CHAPTER 9

The Reconstruction of Marcion’s Gospel

The preceding chapters four through eight have analyzed every verse from Marcion’s Gospel attested by the sources. In these chapters, the attempt was made to present all the relevant issues for gaining insight into Marcion’s text, though admittedly the analysis offered in these discussions has not yet been distilled into readily accessible conclusions concerning the text of Marcion’s Gospel. It is to this task that I now turn in the present chapter. Of considerable importance is the observation that numerous readings in the verses reconstructed below differ to varying degrees from Harnack’s reconstruction, and several verses for which the sources are silent and that Harnack indicated were omitted in Marcion’s Gospel are here more appropriately identified as unattested.1 These differences are due to my attempt to present the data found in the tables in chapter two more accurately than has been done previously and thus to reflect Marcion’s text more precisely. At the same time, however, this increased accuracy, though important, is not the most significant contribution in the following reconstruction. Rather, since perhaps the most pronounced weaknesses of all previous reconstructions, including Harnack’s, is the lack of distinction between various levels of certainty for attested readings, the following reconstruction clearly reveals the attempt to indicate what level of confidence can be assigned to any particular reading for Marcion’s text. Therefore, even when the wording of this reconstruction agrees with that of Harnack’s, the ability to see an assessment of the relative confidence that one can place in a specific reading seeks to provide significantly more helpful insight into Marcion’s Gospel. Though such assessment necessarily involves some level of subjectivity in terms of how one evaluates not only the testimony of a particular source but also the attestation of readings in the NT manuscript tradition, at the very least the more contentious elements of reconstruction should be clear. In order to accomplish the goal of greater clarity and nuance, the following markers have been used in the reconstruction:

1. Text that is set in bold reveals secure readings confirmed both by the methodological consideration of citation habit and attestation in the extant manuscript tradition. In addition, when a reading in Marcion’s

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1 Verses that Harnack indicated were omitted that are in reality unattested include Luke 5:39; 22:43; 24:12; and 24:40.
text is attested by multiple sources or is the unanimous reading of the extant manuscript tradition, it is generally treated as secure. The highest level of confidence can be ascribed to these readings or only to the words utilized, if the word order is unclear (cf. point 6).

2. Text in bold italics reveals very likely readings where an author’s citation habit provides confirmation of the reading, but either corroboratory evidence from the manuscript tradition is lacking or some uncertainty arises due to a source providing only an adaptation or allusion to the passage. Alternatively, a reading can be very likely when the manuscript tradition is essentially uniform or a group of witnesses clearly attest a reading, even if an author’s citation habits do not provide significant insight into the verse.

3. Text set in regular type reveals probable readings where citation habits, explicit statements in a source, or the manuscript tradition have provided some, but not determinative, evidence for a reading. In addition, some allusions of relatively unproblematic elements in verses are included here. Only slight confidence can be placed in these readings having been those of Marcion’s text.

4. Text set in italics reveals possible readings that are attested by a source, though ultimately no confidence can be placed in these readings being found in Marcion’s text.

5. Italic text set in (parentheses) reveals those instances where a source attests certain elements from verses, but where, despite some allusion to the reading, precise wording is not attested. Some elements that are attested with variant wording in different sources and where a decision between the two is not possible are also placed in parentheses.

6. Text set in {curly brackets} is attested text where the word order for Marcion’s text is uncertain. The words set inside these brackets, however, may reflect any of the levels of confidence discussed above. In other

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2 It may also be the case that a source’s citation habit tends to confirm a reading other than the one attested by that author. In such cases the negative evidence cannot create a reading evaluated as “secure” and thus will never be more than “very likely.”

3 Concerning this latter point, e.g., in chapter 5.51 it was noted that in Luke 12:14 Tertullian’s iudicem could be rendering either κριτήν or δικαστήν and that the NA27 apparatus reflects this fact. Given, however, that the former is the reading of both early and varied witnesses such as P75, 8, B, and D it seems slightly more likely that this reading was also found in Marcion’s text. Thus, I have considered Tertullian’s iudicem to be “probably” instead of simply “possibly” rendering κριτήν. Consonant with the explanations of these levels of confidence in the main text above, I would argue that the manuscript tradition offers slight confidence instead of no confidence for κριτήν having appeared in Marcion’s Gospel.