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### c) Gospel of Matthew

### aa) The profiling of the author

In all New Testament lists of apostles there is a Matthew (Μαθθαῖος resp. Μαθθίας, also attested in a slightly different spelling), in both Mk and Lk in the 7th place (Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15), in Acts in the 8th place (1:13). Matthew is a Hasmonean name, documented only for the post-exilic period, which was very common in the time of Jesus.[[1]](#footnote-1) However, the calling of the tax collector Matthew is described exclusively in Mt (Mt 9:9-13). Mk and Lk, on the other hand, know this story as the calling of a tax collector Levi, who in Mk (as presumably also in \*Ev) is called the son of Alphaeus, which led some fathers to believe him to be a brother of James the Younger.[[2]](#footnote-2) Levi is also a common first name for this time, which is also derived from one of the sons of the patriarch Jacob, thus representing one of the twelve tribes of Israel.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Since Matthew, the tax collector, is mentioned in Mt, one has often identified Matthew and Levi and considered whether the evangelist is to be seen in him, or one speculates that the apostle called himself Levi outside the circle of the Twelve, but within a circle of Matthew.[[4]](#footnote-4) For Levi does not appear as a name in the lists of the apostles, not even in Mk and Lk (Mk 3,13 -19; Mt 10,1- 4; Lk 6,12-16). But the identification of Matthew and Levi is not unproblematic. For in Mt Levi does not appear at all, and the son of Alphaeus is called James here (Mt 10:3) as in the other two Gospels (Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15). Interestingly, John knows neither an apostle Matthew nor a tax collector Levi. Acts knows an apostle Matthew, and here too the son of Alphaeus is called James (Acts 1:13).

Consequently, only Mt gives Matthew, who is otherwise not described in detail, a clear vocation history as a tax collector in the list of names of the apostles. For those who added this name to the Gospel and turned the Levi narrative into a Matthew narrative, the existence of a Matthew in the list of names of the apostles had obviously not been enough. They accepted the tension with James, the son of Alphaeus, since one could also imagine that Alphaeus might have had several sons.

As mentioned above with regard to Papias of Hierapolis, we have only a very brief characterisation of Matthew’s activity, namely that of an editor rather than an author: "Matthew wrote the oracles in the Hebrew language, and every one interpreted them as he was able.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Many have already been puzzled about the first part of this statement, but the second half-sentence is no less puzzling, because Papias no longer attributes the result of the product, which is available in writing as a Greek text, directly to Matthew, but to his interpreters. Moreover, note that Papias does not speak of a Gospel. Nevertheless, in the early Christian tradition, the apostle Matthew is regarded as the author of a Gospel. Irenaeus already gives us what we read in Papias (in the quotation from Eusebius), expanded and expressly directed to a Gospel:

"Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church."[[6]](#footnote-6)

I have already dealt with this passage above (see pp. xxx), especially with the clichéd historical construction that Irenaeus has created here with the assumption of Peter's and Paul's preaching activity in Rome and the founding of the church there in order to secure the authority of his own tradition. If, however, this tendency towards fiction can be ascertained with regard to Peter and Paul, this also speaks for the fact that it is Irenaeus who, following the same tendency, transformed Matthew, the editor of a Vorlage for translations, which was not necessarily a Gospel text, into an evangelist.

Strikingly, we learn much less about Matthew than about Mark, although Matthew is an apostle.[[7]](#footnote-7) Régis Burnet states about Matthew:

"The Gospel data are meagre and his accounts of martyrdom do not agree: Even if all collectively grant him the title of evangelist, no one agrees on the fate of this apostle who seems endowed with the gift of invisibility."[[8]](#footnote-8)

Eusebius reports of the Sicilian Pantaenus (died c. 216), the teacher of Clement of Alexandria, and gives significant informatino about the dissemination of Mt:

"1. About that time, Pantænus, a man highly distinguished for his learning, had charge of the

school of the faithful in Alexandria. A school of sacred learning, which continues to our day, was established there in ancient times, and as we have been informed, was managed by men of great ability and zeal for divine things. Among these it is reported that Pantænus was at that time especially conspicuous, as he had been educated in the philosophical system of those called

Stoics. 2. They say that he displayed such zeal for the divine Word, that he was appointed as a herald of the Gospel of Christ to the nations in the East, and was sent as far as India. For indeed there were still many evangelists of the Word who sought earnestly to use their inspired zeal, after the examples of the apostles, for the increase and building up of the Divine Word. 3. Pantænus was one of these, and is said to have gone to India. It is reported that among persons

there who knew of Christ, he found the Gospel according to Matthew, which had anticipated his

own arrival. For Bartholomew, one of the apostles, had preached to them, and left with them the

writing of Matthew in the Hebrew language, which they had preserved till that time. 4. After many good deeds, Pantænus finally became the head of the school at Alexandria, and expounded the treasures of divine doctrine both orally and in writing."[[9]](#footnote-9)

With this note, Eusebius sees an immense outreach of the writing of Mt "in the Hebrew language", transported as far as India and still verifiable there, and at the same time adds to it the further authority and confirmation by Bartholomew.

Eusebius also has something to say about the Apostles and the Gospels from Pantænus's disciple Clement, who, according to Eusebius, was “at this time … being trained with him [scil. Pantænus] in the divine Scriptures at Alexandria”.[[10]](#footnote-10) On him, Eusebius knows more to report:

"1. This extract from Clement I have inserted here for the sake of the history and for the benefit of my readers. Let us now point out the undisputed writings of this apostle. 2. And in the first place his Gospel, which is known to all the churches under heaven, must be acknowledged as genuine. That it has with good reason been put by the ancients in the fourth

place, after the other three Gospels, may be made evident in the following way. 3. Those great and truly divine men, I mean the apostles of Christ, were purified in their life, and were adorned with every virtue of the soul, but were uncultivated in speech. They were confident

indeed in their trust in the divine and wonder-working power which was granted unto them by the Saviour, but they did not know how, nor did they attempt to proclaim the doctrines of their teacher in studied and artistic language, but employing only the demonstration of the divine Spirit, which worked with them, and the wonder-working power of Christ, which was displayed through them, they published the knowledge of the kingdom of heaven throughout the whole world, paying little attention to the composition of written works. 4. And this they did because they were assisted in their ministry by one greater than man. Paul, for instance, who surpassed them all in vigor of expression and in richness of thought, committed to writing no more than the briefest epistles, although he had innumerable mysterious matters to communicate, for he had attained even unto the sights of the third heaven, had been carried to the very paradise of God, and had been deemed worthy to hear unspeakable utterances there. 5. And the rest of the followers of our Saviour, the twelve apostles, the seventy disciples, and countless others besides, were not ignorant of these things. Nevertheless, of all the disciples of the Lord, only Matthew and John have left us written memorials, and they, tradition says, were led to write only under the pressure of necessity. 6. For Matthew, who had at first preached to the Hebrews, when he was about to go to other peoples, committed his Gospel to writing in his native tongue, and thus compensated those whom he was obliged to leave for the loss of his presence. 7. And when Mark and Luke had already published their Gospels, they say that John, who had employed all his time in proclaiming the Gospel orally, finally proceeded to write for the following reason. The three Gospels already mentioned having come into the hands of all and into his own too, they say that he accepted them and bore witness to their truthfulness; but that there was lacking in them an account of the deeds done by Christ at the beginning of his ministry. 8. And this indeed is true. For it is evident that the three evangelists recorded only the deeds done by the Saviour for one year after the imprisonment of John the Baptist, and indicated this in the beginning of their account. 9. For Matthew, after the forty days’ fast and the temptation which followed it, indicates the chronology of his work when he says: “Now when he heard that John was delivered up he withdrew from Judea into Galilee.” 10. Mark likewise says: “Now after that John was delivered up Jesus came into Galilee.” And Luke, before commencing his account of the deeds of Jesus, similarly marks the time, when he says that Herod, “adding to all the evil deeds which he had done, shut up John in prison.” 11. They say, therefore, that the apostle John, being asked to do it for this reason, gave in his Gospel an account of the period which had been omitted by the earlier evangelists, and of the deeds done by the Saviour during that period; that is, of those which were done before the imprisonment of the Baptist. And this is indicated by him, they say, in the following words: “This beginning of miracles did Jesus”; and again when he refers to the Baptist, in the midst of the deeds of Jesus, as still baptizing in Ænon near Salim; where he states the matter clearly in the words: “For John was not yet cast into prison.” 12. John accordingly, in his Gospel, records the deeds of Christ which were performed before the Baptist was cast into prison, but the other three evangelists mention the events which happened after that time. 13. One who understands this can no longer think that the Gospels are at variance with one another, inasmuch as the Gospel according to John contains the first acts of Christ, while the others give an account of the latter part of his life. And the genealogy of our Saviour according to the flesh John quite naturally omitted, because it had been already given by Matthew and Luke, and began with the doctrine of his divinity, which had, as it were, been reserved for him, as their superior, by the divine Spirit. 14. These things may suffice, which we have said concerning the Gospel of John. The cause which led to the composition of the Gospel of Mark has been already stated by us. 15. But as for Luke, in the beginning of his Gospel, he states himself the reasons which led him to write it. He states that since many others had more rashly undertaken to compose a narrative of the events of which he had acquired perfect knowledge, he himself, feeling the necessity of freeing us from their uncertain opinions, delivered in his own Gospel an accurate account of those events in regard to which he had learned the full truth, being aided by his intimacy and his stay with Paul and by his acquaintance with the rest of the apostles. 16. So much for our own account of these things.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

As we can see from this longer piece, which must be quoted at length here[[12]](#footnote-12) - it provides information not only about Matthew, but about the origin of the Gospels and the larger collection in general - the collection of the four Gospels was still criticised at the time of Clement, i.e. at the beginning of the 3rd century, because of the Gospels being "at variance with one another" and also because of their linguistic and literary low quality. Such accusations seem to have been raised not only by non-Christians but also by Christians themselves, the addressees of this text. Therefore, Clement, like Irenaeus before him, feels compelled to stand up for these Gospels, or more precisely, since he also speaks first of Paul, for the further collection of writings of Paul and the Evangelists, and to defend the Apostles. They were "uncultivated in speech", on the other hand, the words of the Lord were not to be turned into literature either, which is why they had not taken any pains on writing. Even Paul had left only short letters, although he could have reported so much more. Furthermore, Clement has to explain why only two of the twelve apostles had left anything in writing. He justifies this by saying that not even these two had written voluntarily. Matthew, because he wanted to go out into the world and wished to substitute his presence and preaching for those he left behind. John had to supplement what Mark and Luke had left out concerning Jesus from the time before John the Baptist was imprisoned. What is striking in our context is how significant the very figure of the Baptist is for Clement's defence of the differences between the Gospels, and also that Clement sees in Luke an apologetic writing directed against those who would have ventured too lightly a history of the facts precisely known to him and against whose doubtful opinions he was writing.

What Clement says about Matthew is reminiscent of Pantænus, but heightens the latter's indications in that it is now not only the written Gospel that is carried into the world, but the evangelist himself advances to become the world preacher, while the Gospel is virtually reduced in reverse to a souvenir remaining at home.

Origen, the one who knew the literary Christian heritage best at that time and was himself a prolific author, writes (quoted by Eusebius) that he

"learned by tradition that the first was written by Matthew, who was once a publican, but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, and it was prepared for the converts from Judaism, and published in the Hebrew language. 5. The second is by Mark, who composed it according to the instructions of Peter, who in his Catholic epistle acknowledges him as a son, saying, ‘The church that is at Babylon elected together with you, saluteth you, and so doth Marcus, my son.’ 6. And the third by Luke, the Gospel commended by Paul, and composed for Gentile converts. Last of all that by John."[[13]](#footnote-13)

According to this testimony, Origen knows no more about Matthew than what we have already learned above from Papias and Irenaeus. However, he omits Irenaeus's second half-sentence with its reference to the various translations and interprets Papias's somewhat vaguely formulated idea of the writing the oracles, as Irenaeus had already done, in the sense of a publication of a written Gospel. So Origen too knows how to embellish his information in his own sense, but he offers no additional knowledge.

Finally, we can learn from Eusebius of Caesarea that the story of the call of the publican Matthew in Mt also appeared to be problematic. In his work *Preaparatio evangelica*, Eusebius refers to the evangelist and mentions that only Matthew describes his pre-apostolic history and activity as a tax collector, while it is concealed in all the other gospels - this, however, Eusebius suggests, testifies to Matthew's pronounced modesty and humility, that he recalls his unworthy life and profession in such a way and occupies a place behind Thomas in the list of apostles, while Mk and Lk list him before Thomas.[[14]](#footnote-14) Eusebius's almost embarrassed argumentation still allows the criticism to shine through that must have existed at that time towards the stylisation and presentation of Matthew as an evangelist.

According to Eusebius, a few decades later John Chrysostom would take up Irenaeus's argument and claim that "Matthew does not blush to mention his profession, nor that of the other apostles, because by this alone the grace of the Holy Spirit is all the more evident in them, and the virtue of the latter".[[15]](#footnote-15) Even Chrysostom reveals to the attentive reader that Irenaeus's narrative was still not fully convincing. In the same work of his "Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew", Chrysostomus elaborates on Matthew:

"It is also reported of Matthew that believers from the Jews had come to him and asked him to leave to them in writings what he had put into words, and to write the Gospel in the Hebrew language. Mark also did this, though in Egypt, after being asked by the disciples. Therefore Matthew, writing to the Hebrews, did not want to set forth more than that he [i.e. Jesus] was descended from Abraham and David, while Luke, addressing all in Koine,[[16]](#footnote-16) takes the thought higher and penetrates as far as Adam."[[17]](#footnote-17)

Chrysostom gives us insight into how the older authors's construction of history is developed. In his setting, as he continues to struggle with a blurred boundary between Jewish and Christian cult practice, he points to Mt as a bridge between the two, using the reference to the different genealogies found in Mt 1:1-17 and Lk 3:23-38.

Despite the meagre yield of early Christian tradition on Matthew, there is one entry in the aforementioned catalogue of "illoustrious men" by Jerome, Chrysostom's contemporary, and that is that he is treated in it as the first of the evangelists, immediately after the two men who open his list, Peter and James:

"Matthew, also called Levi, apostle and aforetimes publican, composed a gospel of Christ at first published in Judea in Hebrew for the sake of those of the circumcision who believed, but this was afterwards translated into Greek, though by what author is uncertain. The Hebrew itself has been preserved until the present day in the library at Cæsarea which Pamphilus so diligently gathered. I have also had the opportunity of having the volume described to me by the Nazarenes of Berœa, a city of Syria, who use it. In this it is to be noted that wherever the Evangelist, whether on his own account or in the person of our Lord the Saviour quotes the testimony of the Old Testament he does not follow the authority of the translators of the Septuagint but the Hebrew. Wherefore these two forms exist Out of Egypt have I called my son, and for he shall be called a Nazarene."[[18]](#footnote-18)

With this information compare Jerome's preface to his commentary on Matthew:

"At the beginning of them all is Matthew, a tax collector surnamed Levi, who issued the Gospel in Judea in Hebrew, and that chiefly at the instigation of those Jews who believed in Jesus, and, when the truth of the Gospel arose, kept no shadow of the Law."[[19]](#footnote-19)

Jerome also repeats widely what was communicated before him by Eusebius, Origen, Irenaeus and Papias. Unlike Origen and Irenaeus, Jerome also admits that one cannot name the Greek translator(s). In addition, he emphasises both times that Matthew wrote his Gospel for Jews or at the request of Jews who believed in Jesus. However, he combines this information in the first quotation with further information on the Hebrew Gospel when he speaks here and in other places "not only of a 'Hebrew Gospel', but also of the Gospel 'according to the Hebrews', but by this he means an Aramaic work with which he claims to have dealt".[[20]](#footnote-20) If Jerome had really dealt with this text even superficially, he would probably not have thought of identifying the two works. But the same identification is also made by Epiphanius of Salamis, who writes not much earlier than Epiphanius.[[21]](#footnote-21) Both authors thus confirm that they were concerned with the creative shaping of history in an apologetic interest, which cannot stand up to critical scrutiny and obviously did not need to stand up to it at the time.

Along the line of the further development of the Matthaean tradition that can be seen so far, a further step was taken in the 6th or 7th century with the work *Liber de ortu beatae Mariae et infantia Salvatoris*.[[22]](#footnote-22) With it, a Latin version was offered of a proto-evangelium of James that had originated in the East, which was increased in miracle reports and reduced in references to Israel and Jewish content. In order to lend credibility to this version, the work was provided with a letter, which was supposed to represent a letter of Jerome to Chromatius and Heliodorus, two of his usual addressees of letters, and in which it is said:

"A heavy task has been laid upon me by Your Beatitude, to reveal that which not even the holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew wished to publish. For, if it had not been a sufficiently secret thing, he would no doubt have added it to his Gospel itself, which he published. But he wrote this little booklet under the cloak of Hebrew letters and did not publish it."[[23]](#footnote-23)

The publication of secret things has attracted people from time immemorial. Consequently, it is no surprise that this text, still with the pseudonymous recommendation of Jerome,

"will be of the greatest importance for the Marian devotion of the Middle Ages ... the text describes Mary's conception and growing up, the birth of Jesus and the miracles of the boy Jesus. In addition to an integration of the canonical accounts, the journey to Egypt is particularly embellished ... With around 130 textual witnesses (this Gospel) is extraordinarily widely handed down".[[24]](#footnote-24)

Here an "apocryphal relation" is at work that uses the canonical to connect new literary products with it and thereby endow them with tradition and authority, just as, conversely, the apocryphal work underpins the "absolute canonicity of Matthew".[[25]](#footnote-25)

To sum up: The rather sparse information on Matthew indicates that Matthew was already prominent enough through the presence of his name in the lists of apostles in the Gospels and Acts to enjoy corresponding authority in the early church. In any case, when Tertullian speaks of "our" Gospel, he refers primarily to Mt.[[26]](#footnote-26) Precisely because knowledge of Matthew was comparatively limited, what little there was offered starting points for diverse, sometimes even contradictory further developments. The canonical offered no limits to creativity, but the wilder the imagination created history, the stronger its canonical basis was cemented. One must therefore ask all the more critically - and this refers not only to Matthew, but also to the previously discussed Mark - to what extent the earliest messages are not already characterised by such fantasy, which, as we have seen, was certainly also inspired by apologetics.

### bb) John the Baptist, Jesus and Peter

Let us turn to the text of Mt itself and raise its profile by dealing with John the Baptist.[[27]](#footnote-27)

(1) As in Mark, the Baptist narrative opens the story of the adult Jesus of Nazareth. But first of all, Matthew sets the genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1:1-17) and the subsequent birth and childhood story (Mt 1:18-2:23) with which his Gospel begins.

The narrative on the Baptist is linguistically partly identical with that in Mk, in other parts the two versions differ from each other.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mt 3:1-17** | **Mk 1:1-10** |
|  | The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. |
| 1 In those days *John the Baptist* came, *preaching in the wilderness of Judea* 2 and saying, “*Repent*, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” 3 This is he who was spoken of through |  |
| *the prophet Isaiah*: | 2 as it is written in *Isaiah the prophet*: |
|  | “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way” — |
| “*A voice of one calling in the wilderness,**‘Prepare the way for the Lord,* *make straight paths for him*.*’*”4 *John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist.* His food was *locusts and wild honey*. 5 *People* went out to him from *Jerusalem* and all *Judea* and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. | 3 “*a voice of one calling in the wilderness,**‘Prepare the way for the Lord,* *make straight paths for him.’*”,4 And so *John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness*, *preaching* a baptism of *repentance* for the forgiveness of *sins*. 5 The whole *Judean countryside* and all the *people of Jerusalem went out to him*. *Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River*. 6 *John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.* |
| 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with *repentance*. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. |  |
| 11 “I baptize you with water for *repentance*. But *after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry*.  | 7 And this was his message: “*After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy* to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with water, but *he* will *baptize you with the Holy Spirit*.” |
| *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit* and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” |  |
| 13 Then *Jesus came* from *Galilee* to the *Jordan* to be *baptized* by *John*. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” 15 Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. 16 As soon as Jesus was baptized,  | 9 At that time *Jesus* *came* from Nazareth in *Galilee* and *was baptized by John in the Jordan*. |
| *he went up out of the water*. At that moment *heaven* was opened, and he saw the *Spirit* of God descending *like a dove and alighting on him*. 17 *And* *a voice from heaven said*, “This is *my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased*.” | 10 Just as Jesus *was coming up out of the water*, he saw *heaven* being torn open and *the Spirit descending on him like a dove*. 11 *And a voice came from heaven*: “You are *my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased*.” |

Regarding the direction of dependence when comparing these two versions of the Baptist scene, the usual synoptic explanation in research is easy to follow. Mk seems to be the template for Mt. After the heading, Mk, as shown above, immediately begins with the narration of the Baptist. In Mt we also encounter a similar structure. Although Mt, as already mentioned, precedes with genealogy and the story of the birth and childhood, both Gospels begin its narration of the life of the adult Jesus with the Baptist pericope. We had previously read Mk as a response to \*Ev, which had assigned the Baptist to the Jewish law and the prophets and antithetically set him apart from the Gospel. Similar observations can also be made for Mt, although the appearance of John already points to the existence of Jesus. Twice Matthew uses the same word παραγίνεται which re-occurs only once more for the appearance of the magi (Mt 2:1), then no more.[[28]](#footnote-28) This confirms Matthias Klinghardt's insight that Mt not only drew on Mk, but also had knowledge of \*Ev, and not only from hearsay, but in the written form of these texts.[[29]](#footnote-29) With regard to this passage, this is shown by their literally identical sections (italicised).

All in all, it is evident that Mt follows its model of Mark, expands it considerably with a few exceptions, which we will come to in a moment, and only abbreviates it in selected places or even changes the order of the model.

Let us begin with the common textual material: the core narrative is identical, according to which the appearance of John the Baptist in the wilderness is read in the saying at Isaiah 40:3, and that this saying points to a baptism for "repentance" ("make straight paths for him"). How carefully Mt edits his model out of knowledge of Jewish Scripture is shown by the deletion of the first part of the quotation given by Mk, which was not drawn from Isaiah, because Mt presumably wanted to remedy the grievance that a quotation given as taken from Isaiah was begun with a verse from Mal 3:1 in Mk ("I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way "). Mt consequently reduces the quotation to what could actually be read in Isaiah.

Another deletion, no longer concerning the manner of quotation but the content, is striking. It is certainly not by chance that Mt omits the qualification of John's baptism as one "for the forgiveness" of sins (Mk 1:4). This corresponds to the fact that John is dramatised and radicalised in Mt. Even though, following Mk, only "people" (Mk: "all the people") of "Jerusalem" are named as the audience who visit John, Mt lists "many of the Pharisees and Sadducees" as special groups of people who come to his baptism. It is to them in particular that the words of reproach and the threat of judgement with the announcement of their destruction are referred, which have taken the place of forgiveness in Mk. If we remember that \*Ev present to both evangelists emphasised precisely the difference between a just or judging God and the God of forgiveness, Mk’s characterisation of John was still too Marcionite for the author of Mt. His abbreviation and at the same time extension compared to Mk is thus an anti-Marcionite intensification of the narration on John. At the same time, however, Mt follows Mk in the idea, reminiscent of Marcion, that the Baptist is clearly inferior to Jesus.

There are further anti-Marcionite sharpenings of the dramaturgy. The baptism "with water” and “with the Holy Spirit" in Mk becomes one of "Holy Spirit" and "fire" in Mt. And again the author of Mt expands the narration by referring to the judging activity, i.e. the cleansing of the wheat and the separation of wheat and chaff. As with the cutting down of the root, this image is also a threat of destruction, here in the "unquenchable fire". Thus John is not only the forerunner of Jesus as the Baptist, he also takes up

"Jesus's message of judgement (also in the special confrontation with the representatives of the Jewish leadership), and he announces Jesus as the figure empowered for judgement, for whose action the baptism with water that he himself performed can only have preparatory significance".[[30]](#footnote-30)

In Mt there is no trace of the possibility of forgiveness left, Marcion's important God-predicate, which he antithetically opposed to God's judging. Even though the syntax in the next part of Mt is slightly changed compared to Mk, Mt nevertheless takes over the entire passage with the exception of the place according to which Jesus came "from Nazareth" - probably because this information had already been mentioned before at the end of the birth story (Mt 2:23).

Again, Mt’s additions are significant here, which can again be interpreted as anti-Marcionite intensifications of the narrative. For John's hint that he should actually be baptised by Jesus, Jesus in turn answers with the hint that John should allow baptism to be administered to him, because in this way they can both "fulfill all righteousness" (πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην). With "righteousness", this account takes up another keyword from Marcion's critique of the Jewish Creator God, which the latter had used as an antithesis to "forgiveness", the term omitted in Mt compared to Mk.

Consequently, it can be summarised that all the changes in content in Mt compared to Mk can be read as anti-Marcionite reinforcements of the opening scene of the Baptist, and that this first narrative of Mt, already formulated by Mk against Marcion, had become even more anti-Marcionite. Since neither the Marcionite profile of \*Ev had been noticed so far nor \*Ev as a template of Mk and Mt had been compared in terms of content, these differently weighted anti-Marcionite tendencies have not yet been recognised. Once discovered, however, they underscore both Marcion’s authorship of \*Ev and the assumption that both Mk and, to a greater extent, Mt already formulated their message in response to Marcion in this opening scene.

( 2) The next scene in which the Baptist is encountered in Matthew is, as in Mark, the time when Jesus goes to Galilee:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mt 4:12-17** | **Mk 1:14 -15** |
| 12 When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee.  | 14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, |
| 13 Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— 14 to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:15 “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—16 the people living in darkness have seen a great light;on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” |  |
| 17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” | proclaiming the good news of God. 15 “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” |

After our first comparison in Mt revealed a clear, reinforcing anti-Marcionite tendency, one is now curious to see whether this can also be corroborated in this and further comparisons.

In this passage, too, Mt follows the framework set by Mk: John's delivery is followed by Jesus going to Galilee and now proclaiming conversion and the nearness of the kingdom.

Matthew's first extension of this framework in terms of content relates to a geographical note, but this is used to insert another quotation from Isaiah from the Septuagint, Isa 9:1. Knowing that Marcion placed the Baptist on the side of the Jewish prophets and accused both of not possessing any knowledge of the Messiah of the Christians, the introduction of Jesus's preaching through this quote from Isaiah by Mt can be seen as another anti-Marcionite tip. This becomes even clearer through the twice - thus certainly not accidental - erasure of the term "gospel" (“the good news”), which is found in Mk, but does not occur in Mt.

This finding confirms what was not mentioned before, that in the first comparison Mt also did not by chance, but deliberately omit the term "gospel" which is also found there in Mk. Both the addition and the renewed deletions can most easily be read as a response to Marcion. As noted above with regard to \*Ev, both Irenaeus and Tertullian had understood the characterisation and titling of Marcion's work as "Gospel" in the sense of a Melchizedek-critical angel's message, and Tertullian even provided it with clear objections. For Marcion, this designation was the expression that he understood Jesus as an angelic messenger, indeed as the transcendent appearance of the "best God" himself, and as an antithetical quantity that he opposed to "law and prophets". So also in this case, the author of Mt must have thought that Mk did not go far enough in differentiating itself from its Vorlage, \*Ev, hence Mt rewrote the content of Jesus's message in an even more distinctly anti-Marcionite way by quoting the prophet Isaiah again and by omitting the term "gospel". In this comparison, too, we encounter the same phenomenon of the anti-Marcionite intensification of Mk by Mt.

( 3) A further time the baptist appears in Matthew at the following place:

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| **Mt 9:14-17** | **Mk 2:18 -22** | **\*Ev 5:33 -38** |
| 14 *Then John’s disciples came and asked* him, *“How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?”* | 18 *Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees* were fasting. Some people *came* and *asked Jesus, “How is it that* *John’s disciples* *and* the disciples *of the Pharisees* are fasting, *but yours are not*?” | 33 And they said to him, “*Why do the disciples of John* and the disciples *of the Pharisees* fast steadily and carry out prayers, but yours eat and drink.” |
| 15 *Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom* mourn *while he is with them*? | 19 J*esus answered, “**How can the guests of the bridegroom* fast *while he is with them*? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. | 34 *Jesus* said to them: *Can the wedding guests* possibly fast *as long as the bridegroom is with them*? |
| *But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.*16 “*No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment*, *making the tear worse*. 17 Neither *do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins,* and both are preserved.” | 20 *But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.*21 “*No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse*. 22 And *no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins*.” | 35 *But days will come,* and *when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days*. 37 “*New wine is not poured into old wineskins. But if so, the new wine will burst the skins, then the wine is lost and also the skins. 38 Instead, new wine is poured into new wineskins.* And both remain preserved. ↑36b And *no one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth onto an old cloak. But if so, it all tears,* and it will be of no use for the old. *For it will result in a larger tear*."↓ |

The present comparison is less striking than the previous two, but this is due to the fact that the two versions are so strongly parallel that they differ only in linguistic subtleties here and there. The author of Mt has vers 25 just like \*Ev vers 34 in a short version, while Mk has a kind of duplication in his vers 19: "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast *while he is with them*? They cannot, *so long as they have him with them*". Whereas, Mt and \*Ev agree again, this time in having an addition compared to Mk, vers 22, where Mt and \*Ev add: “And both remain preserved”. It is possible that neither Mk nor Mt read a typical Marcionite position in this passage, which they would have wanted to oppose. Neither the fact that in this scene John's disciples are linked with those of the Pharisees, nor the idea that Jesus's message is set against both John's disciples and the Pharisees' disciples, nor the double parable of the piece of new cloth on old garments and of new wine in new wineskins, had apparently caused offence to either Mt or Mk. However, this passage preserves a hint, particularly when read in light of Tertullian’s commentary, that \*Ev has a typical Marcionite feature.

In the opening, only the reference to the constant prayers of the Pharisee disciples is left out of \*Ev, but both Mk and Mt introduce the passage. In Mt it is John's disciples, according to Mk unspecifically "people". In this way, Mt picks up the thread of the Baptist theme more clearly than Mk. What Marcion formulated antithetically and probably also wanted to be understood - as we have seen above, Tertullian also read it this way - was taken by Mk as well as by Mt merely as an expression of outbidding the ascetic disciples of John and the Pharisees by the message of Jesus. Both evangelists - as little as Tertullian - denied the novelty of Jesus's message, which Marcion had pointed out in his Gospel. In this they follow him, which is also testified by the double example they adopted. And yet Mk already changes the order within the double example by speaking first of the sewing and the garment and then of the new wine and the wineskins. Moreover, both evangelists slightly reduce the drama by omitting the loss of the "whole", though also the positive note in Marcion that not sewing an unshrunk, i.e. new, patch on an old garment does have a use for the old one. For Marcion, in his arrangement, the first example was the weightier one, because, as shown, it makes clear that Jesus's message belongs into a new frame. The reversal of the order does not contradict this content, only the weighting becomes slightly different. Further on we will see that only Luke, probably because he understood the content in a similar way to Tertullian later on, makes a correction of the content at a central point and thus undermines the overall message of the text. We will need to get back to this text in our section on Luke below.

( 4) The Baptist is then encountered again in the passage parallel to \*Ev 7:17-22.24 -28, which, as noted above, is omitted in Mk:

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| **Mt 11:2-19** | **\*Ev 7:17-28; 16:16-17** |
| 2 When *John*, who was *in prison* | 7:17 And this news about him spread throughout Judea, even to *John* the Baptist. |
| *heard* about the *deeds* of Christ,  | 18 When he *heard* of his *deeds*, he took offence. |
| he sent *his* *disciples*, 3 to ask him, “*Are you the one who* is to *come, or should we expect someone else*?” | And he summons two of *his disciples*, saying, Go, say to him, *Are you the one who comes, or shall we wait for another*? 20 But when the men came to him, they said, John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, Are you the one that comes, or shall we wait for another? |
| 4 Jesus *replied*, “*Go back and report to John what you* *hear* *and* *see*: 5 *The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor*. | 22 And he *answered*, saying to them: *Go and tell John what* your eyes *have seen* *and* your ears *have heard*: *The blind see again, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor are proclaimed good tidings.*  |
| 6 *Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me*.”  | 23 *And blessed are you if you take no offence at me!* |
| 7 *As John’s disciples were leaving*, Jesus *began to speak to the crowd about John*: “*What did you go out* *into the wilderness to see*? *A reed swayed by the wind*? 8 *If not, what did you go out to see?* *A man dressed in fine clothes*? *No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces.* | 24 *When John's messengers had gone*, he *began to speak to the crowds about John*: *What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? Perhaps a reed shaken by the wind*? 25 *Or what then did you go out to see? Perhaps a man covered in soft robes? See, those who live in festive clothing and in luxury are in the palaces!* |
| 9 *Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet*. 10 *This is the one about whom it is written:**“‘I will send my messenger ahead of you,* *who will prepare your way before you.’*11 Truly I tell you, *among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John* the Baptist; *yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.* | 26 *What then did you go out to see? Perhaps a prophet?* *Yes, I say to you, and even more than a prophet! For among those born of women there is no prophet as John*. 27 *He is the one about whom it is written, See, I am sending my messenger before your face, who will prepare the way for you*. 28 *But the least in the kingdom is greater than he*. |
| 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it. 13 For all *the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John*. | 16:16 The *Law and the Prophets were prophesied until John*. Since then the kingdom of God is being proclaimed. 17 Heaven and earth pass away faster than even a single stroke of the words of the Lord. |
| 14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. 15 Whoever has ears, let them hear.16 “To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:17 “‘We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance;we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.” |  |

Once again Mt follows the framework of the narrative in \*Ev, even if he shortens the text somewhat in order to expand it at the same time in other places. Let us again look first at the common elements. John hears about the deeds of "Christ" - in \*Ev we read "great prophet" as a designation for Jesus immediately before in \*Ev 7:16. The next scene will prove that it is really about the question of prophecy. Here, then, Mt has deliberately changed the title to "Christ". More importantly, however, Mt erases the statement of \*Ev 7:18 that John "took offence" after hearing of the deeds. The author of Mk had even, as noted, not included the whole scene in his Gospel. In Mt, however, it is corrected by omitting the statement about taking offence, which is important for Marcion as an antithesis. Mt therefore immediately moves on to the disciples's questions, "are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

The fact that the author of Mt omits the repetition of the question in \*Ev 7:20, which again appears to him as a doublet, follows his editorial profile, which we have already encountered in the comparison with Mk above. Mt almost slavishly reproduces Jesus's answer from \*Ev ("the blind see ..."), but more important is the change into the non-personal in Mt 11:6, which results from the attempt to turn the antithesis formulated in \*Ev towards John - John takes offence, Jesus formulates: Blessed are you if you take no offence at me - away from John and directs it into the general. That is why in Mt 11:7 the reference to "John's messangers" found in \*Ev 7:24 is omitted and the "crowd" is spoken of, to whom Jesus addresses himself in order to inquire about their assessment and expectation of John.

Largely identical are the questions about John, from which it is clear that the people had not only come to see a bowed man in the wilderness, a man not dressed in fine clothes as one dresses in palaces, but a prophet. Since in Mt the designation of Jesus as a "great prophet" is missing, it is not immediately clear why the question of the significance of the prophet ("even more than a prophet") is at issue here, which only arises from \*Ev. With Mal 3:1 ("I will send") it is made clear - only in reversed sentence order - in both versions that John is called the forerunner who is the greatest among men, but in the (heavenly) realm the least. Why John is ascribed such greatness as a human being on the one hand, but such littleness in heaven on the other, cannot be inferred from Mt up to this point, while in \*Ev the justification lies in the fact that John was lacking as a forerunner because he did not understand the deeds of Jesus as indications of the "great prophet" and Messiah, and, therefore, took offence at him, i.e. was not blessed.

The author of Mt had to add a justification here, which is why the extension is made at this point. It is done by first speaking of the violent who do violence to the kingdom of heaven "from the days of John the Baptist until now", and with the added reference to the fact that "all the Prophets and the Law up prophesied until John". The latter echoes the wording of \*Ev 16:16 and proves that the author of Mt identifies the perpetrators of violence with Marcion and his disciples. Mt thus formulates a criticism of \*Ev: Neither the Law nor the Prophets and especially not John have failed, but they have fulfilled their prophetic tasks! Therefore Mt continues with the condition: "If you are willing to accept it" - Marcion had just denied it in \*Ev! - then you must accept that John is "Elijah" "who was to come", i.e. he is really a prophet.[[31]](#footnote-31)

The author of Mt had already clarified the equation of John with Elijah by modifying the description in Mk of John's appearance. For Mt no longer emphasises the material of the clothing alone (Mk 1:6: camel's hair), but speaks of the cloak of goat's hair and the belt tied around the hips (Mt 3:4; 2 Kings 1:8; 2:1-18), thus establishing more clearly than Mk "a reference to Old Testament prophetic terminology".[[32]](#footnote-32) "For every reader who knows the Bible" this identification is "a theological exaltation of the Baptist beyond compare".[[33]](#footnote-33)

The criticism that now follows in Mt consequently hits Marcion and his followers: " To what can I compare this generation ..." It is a criticism of minors ("children") who spread seductive propaganda in public, but to whose music - as Mt demonstrates with his text - he is not willing to dance. Instead of declaring John a "demon", whereby Mt exaggerates Marcion's criticism of John and also exaggerates the Marcionite antithesis by contrasting Jesus as a "glutton and a drunkard", he makes John the "last messenger(s) of God himself"[[34]](#footnote-34) and hits Marcion in his antithetical point. The fact that, according to Mt, "wisdom is proved right by her deeds" can therefore only refer to John, who in Mt, against the Marcionite criticism of John, is attributed both prophetic insight and salvation.

(5) The next scene in which John the Baptist appears is the one that follows, which we had already compared in the parallel of \*Ev, Mk and Josephus. Let us add Matthew here:

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| **\*Ev 9:7-9.18-22** | **Mk 6:14-29; 8:27-31** | **Mt 14:1-12; 16:13 -20** | **Josephus, Antiquitates XVIII 5,2 § 116 -119[[35]](#footnote-35)** |
| 9:7 But when King Herod heard about what happened, he became perplexed because some said, John has been raised from the dead! | 6:14 King Herod heard about this, for Jesus’ name had become well known. Some were saying, “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and  | 14:1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus, 2 and he said to his attendants, “This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead!  |  |
|  | that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.” | That is why miraculous powers are at work in him.” |  |
| 8 And others, Elijah has appeared, and yet others said, One of the ancient prophets has risen. 9 But Herod said: I beheaded John. Who is this man about whom I hear such things? And he sought to meet him. | 15 Others said, “He is Elijah.”And still others claimed, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.”16 But when Herod heard this, he said, “John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!” |  |  |
|  | 17 For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, whom he had married. | 3 Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, | Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist: for Herod slew him, |
|  | 18 For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.”  | 4 for John had been saying to him: “It is not lawful for you to have her.”  | who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, |
|  | 19 So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to,  | 5 Herod wanted to kill John,  | both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism;  |
|  | 20 because Herod feared John and protected him,  | but he was afraid of the people, because they considered John a prophet. | for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away [or the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Now when [many] others came in crowds about him, for they were very greatly moved [or pleased] by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion, [for they seemed ready to do any thing he should advise,] thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it would be too late. |
|  | knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him. |  |  |
|  | 21 Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. | 6 On Herod’s birthday  |  |
|  | 22 When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, “Ask me for anything you want, and I’ll give it to you.” | the daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod so much |  |
|  | 23 And he promised her with an oath, “Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom.” | 7 that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. |  |
|  | 24 She went out and said to her mother,  |  |  |
|  | “What shall I ask for?” “The head of John the Baptist,” she answered. 25 At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: “I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter.” 26 The king was greatly distressed,  | 8 Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.”  | Accordingly he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death. Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this army was sent as a punishment upon Herod, and a mark of God's displeasure to him. |
|  | but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. 27 So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John’s head.  | 9 The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted  |
|  | The man went, beheaded John in the prison, 28 and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. 29 On hearing of this, John’s disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb. | 10 and had John beheaded in the prison. 11 His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. 12 John’s disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus. |  |
| 18 And it happened, when the disciples were together with him alone, he asked them, saying, Who do the people take me for, the Son of Man? 19 And the disciples said, for John the Baptist, others for Elijah or one of the prophets. 20 But he said to them: But who do you (take me for)? But Peter answered, saying, You are the Christ, the Son. | 8:27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?” 28 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” 29 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.” | 16:13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” 14 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” 16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” 17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” |  |
| 21 But he berated them and demanded to tell this to no one, 22 saying, "It is necessary that the Son of Man suffers much and be killed, but after three days raised again.” | 30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. 31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days[[36]](#footnote-36) rise again. 32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. | 20 Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. |  |

This comparison, extended to include Mt, shows that Mt follows Mk more closely than \*Ev, as the statement "That is why miraculous powers are at work in him" shows in the opening. Since the author of Mt had already used the equation of John and Elijah earlier in response to \*Ev (Mt 11:14), he omits this passage from Mk 6:15-16. In general, he shortens Mark's narrative of the beheading of the Baptist by reducing the vividness of the dramaturgy and omitting the dialogues except for the demand to hand over the head. It seems all the more important to Matthew to expand the question between Jesus and the disciples to his identity. In a small extension, he inserts the prophet Jeremiah as opposed to \*Ev and Mark, but then above all the confession of Peter who is not only "the Messiah" but also "the Son of the living God". And on this confession he inserts Peter's authorisation, revealed by the Father, that on him as a rock the Church will be built, which "the gates of the Hades will not overcome", indeed that he will give Peter "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" with the binding and releasing power in heaven as on earth.

While scholars have so far wondered about this exaltation of Peter, it arises immediately as a further response to Marcion. As explained above, Marcion had only recognised Paul as a true apostle, while he had come to know Peter as a fickle, insecure apostle through Paul's letter to the Galatians, and he had finally drawn him in \*Ev 22,54 - 61 as a three-time denier of Jesus, culminating in Jesus's saying: "Before the cock crows, you will have betrayed me for three times" (\*Ev 22,61). Obviously, this denial narrative had made such an impression on the readership that the narrative is encountered in all four later canonical Gospels (Mk 14:66-72; Mt 26:69-75; Lk 22:54-61; Jn 18:25-27). Nevertheless, in order to save Peter's position against Marcion, indeed to elevate him above all the other apostles, Matthew inserts this passage into the question of Jesus's identity and the comparison with the Baptist, putting into Peter's mouth a confession to the Son of God which in \*Ev is found only as a confession by demons (\*Ev 4:41; 8:28), as a question in the assembly of the "elders of the people", the "chief priests" and "scribes" to accuse Jesus (\*Ev 22:70) and as a mockery of the people (\*Ev 23:35). Nor is this confession frequent in Matthew. It occurs in the mouth of the tempter (Mt 4:3, 6), also already as a confession of Peter rescued from distress at sea and of the other apostles in the boat (Mt 14:33) and as a reproach of the high priest (Mt 26:63).

(6) Another place where the Baptist appears in Matthew is in the following scene, which we had already touched upon above:

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| **Mt 21,23-32** | **Mk 11:27-33** | **\*Ev 20:1-8,19** |
| 23 Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?” | 27 They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. 28 “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?” | 1 And it happened, as he was teaching the people in the temple on one of the days, that the Pharisees got up 2 and spoke, saying to him, Explain to us, by what authority are you doing these things, and who has given you this authority! |
| 24 Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. | 29 Jesus replied, “I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things.  | 3 But he answered, saying to them: I will also ask you a question, which you shall answer me: |
| 25 John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?” | 30 John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!” | 4 Was the baptism of John from heaven or of men? |
| They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ 26 But if we say, ‘Of human origin’—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.”27 So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Then he said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. | 31 They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ 32 But if we say, ‘Of human origin’ …” (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) 33 So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”  | 5 But they deliberated and said to one another, If we say “from heaven”, he will say, “Why then did you not believe him?” But if we say “of men”, all of the people will stone us because they are convinced that John is a prophet. 7 And they answered that they knew not from where it came. 8 And Jesus said to them: “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 9 And they sought to lay hands on him, but they were afraid. |
| 28 “What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’ 29 “‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. 30 “Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go. 31 “Which of the two did what his father wanted?” “The first,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. 32 For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him. |  |  |

With the exception of the interlocutors, who identify Mt and Mk as "high priests", "scribes" and "elders", while \*Ev refers to them as "Pharisees", the versions largely agree, with Mt and \*Ev sometimes being closer, and Mt and Mk in other places. However, the same observation we made above about Mk in comparison with \*Ev applies to Mt. For Mt, like Mk, has also inserted the scene of the cleansing of the temple and the image comparison with the withered fig tree. Thus the question of authority does not refer, as in \*Ev, to the teaching of Jesus mentioned in \*Ev 20:1 in contrast to that of the Pharisees, but to his cleansing of the temple, criticised by the temple authorities. As already explained with regard to \*Ev, \*Ev shows more clearly than Mt and Mk the criticism of Jesus by the Pharisees (cf. also \*Ev 19:39 par.).

However, Matthew does not leave it at this point with the parallel text to \*Ev and Mk, but, as the reference to John in the parable section inserted only in Mt and documented there shows, it serves to continue the argument and represents a harsh confrontation with the temple authorities addressed. According to the parable, "tax collectors" and "prostitutes" are more likely to "enter the kingdom of God" than these temple authorities who had heard Jesus's invitation but rejected it. Mt gives as further justification that John had come to them in "the way of righteousness", but they did also "not believe" him, not even did "repent" of their mistakes. Even though Matthew scolds the temple authorities here, with the keyword "righteousness" in connection with John he takes up a point that he had already directed against Marcion before, but here formulated as a resigned admission that not even this righteousness of John could convince Jesus's opponents. This passage is not yet the last encounter with the Baptist in Matthew. And we will come back to this comparison further below on Lk.

( 7) There is yet another passage in Matthew where the Baptist is found:

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| **Mt 17:9-13** | **Mark 9:9-13** |
| 9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.” | 9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. |
| 10 The disciples asked him, “Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?” 11 Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things.  | 10 They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant. 11 And they asked him, “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?” 12 Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things.  |
|  | Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? |
| 12 But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished.  | 13 But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.” |
| In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” 13 Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist. |  |

The author of Mt uses here the explanations of Mk, in which, however, the Baptist is not mentioned. It is rather about the two questions why the scribes say that Elijah must come first and why the Son of Man must suffer. The answer in Mk is that Elijah had already come and that he had already had to suffer. Those who remember Mk 6:15 and 8:28 know that some people thought Jesus, the Son of Man, was Elijah. In our passage, Jesus answers that Elijah had to precede him, that he was not Elijah himself, but that Elijah also had to suffer.

As from the beginning, the point of Mk is to place Jesus, like John, in the tradition of the Jewish prophets and thus to parallelise the two.[[37]](#footnote-37) In Mt, the passage takes on yet another direction. While he offers Jesus's answer found in Mk, he makes it clear that the Son of Man must suffer like Elijah, and that the talk of Elijah refers to the Baptist. As before, we see here even more explicitly than in Mk the further convergence of John and Jesus. The Baptist is not only the one who precedes Jesus, but he also anticipates suffering and martyrdom, with which the passage already refers to Jesus's passion and resurrection,[[38]](#footnote-38) the last place where the Baptist is mentioned in Mt. The author of Mt also defuses the antithesis between John, the preacher of judgement and disaster, and Jesus, the preacher of salvation, i.e. the preacher of the "God of punishment and judgement" and the other of "human kindness and mercy". Frankemölle believes that according to Mt, both are "primarily proclaimers and realisers of salvation",[[39]](#footnote-39) even if the judgement motif is pronounced in the Baptist.

It can be summarised that the passages on John in Mt, especially with the exaltation of Peter, can be read as a response to \*Ev, not directly as in Mk, but also taking into account and including \*Ev already twisted and altered by Mk. However, right from the beginning it becomes clear that Mt obviously still considered Mk's response to be too restrained and too close to \*Ev. Even though he basically follows the narratives of Mk, he inserts enough recognisable aggravations and radicalisations that make the text even more clearly recognisable than Mk's in its anti-Marcionite orientation. The Baptist and Jesus fulfil the Scriptures (Mt 3:15), John and Jesus are thus not antithetically opposed to each other, but are related to and aligned with each other.[[40]](#footnote-40) This does not mean, however, that Mt simply allows the one to be merged with the other.[[41]](#footnote-41) The disciples of John are no competitors with the disciples of Jesus, for they do not belong "in the ranks of the Jewish opponents of Jesus".[[42]](#footnote-42)

Certainly, it is not the primary aim of Mt to give an answer to \*Ev, but to carry Jesus's message, which is critical of the temple. Yet, without reading Mt as an answer to Marcion, some of the textual nuances are lost and passages like Peter's exaltation are difficult to understand.

1. Ilan lists 63 people carrying this name, so T.a. Ilan, Lexicon of Jewish Names in late antiquity. 1. Palestine 330 BC - 200 CE (2002), 191-193. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Ioh. Chrys., Homilia in Mattheum 33; Theod. Cyr., Comm. in Ps. 67,28. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See T.a. Ilan, Lexicon of Jewish Names in late antiquity. 1. Palestine 330 BC - 200 CE (2002), 182-185. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See R.g. Burnet, Les douze apôtres. Histoire de la réception des figures apostoliques dans le christianisme ancien (2014), 546. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 39,16. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Iren., Adv. haer. III 1,1; Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. V 8,3. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The same astonishment can be found in R.g. Burnet, Les douze apôtres. Histoire de la réception des figures apostoliques dans le christianisme ancien (2014), 545. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Own trans. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 10,1-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 11,1. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. III 24,1-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Parts of this quotation have already been touched upon above, cf. p. xxx. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Euseb. Caes., Hist. eccl. VI 25,4-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Euseb. Caes., Praep. ev. III 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ioh. Chrys., Homilia in Mattheum 1 (own trans.). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Koine is the Greek language at that time, used in the New Testament. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ioh. Chrys., Homilia in Mattheum 3 (own trans.). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Hieron., De vir. inl. 3. On this text see W. Schmithals, Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien (1985), 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Hieron., Comm. in Matth. prol. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. J. Frey, Die Fragmente des Hebräerevangeliums (2012), 594. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Epiph., Pan. 30,3,7; 13,2f. (337; 349 Holl). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. CANT 51; BHL 5334-5442b. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. J. Gijsel, Ed. Libri de nativitate Mariae. Teilband 1: Pseudo-Matthaei evangelium. Textus et commentarius (1997), 119. (Own trans.). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. S. Spreckelmeier, Bibelepisches Erzählen vom 'Transitus Mariae' im Mittelalter: Diskurshistorische Studien (2019), 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The expression „apocryphal relation“ was coined by Hans Jürgen Scheuer, Berlin, and orally transmitted to me. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. M. Vinzent, Tertullian's Preface to Marcion's Gospel (2016), 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. See G. Häfner, Der verheißene Vorläufer. Redaktionskritische Untersuchung zur Darstellung Johannes des Täufers im Matthäus-Evangelium (1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. J.P. Meier, John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel (1980), 388. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. M. Klinghardt, The Oldest Gospel and the Formation of the Canonical Gospels (2021), 238-251, 251. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. G. Häfner, Der verheißene Vorläufer. Redaktionskritische Untersuchung zur Darstellung Johannes des Täufers im Matthäus-Evangelium (1994), 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. On the identification of the Baptist with Elijah (and potential parallels from Qumran), see C.A. Wells, Jesus, John the Baptist and Peter: Discriminating Allegories for the same Prophet (2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. E.-M. Becker, Der früheste Evangelist. Studien zum Markusevangelium (2017), 312-313. Vgl. H. Frankemölle, Johannes der Täufer und Jesus im Matthäusevangelium: Jesus als Nachfolger des Täufers (1996), 206-207. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. H. Frankemölle, Johannes der Täufer und Jesus im Matthäusevangelium: Jesus als Nachfolger des Täufers (1996), 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Trans. William Whiston. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. On the agreement of \*Ev and Mk (vs. Mt and Lk) regarding the timing of the resurrection, cf. M. Klinghardt, The Oldest Gospel and the Formation of the Canonical Gospels (2021), 720-722. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. So J. Gnilka, Die frühen Christen. Ursprünge und Anfang der Kirche (1999), 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. See H. Frankemölle, Johannes der Täufer und Jesus im Matthäusevangelium: Jesus als Nachfolger des Täufers (1996), 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Häfner speaks of a parallelism between John and Jesus’s given a christological edge of Jesus, see G. Häfner, Der verheißene Vorläufer. Redaktionskritische Untersuchung zur Darstellung Johannes des Täufers im Matthäus-Evangelium (1994), 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. See G.D. Kilpatrick, The Origins of the Gospel according to St. Matthew (1950), 90; 107. Kilpatrick emphasises the differences between John and Jesus, whereas Trilling sees them more aligned to each other, see W. Trilling, Die Täufertradition bei Matthäus (1959). John as the one who points to Jesus, is underlined by G. Häfner, Der verheißene Vorläufer. Redaktionskritische Untersuchung zur Darstellung Johannes des Täufers im Matthäus-Evangelium (1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. U. Luz, Das Evangelium nach Matthäus 2 Mt. 8 - 17 (1990), 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)