighbour of his wife's embraces. At last he came to conclude that all he had read in tragedy of Thyestes and Œdipus and the like might be true. How could such things be consistent with Divine Order and Divine Providence ? How could God be the Author of such things as he had seen ? Had he called such a world into being, and perhaps could not now unmake it ? Did he who made the Lamb make thee ? would be William Blake's way of putting it to the Tiger, the Lamb crossing the stage first. Or is it possible that He once joyed over these evil creations and had now ceased to delight in them ? But this can hardly be. So the writer infers the existence of Matter, out of which God made the world and made it fair ; but from it also Evil arose, as being Matter that had missed the artist's hand, rejected by Him as unsuitable, and so finding itself realized in the evil deeds of men.

Something like this is the argument of the newly found Prologue. It finds God and a world-order ; it then discovers the dissonance of the world from the Divine Order, and discovers Hylē or Matter, and so the way is opened for a reconciliation of the inner lack of harmony of the world with a Divine Idea.

I believe this passage has been styled rhetorical in some quarters, and Eusebius speaks of it and of all such speculations into the origin of evil as being the favourite occupation of heretics ;¹ we cannot think that such serious speculations are either rhetorical or that they

¹ So does Tertullian, cf. *adv. Marc.*, i. 2 : "Languens enim (quod et nunc multi, et maxime hæretici) circa mali quaestionem 'Unde malum ?' etc." The origin of evil must have been at the beginning of the Marcionite doctrine. Tertullian says that the heretics (to wit, Marcion and his contemporaries in the first instance) have a morbid interest in it. The language of Eusebius in *H.E.*, v. 27, describes the supposed Maximus passage as, *περὶ τοῦ πολυθρύλητου παρὰ τοῖς αἰρεσιώταις ζητήματος πόθεν ἡ κακία καὶ περὶ τοῦ γενητῆν ὑπάρχειν ὕλην*, upon which Fabricius remarked that the talkative heretics referred to are either the Marcionites or the Valentinians.

are necessarily heretical. If, however, they should chance to be heretical, to what heretic shall we refer them? Methodius says it is Valentinus: and Adamantius who follows him says expressly of the latter part of the Prologue that it is the *Doctrine of Valentinus*. But this is not any fresh evidence. Eznik the Armenian also transcribes Methodius. Eusebius, on the other hand, seems to refer it to Maximus, who sets up the figure of heretical speculation in order that he may have the pleasure of knocking it down again.

We are going to suggest that the author is Marcion. There is no preliminary difficulty in substituting Marcion for Valentinus, for they are known to be closely related, and their theological systems have a common root. Let us see if anything can be said in support of the suggestion.

The passage to which the author refers from Homer's description of the storm-driven sea is at the beginning of the ninth book of the *Iliad*. It runs as follows in Derby's translation:—

As when two stormy winds ruffle the sea,
Boreas and Zephyr, from the hills of Thrace
With sudden gust descending; the dark waves
Rear high their angry crests, and toss on shore
Masses of tangled weed: (such stormy grief
The breast of ev'ry Grecian warrior rent).

The sea upon which the winds play is called by Homer the Pontus; and no doubt he means the Thracian Pontus, from which Boreas and Zephyrus come in the twenty-third book to fan the flames of the funeral pile of Patroclus (*Il.*, 23, 230). It was, however, a word susceptible of misunderstanding; its most natural meaning is the Euxine, and we suspect that no less a person than Tertullian has thought of it as being the Pontus Euxinus, or Black Sea, about which he has so many epigrammatic touches in his books against Marcion. For, in his first book, after impaling Marcion on the horns of a dilemma, he says, "Marcion, *you are caught in the surge of your own Pontus*. The waves of truth overwhelm (*involvunt*) you on every side. You can neither set up equal gods nor unequal gods."

The sting of the retort is evident, if Marcion had, to Tertullian's mind, represented himself as walking by the storm-tossed Euxine and imagining that he would be engulfed in the waves. "The very thing,"

says Tertullian ; " you are so, and the waves are the waves of truth breaking over you " (*Tert. adv. Marc.*, i. 7).

When Tertullian comes to discuss the *Antitheses* or supposed *Contradictions* between the Old Testament and the New, he suggests that if we are going to search for contradictions, we shall not be limited to the two Testaments. Nature is full of contradictions, man is a bundle of them. Must we try to assign the inharmonious parts to separate Authors and Origins ? Tell me, Marcion, " Why have you not reckoned up also the *Antitheses* which occur in the natural works of the Creator, who is forever contrary to Himself ? Why were you not able to reflect (*recogitare*) that the world, at all events, even amongst your people of Pontus, is made up (unless I am mistaken), out of a diversity of elements which are mutually hostile ? " (*adv. Marc.*, iv. 1).

The suggestion of the Pontic discords, about which he professes to have some knowledge, is at once explained by the Prologue which we have been studying, if that Prologue be really Marcion's. For it is clear that the people on the shores of the Pontus have a very black picture drawn of them, whatever Pontus may be meant by the writer. We think it is natural to explain the Prologue by Tertullian, and Tertullian by the Prologue. In that case, the Prologue is Marcion's.

A difficulty now arises as to whether the views of the supposed Prologue are really Marcion's views. Is it true that Hylē or Matter is one of his fundamental conceptions ? and if it is with Hylē that the Creator operates, where is the good God of Marcion, who is really supreme over both Matter and the Creator that operates upon it ?

Tertullian makes great play with the Marcionite conception of the ingenerate Matter which is co-eval with God, to the credit of which evil is to be reckoned : (*contra Marc.*, i. 17), and Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.*, iii. § 3) explains that those who belong to the School of Marcion regard Nature as evil, having been produced from evil Matter by a just Demiurge.

If we turn to the account of the doctrine of Marcion given by Eznik the Armenian, we shall find great prominence given to Hylē in the Marcionite cosmogony. For instance, " Marcion wrongly introduces a strange element in opposition to the God of the Law, positing with him also Hylē, by way of essence, and three heavens. In the one (they say) dwells the Stranger, and in the second the God of the

Law, and in the third His armies ; and in the earth Hylē, and they call her the Power of the Earth."

Eznik has much more to say about this Hylē ; but we are advised by the students of Church History that Eznik needs to be used cautiously, as representing a later stage of Marcionite teaching. Harnack, for example, in his *History of Dogma* (Eng. Trans., i. 167 note) says, "the later Marcionite speculations about matter (see the account of Eznik) should not be charged upon the Master himself, as is manifest from the second book of Tertullian against Marcion".

This may readily be conceded, but the later speculations about Matter spring from an initial doctrine as to the existence of Matter and its co-existence with God, which is all that is required in our argument.

As to the great Marcionite doctrine of the good God of the New Testament, who is other than the just God of the Old Testament, we have not in our extracts reached the point where he comes upon the scene, so that his non-appearance does not affect the argument nor prevent us from believing that our Prologue really comes from Marcion himself.

Tertullian certainly found the doctrine of the co-existence of Matter with God in his copy of Marcion, for he makes sport of it, and suggests that if it be true, we shall have to erect space into a third co-existent entity, containing the other two. "Si et ille mundum ex aliqua materia subjacente molitus est, innata et infecta et contemporali Deo, *quemadmodum de Creatore Marcion sentit*, redigis et hoc ad majestatem loci, qui et deum et materiam, duos deos, clusit" (c. *Marc.* i. 17). It will be observed that Tertullian is quoting Marcion's own statements, probably in the Latin translation, and the terms used are those which are employed by the supposed heretic in Methodius and Adamantius, as that something co-exists (*συνυπάρχειν*) with God, which we may call Matter, and that this matter is unwrought and unformed, *ἀποίου καὶ ἀσχηματίστου*, (cf. the "innata and infecta" of Tertullian) and note that the orthodox opponent in Methodius sums up the heretic's doctrine in the words that "God created these things from a certain underlying substance,"¹ viz. matter, which is

¹ *ὑποκειμένης τινὸς οὐσίας*, clearly both Tertullian and Methodius are discussing the statements of Marcion.

almost exactly what Tertullian says above "ex aliqua materia subjacente".¹

The terms employed are Platonic, and in that sense it might be urged that they were more proper for Methodius to use, than for Marcion. It will be easy to decide the writer to whom (after Plato) the language is to be referred, if we take another witness to Marcion's teaching who is earlier than Methodius. In the summary of heretical teaching which Hippolytus makes at the end of his *Philosophumena* he tells us that "Marcion of Pontus and his teacher Cerdo also define the existence of three principles, the Good, the Just, and Matter; some of their disciples add a fourth, the Wicked. All of them say that the Good One made nothing at all, but that the Just One (whom some call the Wicked One, but others simply Just) made everything out of the underlying matter (ἐκ τῆς ὑποκειμένης ὕλης): and he made it, not well, but irrationally. Needs must the things made resemble their maker; for this reason they employ the evangelical parable that a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit (Matt. vii. 18). This summary shows us again the ὕλη ὑποκειμένη, and it also tells us the next thing that was to be argued from the fact of an imperfect creation. It is well known that Marcion found a point of departure in the good and evil trees of the Gospel. Hippolytus shows us how to connect this with the preliminary metaphysical speculation. In the Dialogue of Adamantius, Megethius says (i. 28): "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, etc. You see you have here the two masters and the two natures." One sees the steps which Marcion is going to take, from the two trees to the two gods.

As to the Platonism of the opening passage on God and Matter, it is clear that Marcion must be counted a Platonist as well as Methodius. For we traced to Marcion through Tertullian the statement that Matter was ἀποιος and ἀσχημάτιστος and co-eval with God. But this is Plato's doctrine; when Hippolytus sums up Plato's doctrine, he tells us that Plato assumes as principles, God, Matter, and Pattern (παράδειγμα). Matter was subjacent (ὑποκειμένη). Matter was also unformed (ἀσχημάτιστος) and unmade (ἀποιος). Thus Matter is a first principle and synchronous with God, σύγχρονον τῷ Θεῷ. The language of our Prologue is Platonic language.

¹ Cf. *adv. Marcionem*, v. 19: "Collocans et cum Deo Creatore materiam, de porticu Stoicorum".

Platonic scholars can fill in the references to the proper dialogues ; what we are concerned with is the popular summaries of Greek philosophy, such as we find in early Christian writers. It is clear that Marcion is a Platonist ; we do not think any the worse of him on that account, but we are surprised at the discovery.

We have already pointed out that Marcion is ridiculed by Tertullian for his morbid interest in the question of the origin of evil, and as the reference on the part of Tertullian to this favourite inquiry of the heretics occurs at the opening of his book (*adv. Marc.*, i. 2), we may infer the probability that it also stood at the beginning of Marcion's book. This is exactly what we suspected of the author of the passages transcribed by Methodius : in these passages Methodius is Marcion.

In order to examine the question more closely, we will now make a free translation of the chapters which we have been speculating over, and see if any further clue can be obtained to their origin.

Before doing this, however, we are called to a halt by the appearance of Harnack's great work on Marcion, in which he collects all that has ever been preserved and all that has ever been said on the person or the teaching of the great heretic : (if we must call him a heretic who was really only a great spiritual leader). Harnack does not suspect that any extended passages of the *Antitheses* have been preserved, though there is an abundance of selected contradictions between the Old and New Testaments that can be recovered ; but he thinks he has found in an Armenian text, said to be translated from Ephraim Syrus, the opening sentences of the *Antitheses*. The homily in question was first translated by Schäfers in 1917, and contains an outburst of wonder at the way in which the Gospel is neglected : it runs as follows :—

“O what wonder upon wonder, what amazement, and overpowering astonishment it is, that people have not a jot to say about the Gospel, that they do not think thereon, nor that aught can be compared therewith !”¹

This is somewhat obscure ; but it surely does not refer to the *Antitheses*.² The writer says that it comes from a Pro-Evangelium

¹ Schäfers' translation is as follows :—

“O Wunder über Wunder, Verzückung, Macht und Staunen ist, dass man gar nichts über das Evangelium sagen, noch über dasselbe denken, noch es mit irgend etwas vergleichen kann.”

² Does it not really mean, “that one can say nothing beyond the

of Marcion ; i.e. as we should say, the Preface to the Reader at the beginning of Marcion's *Gospel of Luke*. Harnack, however, beset by the idea that Marcion never wrote more than one book, fails to see that as he is known to have published a Gospel, he was therefore at liberty to write a preface to it. We conclude that what has been recovered is the opening of the Marcionite *Evangelium*. We are free to look further for the opening of the *Antitheses*.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTERS OF MARCION'S "ANTITHESES".

[Yester-e'en, dear friend], as I was walking on the shore of the sea and gazing upon it with some closeness of attention, I observed an excess of Divine Power and the art of a wise intelligence, if indeed we ought to use the word "Art". [My experience yesterday was in this wise.] It was something like the lines of Homer :—

As when two stormy winds ruffle the sea,
Boreas and Zephyr, from the hills of Thrace,
With sudden gust descending ; the dark waves
Rear high their angry crests, and toss on shore
Masses of tangled weed :

for I saw the waves running mountains high and almost touching the welkin, nor did I expect in consequence any other result than the submergence of all the land, and I was devising for myself mentally a place of refuge, and the very ark of Noah. But my expectation did not happen, for where the sea broke it relapsed again into itself, not passing beyond its proper location, but acting, if one may say so, as if in fear of a Divine injunction. Just as oft-times some servant constrained against his will to carry out a command of his master, obeys his injunction through fear, but does not venture to say what he suffers through his unwillingness to obey, but is inwardly malcontent and filled with spleen, so it seemed to me that the sea, impassioned as it were and yet restraining its wrath within itself and controlling itself, was unwilling to disclose its ire to its lord and master. While I was observing what took place I began to scrutinize, and would have measured mentally the heaven and its orb, and wished to know its commencement and its cessation, and what motion it has, whether one

Gospel, that they cannot think higher than the Gospel, that they can compare nothing with the Gospel" ?

of transference from place to place or a circular motion, and how it comes also to have a permanent foundation. Yea ! it seemed proper for me also to investigate the sun's path, the turning point of its position in the sky, and what the period of its race, and whither it presently goes, and how not even so does it transgress its proper path, but it also, as we must say, keeps a command given by one superior to itself, and appears to our sight when it is allowed to do so, and moves off when it is called away. As I made my investigation into these things, I observed the solar splendour to fade and the light of day to fail, and darkness to rush on, and the moon to follow after the sun, coming up lesser at the first, but as she holds on her way presenting the appearance of a greater light. Nor did I quit inquiring into her, and investigating the cause of the waxing and waning, and how she too observes the appointed circuit of her days. And from thence I inferred the existence of a Divine Providence and a Power Supreme, which comprises all things, and which also we may rightly call God. So at last I set on praising the Creator, as I viewed His firm fixed earth with the diversities of living creatures and the varied blooms of plants.

Nor did my mind call a halt over these things only, but I went further and began to ask whence they had their composition, whether from somewhat that ever co-existed with God, or whether of Him and from Him and Him alone, with whom nought else co-existed. For the existence of things from nothing seemed to me quite a wrong point of view, such an argument being to most people altogether unconvincing. For things that become are wont to have their constitution from things that are. So also it seemed to me that it was truth to say that nought is forever with God but God Himself, but that from Him all things that are have come into being. To this point, then, of conviction I was brought by the orderliness of the elements, and the fair array of nature in regard to them.

So I went home, under the supposition that somehow all was well explained, and the following day [i.e. to-day] I came and saw two men (human beings of the same race), battering and insulting one another, and further, the second of them was trying to tear off his neighbour's garment. Some, too, were aiming at more shocking ventures. One of them was stripping a dead body and the corpse which had already been laid in the ground he now displayed again before

the sun, and he did despite to a form like his own, leaving the dead for a prey to the dogs. Here a man had drawn his sword and was going after a man like himself ; he, on his part, sought safety in flight, but the other ceased not to pursue him, nor would he control his rage. And what shall I say further ? Except that when he got at him he promptly struck him with his sword ; the other became a suppliant to his neighbour and stretched out appealing hands, and would have given him his very raiment, asking only for his life. But his persecutor did not repress his passion, nor pity him as one of his own race, nor would he see himself in the image of the other, but like a wild beast began to ravine with his sword ; and now, beast-like, he had his teeth in the corse of the other (for his rage was like that) and you might have seen how the one now lay prostrate, and how the other ended by stripping him, nor would he cover with earth the body which he had made bare of raiment. Following on these there was another who would make sport with his neighbour's wife, robbing a fellow-man of his marriage rights, and in hot haste to turn to an impious union, not wishing that the wedded husband should be father of his own children. After that I began to believe even the Greek tragedies ; the banquet of Thyestes appeared to have been a real occurrence ; I could believe in the lawless incest of Œdipus ; nor did I discredit the sword-strife of the two brethren. Having been spectator of such dreadful things I began to inquire into their origin, what it was that set them in motion, who it was that engineered such things against men, whence came the invention of them, who was their teacher. For I dared not say that God was their Maker, nor certainly that they had their constitution from Him, nor even their subsistence. For how could we imagine such things of God ? He the good one and the Maker of things more excellent, to whom nothing base attaches itself ; He who has no natural joy in such things, but forbids even the inception of them, and rejects those who take pleasure therein, and draws near to those who flee therefrom ! And how unreasonable to call God the Creator of such a state of things, when we know that he execrates them ! For He could not have wished them to cease to be, if he had been their initial artist. For those that come to Him He wills to be His imitators ; and that is why it seemed to be irrational to attach such things to Him, or to regard them as due to Him, or even with the outside concession as to the possibility of things arising out of

nothing, could one say that it was He who was the Author of evil. For if He had brought evil out of non-being into being, He would not again have withdrawn it from existence ; or if so, we should have to say that once upon a time God delighted in evils, but now He does so no more, which is an impossible statement to make about God : one could not make such a discord to fit His nature. For this reason it seemed to me that somewhat must co-exist with Him (let us call it Matter), from which as Artificer He wrought existing things, with the discrimination of wise Art and the beauty of fair Adornment ; and from this Matter even things evil seemed to come. For since Matter was in itself unfashioned and unformed, and besides that was also under disorderly impulses, and so in need of Divine Art, the Creator with no ill-will and with no desire to abandon Matter to irregular impulse, began to create therefrom, as wishing to turn the worst into the very best. This was, then, His Creative Art ; but such parts of the compound as were, so to speak, the mere lees of Matter, and altogether unsuitable for Creative Art, He left as they were : they were no concern of His. It is from such a quarter that I suppose the irruption of evils among men to have come.

It is clear that the foregoing chapters are, like Methodius' work generally, cast into the form of a Platonic *Dialogue*, but it may be suspected that they did not originally come from such a *Dialogue*, but from something more nearly approaching to a history.

The second section explains that the events recorded took place on *the next day*¹ which is explained as being *to-day*, so as to bring the argument down into the present, and put it in line with the *yester-e'en* with which the first chapter opens. The addition, no doubt, makes the *Dialogue* more vivid ; but it is superfluous, and when it is removed, for which reason we have bracketed it, we may

¹ Dr. Armitage Robinson has misrepresented the situation in his *Philocalia*, p. xlii. He says, "A speaker . . . describes how on the previous afternoon he had observed the beauties of nature in sea and sun and moon, and had been led to praise their Maker. On his way home he had been startled by witnessing the most fearful crimes ; robbery, bloodshed, adultery : and had been led to ask whether God could possibly be the Maker of these as well." The *Dialogue* does not say anything like this. The sea was not beautiful to the writer, the events related did not occur on the same day.

remove at the same time the *χθὲς δειλινόν* at the beginning of the first section, and the *ὦ φίλε* which recurs again at the end of the supposed Valentinian speeches and is clearly Methodius' own language in imitation of Plato, introduced for the sake of making the story into conversation. The manner of Methodius, is, as we say, borrowed from Plato : we may compare the opening of the *Republic* : " *Yesterday I went down to the Piræus with Glaucon* " ; and the opening of the *Charmides* : " *Yesterday evening I returned from the Army at Potidæa,*" or we may compare the opening of the *Symposium* : " *The day before yesterday I was coming from my own home* ".

There is, however, no need to emphasize the Platonism of Methodius ; the question is whether his sources were also Platonic in form ; for it seems probable that we are dealing with borrowed matter, even if it is superficially Platonized. The opening chapter of Methodius on *Free-Will* is in quite a different style from the sections which follow, and which we have been discussing. These sections appear to be labelled as Valentinian, and when Adamantius copies the second section from Methodius, he introduces it as the written dogma of Valentin, which suggests that he found it so described in his copy of Methodius.

At this point, then, we are up against an ancient controversy (caused by Eusebius' reference of part of the Methodius *Dialogue* to Maximus), which was re-opened by Dr. Armitage Robinson in his *Philocalia*, pp. 41 ff., under the heading " Maximus or Methodius ? "

His conclusions are that Methodius and Methodius only is the author of the *Dialogue on Free-Will*, for the following reasons :—

- (1) An author of such power as Methodius would not have cared to borrow from an earlier writer without acknowledgment.

The answer to this lies in the very first statement made by the Orthodox opponent (who is certainly Methodius himself), that there have been many capable persons before yourself and myself who have made the closest inquiry into this problem (the origin of evil) ; and have treated the matter just as you have done ;

*καὶ γὰρ πρό σου τε καὶ ἐμοῦ πολλοὶ τινες ἄνδρες
ἱκανοὶ περὶ τούτου τὴν μεγίστην ζήτησιν ἐποιήσαντο·
καὶ οἱ μὲν ὁμοίως διετέθησάν σοι κτέ.*

We have, then, Methodius' own admission that the treatment in

the opening sections was not original. He borrowed with an indirect acknowledgment.

- (2) The Platonic character of the passage which Eusebius refers to Maximus is in keeping with all the known writings of Methodius.

This would certainly be true if Methodius had borrowed a passage and superficially Platonized it. But we shall have to reckon with the possibility that Methodius annexed a writer who, like himself, had Platonic affinities.

- (3) The strongest argument of all for the authorship of Methodius is said to be the general harmony of the Eusebian extract with the rest of the book, which is thus seen to be the work of a single author.

This is really the main argument on which Robinson relies, and we must pay close attention to it. If it can be maintained, there will be no place for a Maximus extract or for a Marcionite base. The problem will be changed into an inquiry as to how Eusebius came to make such a mistake as to write Maximus for Methodius, and not to know either the exact author or the approximate date of the work he was quoting. When we come to examine Dr. Robinson's method of proof for the single authorship of Methodius without quotations, extracts, or interpolations, we are surprised to find that his procedure is fallacious, and that his most striking cases of similarity of language are a misunderstanding of the thing to be proved. We proceed to give some examples.

The good-tempered heretic (Valentinian or whatever he was) who was distressed by the domestic discords of the people among whom he dwelt, expressed a longing (*πόθος*) to investigate (*ἀναζητεῖν*) what is the origin of evil; and his orthodox emendator observes that "since you have a longing (*πόθος*) to enquire into (*ζητεῖν*) the origin of evil, etc". Obviously the one sentence is the reproduction of the other, and if Methodius wrote the first, then he also wrote the second; but he may have written the second, having previously incorporated the first. The coincidence of language proves nothing: it is *ignoratio elenchi* if not *petitio principii*, to say that he who wrote the second wrote also the first.

The heretic explains that he resolved the perplexity of the situation

in which he was intellectually involved by concluding that "there must be somewhat co-existent (*συνυπάρχειν*) with God (let us call it Matter)," and his friendly opponent remarks that "he does not think he is ignorant of the fact that two ingenerates cannot exist together (*ὑπάρχειν ἄμα*) however much he may seem to have prejudged the case and set it down so in the argument".

Here again the reply of the orthodox is conditioned by the statement of the heretic, but the coincidence does not prove that the orthodox and the heretic are, from a literary point of view, the same person. When the heretic says that the Matter whose existence he has been led to assume is "unwrought (*ἀποιού*) and unformed (*ἀσχηματίστου*) and the subject of irregular impulses" (*ἀτάκτως φερομένης*) the orthodox observes that "you said, did you not, that Matter was unwrought and unformed"? The heretic admits the charge. The Creator Himself, says the orthodox, from his close association with Matter will turn out to be the subject of irregular impulses (*ὁμοίως αὐτὸν τῇ ὕλῃ ἀτάκτως φέρεσθαι*).

Dr. Robinson sets this down as a proof of unity of authorship! What does all this prove as to authorship? If A quotes B, does it prove that he is the author of B?

The heretic who found his faith in the settled order of a Divinely governed world, by observing the fixity of the earth and the obedient motions of the heavenly bodies, says, "I *saw* that the earth was *firmly set* (*πεπηγυῖαν*)". "If you talk of the heavens," says the other, "and the sun, and if you *see* that the earth likewise is *firmly set*," etc.

Obviously the language of the heretic is again on the lips of the orthodox, but this does not prove the language of the heretic to be the creation of the orthodox.

"I wanted to find out," says the heretic, "what was the invention of these evils, and who was their teacher: (*τίς ὁ τούτων διδάσκαλος*)"; and the orthodox replies that "the teacher of evil (*ὁ διδάσκων τὸ κακόν*) is the Dragon". How does this prove that Methodius is both the heretic and the orthodox? We may still regard it as an open question whether there is any interpolated matter in the treatise on *Free-Will*.

We may also leave it as an unsolved problem whether Maximus is Methodius. Zahn, who wrote on the subject in the *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* (ix. 228 ff.) suggested (i) that ΜΕΘΟΔΙΟΤ had been misread in uncial script as ΜΑΞΙΜΟΤ which seems to me to be

bad paleography ; or (ii) that Maximus was the name of the orthodox opponent in the *Dialogue*, and that the real title of the work was "Maximus, or on Freewill," just as a Platonic *Dialogue* might be named Gorgias or Philebus from its principal interlocutor. Dr. Robinson makes the same suggestion on his own account, without knowing what Zahn had written. It is not easy to believe that Eusebius, who was well acquainted with Methodius and his writings, would have made such a mistake as to replace Methodius, who was a contemporary of his own, by one of his *dramatis personæ*, or to express his admiration of the Christian character of a merely artistic creation.

The real question for us is whether this Methodius-Adamantius matter is of the same kind as would make a proper Prologue to the fundamental opposition between the Old and the New Testament. It might be urged that the Demiurge, as distinct from the Unknown God does not appear in our extract, and that the problem of the Origin of Evil has not been commonly recognized as occurring and occupying a large place in the Marcionite thought. We have, however, sufficient patristic Testimony that the heretics, especially the Marcionites and the Valentinians, were closely occupied with this problem. If, then, any such discussion goes back to Marcion, it must be in the *Antitheses* that it finds a place ; it cannot be found in the Prologue to the Marcionite Gospel : nor can it have occurred in the main body of the *Contradictions*, for we know that this main body is occupied with Biblical internal dissonances. If, then, Marcion discussed the problem of the Origin of Evil, the Prologue to the *Antitheses* is the place to look for it.¹

But suppose someone says that the Supreme Being in the Methodius passage is not wholly detached from the work of Creation, as the Marcionite theology is held to require, for He uses the Hylē where he can, drawing off the eligible vintage, and leaving the lees, will it not follow presently, as the argument develops, that these Unfathered and Unfactored parts of Hylē will acquire an artificer of their own, if not exactly an artist, and so the way will be open for

¹ See the quotations from Tertullian and Eusebius on p. 294. Remark especially that they are at the very beginning of Tertullian's *Treatise against Marcion*.

the affirmation of the Unknown Good God, the Knowable Just God, and the unformed matter out of which the Universe arises ?

We do not think that further confirmation of our theory regarding the Marcionite Prologue is necessary. We do not, however, know finally how much Methodius has added to what he borrowed, nor how much he may have dropped. We can detect a few Platonic touches by which a narration is turned into a *Dialogue*.

As to the passages which we have been working on, they have a beauty and a style of their own. They would be likely to be detached by literary and theological collectors ; and whatever be their origin, some such detachment would explain how it comes about that they turn up under diverse names, and are incorporated in various works on religion and philosophy.

It may, perhaps, be said that our argument requires that the Homeric quotation with regard to the "ruffled Pontus" should be referred to Marcion himself, whereas it is far more likely to be the work of the erudite Hellenic scholar Methodius, than of the Pontic shipmaster. The answer to this objection may be found in the consideration that Homer was as much read in the countries that border on the Black Sea as the Bible is in Scotland or in Wales. Here are some references from my *Homeric Centones*. "Who would have expected that a Jewish proselyte would, in translating the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, have gone out of his way to employ Homeric diction ? Yet it is demonstrable that Aquila of Pontus did this ; nor is it easy to avoid the double conclusion (i) that Homer was a part of the common-school education in Pontus ; (ii) that the Rabbinical protests against Greek learning were, at least in the second century, mere *fulmina bruta*."¹ "Dion Cassius tells us of the passion of the Borysthenitae for Homer."²

So it seems that Homer was just as much in demand at Sinope as at Patara.

Even if the quotation should be claimed for Methodius, it will still be possible to remove it as an interpolation, and the storm will remain, to which Tertullian alludes, when its literary illustration has been withdrawn. We prefer to believe that the whole narration, including the learned comment, is Marcion's.

¹ *Loc. cit.*, pp. 3, 4.

² *Ibid.*, p. 6 n.

It may, perhaps, be suggested that the Creator in the passages which we have been discussing, is definitely a good and artistic being, and that we ought not therefore to imagine that he would be displaced by another good God, and only allowed the title of the Just One. It may be as well to guard ourselves against too rigid a use of the terms Good and Just, as though they were exclusive or contradictory. Harnack points out that Marcion's Creator is really a good being, but his goodness is of an inadequate character : both the Creator and his Law are good, in a relative sense, but it is a lower rank of goodness than that which is the mark of the Supreme Being. Any objection on this score may therefore be eliminated.