21

## II Poverty instead of Wealth

The following explanations follow so closely on from the theme of "kindness and justice" just dealt with that the first part in particular reads like a continuation. It continues with the central aspect of the new Torah as developed by Marcion in his Gospel and put into the mouth of his protagonist Jesus.

### 1 The Beatitudes and the Woes

We had already read that Marcion was rich and, judging by his wealth, a successful entrepreneur. Is it not surprising that he of all people puts the following words into the mouth of his protagonist Jesus as Christ's Torah?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **\*Ev 6:20-26** | **Lk 6:20-26** | **Mt 5:3-12** |
| 20 And he lifted up his eyes at his disciples and said,  | 20 And he lifted up his eyes at his disciples and said, |  |
| Blessed the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.  | Blessed are the poor now, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.  | 3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. |
| 21 Blessed the hungry, for they will be satisfied.  | 21 Blessed are those who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. |  |
| Blessed the weeping, for they will laugh.  | Blessed are those who weep now, for you will laugh. |  |
|  |  | 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. |
| 22 Blessed will you be when people will hate and vilify you and reject your name as something evil for the sake of the Son of Man.  | 22 Blessed are you when men hate you, and cast you out, and reproach you, and cast your name as evil because of the Son of Man. 23 Rejoice in that day and dance; for behold, your reward is great in heaven. | 11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven,  |
| 23 Your fathers have done the same already to the prophets. 24 But woe to the rich; for you have received your consolation. 25 Woe to the saturated, for they will go hungry. Woe to the laughing, for they will be saddened. 26 Woe if people speak well of you. That is what your fathers have done also to the false prophets. | For the same thing their fathers have already done to the prophets. 24 But woe to you who are rich, for you have received consolation. 25 Woe to you who are saturated now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will weep and mourn. 26 Woe if people speak well of you. That is what your fathers have done also to the false prophets. | for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. |

In his extensive commentary on the Beatitudes, Hans Dieter Betz writes:

"The popularity of the text today shows no sign of diminution. The multitude of books on the Sermon on the Mount appearing every year in all languages and lands, not to mention articles in journals, magazines, and newspapers, exceeds what even computerized bibliographies can handle. Indeed, at present there is no complete bibliography of all the works written on the Sermon on the Mount, and I dare say there never will be one. Nor is there a complete history of the interpretation of this text, and again I dare say there never will be one. If undertaken, it

would largely overlap with the entire history of biblical interpretation, Christian theology, and even secular philosophy, since almost every author during this history had one thing or another to say on the subject."[[1]](#footnote-1)

It is all the more significant that the literary model \*Ev has not yet been studied in this regard. It has always been noted that none of the synoptic gospels has placed the themes of property, wealth and poverty at the centre as much as Lk, which follows \*Ev in this.

Already with regard to the Beatitudes cited by Lk and Mt, one has noticed the differences to such Beatitudes that can be found in the Jewish Scriptures or, for example, in the Qumran writings (11QMelch; 1QH).[[2]](#footnote-2) As in \*Ev, the connection between the promise of salvation, reminiscent of Isa 61:1ff. and the Book of Daniel, is also found in 11QMelch[[3]](#footnote-3):

1 [...] ... your God [...].

2 […] And since He has said (Lev 25:13) In [this] year of Jobel [you shall return every one to his ancestral estate (Deut 15:2) And this is]

3 [the s]tate [of the year of remission] of every creditor remission of his loan which he hath made to his neighbour. He shall not afflict his neighbour or his brother, for it is proclaimed a year of remission for Go[d.

4 for Go[d. Its interpretation] (goes) to the end of days, to the captives, since it is [said about them (Isa 61:1): to proclaim release for captives] and

5 their rebels out of ... the congregation and out of the inheritance of Malkizedek, who will

6 bring them back to them. And he proclaims release for them, to let them off [The burden of all their indebtedness. And he does] this thing

7 in the first week of the jubilee after new jubilees, and the day of atonements, which is the end of the jubilee, the tenth,

8 to make atonement in it for all the sons of God and for the men of the lot of the Malkite, according to theirs, for this is the time for the year of jubilee.

9 this is the time for the year of favour (cf. Isa 61:2) for Malkizedek, [and to exalt in judgment God's saints to a reign of right as] it is written

10 About him in the songs of David, since he said (Ps 82:1), God [stands in the congregation of God, in the midst of divines He judges; and about him it is said (Ps 7:8-9) about her

11 to the height return! God judges nations. And when it is said (Ps 82:2) until when will ye judge iniquity, and lift up the face of the wicked? Se]la -

12 [so its interpretation goes] to Belial and the spirits of his lot, who were all those who rebelled in their departure from the ordinances of God to cause iniquity].

13 [And Malkizedek executes the vengeance] of the judgments of God on that day and rescues them from the hand of Belial(s) and from the hand of all the spirits of his lot].

14 And to his help (are ready) all the godly [.... and this is w[hat ... a]ll sons of God and ordered the foundation,]

15 this very thing. This is the day of [peace (?) about which] [God once] spoke in the words of Isaiah the prophet, when he said (Isa 52:7): How lovely are]

16 On <!> mountains the feet of a messenger proclaiming peace, a messenger of good, proclaiming salvation, saying to Zion, "Your God has become king".

17 His interpretation: the mountains [they are the] prophets, they are the ones d[… on/for all[s] who[s]].

18 And the messenger, h[e] is the anointed of the spi[rit, about whom] Dan[iel] said (Dan 9:25): [until the Anointed Prince there are seven weeks; and messenger of]

19 Good, proclaim[ing] help[ing] - this is what is written about him, there [- (Isa 61:2-3): -]

20 to comfort mourners. His interpretation:] to instruct them in all times of the world (?).

21 In truth to…[.

22 [… She was removed from Belial and [Rachel.]

23 [… By judgments of God, as it is written concerning him, he saith unto Zion, King is become thy God! - Zion, that is]

24 [… the fulfiller of the covenant those who depart from the way of the people. And thy God, that is]

25 [… will save them out of the hand of Belial. And when it is said (Lev 25:9), And let a shofar horn sound through it - throughout the land].

This text from Qumran, though fragmentary, speaks of the healing treatment of the afflicted, of their liberation and freedom, but at the same time also of God's judgement and vengeance. Whether Marcion was aware of such traditions is uncertain, but his Beatitudes read like a contrasting message.

"Contrary to 11QMelch, in the Gospel Beatitudes there is no trace of vengeance in the eschatological peace and in the rewarding of the persecuted, nor is there found any allusion to a «military» conflict (… 11QMelch 3,7; cf. 2,25 and 1QM 2,8-10; CD-B 20,14), or to one league supported by the intervention of another one — as is the case with 11QMelch 3,14 where the «gods of justice» … and all the «sons of God» … are expected to come to aid Melchizedek …" Or “in other texts from Qumran, such as 1QSb 5,20-29; 4Q161; 4Q285, the eschatological battle is led by the Davidic Messiah.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

In \*Rom 4:7-8 = Rom 4:7-8 Marcion, on the other hand, reads the forgiving Lord who blessedly praises the many and each individual: “7 Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.”

On the other hand, the Wisdom Books with the Psalms speak of beatitudes that are connected with condemnations, which for Marcion are testimonies of an ambivalent god and his Christ. This god was to him "judge, tyrant and warlord",[[5]](#footnote-5) and as judge "a steward", "a petty" official,[[6]](#footnote-6) "who does not prove good"[[7]](#footnote-7) and is "jealous",[[8]](#footnote-8) and whose Christ turns out to be an "angry"[[9]](#footnote-9) "war hero and armour-bearer",[[10]](#footnote-10) "unbalanced, fickle, capricious", "who teaches one thing but does another, who teaches to give to all who ask but does not himself give to those who ask."[[11]](#footnote-11) The antithesis to this sees in the alien God the "bestower of abundant goodness",[[12]](#footnote-12) his Christ as "a mild, gentle, merely good, even best".[[13]](#footnote-13)

According to Marcion, the message of the Jewish Scriptures was one of the Creator god, who arguably cared for human beings, especially the poor,[[14]](#footnote-14) but acted elitistically and exclusively insofar as he turned exclusively to Israel, he was also full of hatred. In the wake of Ex 19, Marcion read Ex 20: while this God reminded his people of his actions in delivering the people from the bondage of Egypt, from the "house of slaverei", this salvific action was combined with a self-revelation as a "jealous God", yes, even more, it says of God: "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me" (Ex 20:5).

Marcion also read similar threatening content in the prophets: These mention God's benefits and promises for the future to "encourage the poor" (Isa 61:1), that the poor should rejoice and those who despair would be filled with joy (cf. Isa 29:19), but these promises are combined with a ghastly horror outlook: " The ruthless will vanish, the mockers will disappear, and all who have an eye for evil will be cut down" (Isa 29:20). Truly the mourners shall be comforted, but it will be in the "day when God will seek vengeance" (Isa 61:2). In the same prophet it is said of God:

" I will not accuse them forever,

 nor will I always be angry,

for then they would faint away because of me—

 the very people I have created.

17 I was enraged by their sinful greed;

 I punished them, and hid my face in anger,

 yet they kept on in their willful ways.

18 I have seen their ways, but I will heal them;

 I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel’s mourners,

19 creating praise on their lips.

Peace, peace, to those far and near,”

 says the Lord. “And I will heal them.”

20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea,

 which cannot rest,

 whose waves cast up mire and mud.

21 “There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked." (Isa 57:16-21).

Previously, one could read in Isaiah that "mourning and suffering will disappear", but only after God had "come with divine retribution" (Isa 35:4, 10).

In place of this honey and lash message, Marcion sets a new Torah that should be free of fear and condemnation. He did this not only by listing the Beatitudes, but also by adding woes of defence that should correspond precisely to the Beatitudes and continue them, but not run counter to them.

The opening Beatitude already addresses the poor, especially those who are poor in a material sense, even though Mt already begins to spiritualise here: from "blessed are the poor" Mt makes: "blessed are the poor in spirit".[[15]](#footnote-15) As announced by Christ on the first day of his appearance in the aftermath of the dramatic scene in which he only narrowly escapes death, this Christ returns to the preaching of the Kingdom of God. Poverty must be understood in a real and in a figurative sense, as the next Beatitudes also show, for example, when poverty is followed by hunger. The Beatitudes clearly allude to various sayings of the prophets and show the difference between the promises then and now. The beatitude of the hungry who will be satisfied recalls the prophet's saying: "They will neither hunger nor thirst" (Isa 49:10). But this prophetic saying is preceded by: "He made my mouth like a sharp sword; he hid me in the shadow of his hand. He made me a sharp arrow and put me in his quiver" (Isa 49:2). Even though this God promises joy and laughter to those whose tears flow (Ps 126), to "wipe away their tears from every one of their faces", he does so by "trampling Moab in its place like straw in the muck" (Isa 25:10). Finally, the last beatitude in \*Ev ("Blessed will you be when people will hate and vilify you and reject your name as something evil for the sake of the Son of Man") shows how differently Christ's ethical action is directed.[[16]](#footnote-16) From the beginning of his public appearance, Jesus is rejected by the prevailing authorities and criticised for self-identification as the Son of Man.

As shown before, it was precisely the reinterpretation of this title "Son of Man" that no longer corresponded to the Danielic avenger and murderer of the opposing powers - Mt deletes this title[[17]](#footnote-17) and with it also the criticism of the Book of Daniel and thus brings the Beatitudes closer to the Jewish Scriptures again[[18]](#footnote-18) - but represented a Beatific One without condemnation of others. Certainly Marcion's Jesus had unsettled the followers of Daniel's vision, to which the reference is directed that the forefathers had dealt similarly with the prophets.

Paul mentions in 1 Thes 2:15 that the Jews had murdered the Lord and the prophets - "their own prophets", as the Pauline text of Marcion’s collection puts it, in order to distinguish these prophets from the Lord who did not belong to "them" (interestingly, this reading has made its way into the canonical text).[[19]](#footnote-19) Tertullian reports that Marcion used this argument to point out the intrinsic inconsistency of the Jewish god, who "himself murders these same prophets, as it were, by discrediting those" whom he has appointed to deliver his message.[[20]](#footnote-20) Certainly Marcion knew of the sad fate of the last Jewish prophets, such as Zechariah ben Jehoiada, who had admonished King Joash, but was stoned and killed for it (2 Chr 24:20-22, cf. Mt 23:35) or of Uriah ben Shemaiah, who was innocently martyred (Jer 26:20-24), or think of Elijah mentioned by Paul (Rom 11:3), who recalls the murder of God's prophets by the children of Israel (1 Kings 19:10, 14). Perhaps Marcion also knew the work "The Lives of the Prophets", which describes such fates, although it is only attested for a later time.[[21]](#footnote-21)

How different the beatific message of Marcion's Christ is from the Jewish models in Marcion's opinion becomes even clearer in the cries of woe, which are only found in \*Ev and Lk.

Research has often pointed out the clear correspondence of the cries of woe with the Beatitudes and that the Beatitudes were already grouped with cries of woe in the Jewish Scriptures and in other Jewish works, but they never corresponded to each other as in the present case.[[22]](#footnote-22) In order to be able to read out the specific moments here, the most important comparative texts will be consulted.

We read, for example, the following beatitude, connected with a woe in Isa 3:10-11:

“10 Tell the righteous it will be well with them,

 for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds.

11 Woe to the wicked!

 Disaster is upon them!

They will be paid back

 for what their hands have done.”

Righteousness prevails, the righteous or rather the righteous will be happy because they reap what they sow, and so will the wicked.

Similarly, we read in Eccli 10:16-17:

“16 Woe to the land whose king was a servant

 and whose princes feast in the morning.

17 Blessed is the land whose king is of noble birth

 and whose princes eat at a proper time—

 for strength and not for drunkenness.”

Here, in both cases, the point is that the land is praised that has a noble king.

The Book of Tobit 13:12-14, offers another example:

“12 Cursed be all who will speak harsh words to you! Cursed will be all who destroy you, tear down your walls, all who overthrow your towers and set fire to your dwellings! But blessed for ever will be all who show you reverence!

13 Then go out with joy to the sons of the righteous, for they will all be gathered together and give praise to the Lord of eternity.

14 Blessed are those who love you! Blessed are they who rejoice in your peace, and blessed are all the people who are grieved over you because of all your plagues. For they will rejoice in you and see all your joy forever.”

At this point, people are opposed to each other who are for or against Jerusalem. Something similar applies to Jewish texts from the time of the Second Temple of Jerusalem, 2 Baruch 10 for example, we read:

“6 Blessed is he who was not born, or he who was born but died.

7 But as for us who are alive, woe to us, for we see the afflictions of Zion, and what has come upon Jerusalem.”

A detailed list of woes and beatitudes is also encountered in the so-called Ethiopian Book of Enoch, chapter 99:

“1 Woe to those who commit ungodliness and praise and glorify lying words; you will perish and not have a good life.

2 Woe to those who pervert the words of truth, transgress the eternal law, and make themselves what they were not (before), sinners; on earth they shall be trodden down.

3 In those days make ready, you righteous, to bring your prayers to remembrance, and present them for a testimony unto the angels, that they may present the sin of sinners to the remembrance of the Most High.

4 And in those days the nations shall be in revolt, and the families of the nations shall rise up in the day of destruction.

5 And in those days they that are in distress shall go and rend their children, and cast them from them: their children shall slip away from them, and while they lie on their breasts they shall cast their little ones, and shall not return unto them, neither have mercy on their loved ones.

6 Again, I swear to you sinners that sin is ripe for the day of unheard-of bloodshed.

7 And they will worship stones, and others will form images of gold and silver, wood and clay, and others will worship evil spirits and demons and all kinds of idols [and this] in ignorance, but there will be no help from them.

8 And they will sink into ungodliness because of the folly of their heart, and their eyes will be blinded by the fear of their heart and the visions of their dreams.

9 By them they will become ungodly and full of fear, for all their works they do in falsehood and worship stones; so they will perish in a moment.

10 Blessed in those days are all those who receive and understand the words of wisdom, and follow the way of the Most High, and walk in the path of his righteousness, and are not ungodly with the ungodly, for they shall be saved.

11 Woe to you who extend wickedness to your neighbour, you will be killed in hell.

12 Woe to you who keep a false and deceitful measure, and provoke to bitterness on earth, for thereby it will come to an end with them.

13 Woe to you who build your houses with the labour of others, and whose building materials are only bricks and stones of sin; I tell you, you will have no peace.

14 Woe to those who reject the measure and the eternal inheritance of their fathers, and whose soul follows idols; they will have no peace.

15 Woe to those who commit iniquity and support violence and kill their neighbour until the day of great judgement.

16 For he shall bring down your glory to the ground, and shall bring sorrow into your heart, and shall stir up his wrath, and the; and all the righteous and the holy shall remember your sin.”

What all these combinations of beatitudes and woeings have in common is that they do not link two contrasting messages, but the respective praises and warnings serve the same cause, namely the black-and-white drawing of, on the one hand, righteous and pious actions versus the detestable deeds of the idolaters.

More nuanced and contrasting are the beatitudes and prophecies from the so-called Slavic Book of Enoch (2 Enoch), a Jewish-apocalyptic pseudepigraphon that may date to the time of or after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem of 66 CE. The book begins with Enoch's journey through the heavens to meet God, where the secrets of creation are eventually revealed to him (chapters 1-38). He brings this heavenly knowledge to earth to teach his sons during a brief encounter, ending with his second ascension (chapters 39-67). As a heavenly being, Enoch transcends even the angels, whereby he and his family seem to exercise priestly functions (chapters 68-73).[[23]](#footnote-23) In chapter 52, the following six pairs of beatitudes and curses are encountered:

“1 Blessed is he who opens his mouth in praise of the Lord!

2 Cursed is he who opens his mouth to revile his neighbour!

5 Blessed is he who praises all the works of the Lord!

6 Cursed is he who makes a creature of the Lord contemptible!

7 Blessed is he who looks on the work of his hands!

8 Cursed is he who looks to destroy the works of others!

9 Blessed is he who keeps the foundations of his fathers!

10 Cursed is he who distorts the commands and regulations of his fathers!

11 Blessed is he who walks in peace!

12 Cursed is he who disturbs peace!

13 Blessed is he who speaks of peace and has peace!

15 All these things will be put into the scales and written down in books on the great day of judgement.

16 Now, my children! Keep your hearts from all unrighteousness, so that you may pray to the light of the scales for ever!”

Focused on the "God of Sabaoth", the curses represent more than what the word seems to imply at first, since the text opens with a curse on those who open their mouths to curse others (2) and praises those who "open their mouths in praise of the Lord" (1). This text may even have been inspired by the words of Marcion and Luke, while at the same time recording critical tones when the "works of the Lord" are expressly praised, when it is also urged that one "keep the foundations of his fathers" and when reference is made to the preservation of peace. The fact that in the end it all boils down to the "great day of judgement", when everything will be "put into the scales and written down in books", is the very opposite of what Marcion propagates.

Against this background, let us compare the beatitudes and cries for help from \*Ev (and Lk 6:20-26):



In comparison with the parallels from the Jewish Scriptures and other Jewish works, the strictly parallel and at the same time inverted structure of the beatitudes and woes in \*Ev is immediately noticeable. Already Lk, by inserting verse 23a ("Rejoice in that day and dance; for behold, your reward is great in heaven"), broke this schematic, perhaps because he did not see and understand it. He would not be alone in this, for past research has also rarely perceived the Beatitudes and the Woes as a unity.[[24]](#footnote-24) It has even been thought that the audience of the Beatitudes was distinct from that to which the Woes were addressed, and that the two literary units had nothing to do with each other in terms of tradition history.[[25]](#footnote-25) Even in those cases in which the Woes were seen as an "inversion of the Beatitudes", such as by members of "The International Q Project", they were nevertheless separated from them. Thus, for example, the Woes were separated from the Q text and only the Beatitudes were retained for the latter,[[26]](#footnote-26) which, however, as in the case of Mt, represents a massive and momentous intervention in the combined composed sequence.

From the graphic representation we can see that Marcion not only considers the Beatitudes and Woes to be complementary, but he had laid them out in strict inversion, except for the last pair. The blessed are promised the final state, which is the starting point for the exhorted. Conversely, the exhorted begin with the state in which the blessed will end.

The poverty of the blessed not only resonates in the possession of the consolation of the rich, it is their equivalent, because these rich are actually poor due to their own situation as the satiated and possessors of consolation, for they have in themselves desire neither for consolation nor for the kingdom of heaven.

The author is even clearer with the next two Beatitudes. In the first, those who are hungry correspond directly those being hungry in the future, but who are saturated. Those who weep correspond to those who are "saddened", but are now laughing, while those who weep are told of the laughter to come. The fourth pair functions somewhat differently, but nevertheless shows a clear link: the now hated and rejected are threatened with the fate of the prophets in the time of the fathers, while in the corresponding woe, those who now enjoy a good reputation are made to see the same fate that the blessed now already possess. In this case, those who are now reviled do not come to enjoy the good reputation of those who are admonished, but the latter share the future lot with the blessed. What lesson can be drawn from this construction?

Both the inversion of the statements and the strict correspondence between the Beatitudes and Woes lead to a dynamic circular movement. Those who are called blessed will enter the state of those to whom the woes apply, those to whom the woes apply will enter the state of those to whom the beatitudes are preached. In the end, the same future goal is announced to both. Consequently, it is not a matter of two different circles of hearers, as if the Beatitudes were addressed to some and the Woes to others, as is the case in some of the Jewish parallel texts, but rather one and the same people who live in a circular relationship and with the same goal in view and who are all united under the Beatitudes and the Woes.

This means that even those who seem to be in the more comfortable position of the blessed are not exempt from exhortations, while conversely, those who hear the exhortation are not separated from the beatitudes. With this dynamic notion, however, Marcion undermines any duality and black-and-white notion that we have encountered in the older Jewish Beatitudes and their associated Woes. Marcion thus abolishes the condemnatory character of the Woes. They are no longer part of the righteous condemnation of a divine judge who has two scales in his hands, but they represent forms of Christian exhortations according to which even the Woes should ultimately lead to beatitude.[[27]](#footnote-27) Conversely, the Beatitudes do not mark the privileges of a few chosen ones, but the beatified and the exhorted ones stand on par in the same salvation context, whose future, however, leads to the fate of Christ, being threatened to be murdered by the fathers. A look at Lk 10:13-16 shows that these verses also follow a similar pattern of argumentation:

"13 Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. 16 “Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

Even though it is disputed in research whether this passage had belonged to \*Ev - all commentators and critics of Marcion pass over the passage, and Harnack had probably seen correctly that it is hardly likely that Tertullian would have let it slip in order to point out that Marcion also speaks of a judgment,[[28]](#footnote-28) Klinghardt has presented good reasons why this passage was nevertheless in \*Ev, at least with some probability - it shows that here too there is no mention of a judgement by a judgeing god, but an admonition is given that men should not condemn themselves.[[29]](#footnote-29)

That the woes here, like those against Pharisees and teachers of the law (\*Ev 11:42-54), are not to be read in Marcion as "harsh" divine condemnations, as in the Creator god, but instead are meant to be "full of mercy", Tertullian comments critically on Marcion.[[30]](#footnote-30) This becomes especially clear in the following passage:

"1 But he said to his disciples, ‘It is impossible that no offence comes. But woe to him by whom the offence comes! 2 It would be better for him if he were never born or if a millstone was hung around his neck and he was thrown into the sea than that he causes one of these little ones to fall. 3 Guard yourselves! If your brother sins against you, set him straight. And if he repents, forgive him. 4 And if he sins against you seven times in one day and turns to you seven times and says, “I repent,” you shall forgive him.’” (\*Ev 17:1-4)

Christ reminds his disciples of the danger of becoming a stumbling block, but in the end there is the call to forgive, even when someone sins beyond measure. Death with the millstone around the neck is thus precisely not meant to be the end of sin, but the overabundance of forgiveness. Admonition and correction are not the last words, but as in the Sermon on the Plain, exhortations are not about condemnation and damnation, but about forgiveness and blessing. Seen in this light, Marcion has implemented narratively what he had read in \*Rom 12:9-18 in Paul of the "commandments of the new God":[[31]](#footnote-31)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **\*Rom 12:9-19** | **Rom 12:9-19** |
|  | 9 Let love be without hypocrisy. |
| 9 Abhor evil, hold fast to good! | Abhor evil, hold fast to good! |
| 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love! | 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love, surpassing one another in mutual respect. 11 Do not slacken your zeal, be inflamed by the Spirit and serve the Lord. |
| 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation! | 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in affliction, persevere in prayer. 13 Share in the needs of the saints; give hospitality at all times. |
| 14 Bless and do not curse! | 14 Bless your persecutors; bless them, do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with the joyful and weep with those who weep. |
| 16 Do not aim high, but remain humble! And do not think yourselves wise!17 Do not repay anyone evil with evil! | 16 Be of one mind among yourselves; do not aim high, but remain humble. Do not think yourselves wise. 17 Do not repay evil with evil. Be mindful of what is good for all people. 18 As far as it is possible for you, make peace with all people. |
| 19 Do not judge for yourselves,18 Keep peace with all people! | 19 Do not retaliate yourselves, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written: Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. |

According to Tertullian, this passage from Paul's letter is very different in important places in both versions. This is evident from his refutation of Paul's version of Marcion:

"Let us look at what clearly are the commandments of a new god: Abhorring, he says, the evil, and cleaving to the good [cf. Rom 12:9]. Does the Creator say anything different? Put away the evil from you [cf. Dt 17:7; 21:21; 1 Cor 5:13], and, Depart from evil and do good [Ps 34:14]. In love of the brotherhood kindly affectioned one to another [Rom 12:10]: is not that the same as, Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself? [Lev 19:18] Rejoicing in hope [Rom 12:12], the hope of God: for, It is better to hope in the Lord than to hope in governors [Ps 118:9]. Patient under distress [Rom 12:12]: for, The Lord will hear thee in the day of distress [Ps 20:1]: you have the psalm. Bless, and curse not [Rom 12:14]: who better can have given this teaching than he who established all things with blessings? Not high-minded, but consenting to the lowly, and be not wise in your own sight [Rom 12:16]: for Isaiah pronounces woe against such as these [Isa 5:20-21]. Recompense to no man evil for evil [Rom 12:17]: And remember not thy brother's wickedness [Lev 19:18]. Not avenging yourselves [Rom 12:19]: for, Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord [Deut 32:35]. Have peace with all men [Rom 12:18]: so also the law of retribution gave no permission to revenge an injury, but restrained the infliction of it by fear of revenge. With reason therefore has he embraced the Creator's whole moral law in its own principal commandment: Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself. If this fulfilling of the law comes from the law itself, I am now at a loss who may be the God of the law. Perhaps it is Marcion's god. But if the gospel of Christ is fulfilled by this commandment, but what is Christ's is not the Creator's, what are we still contending about?”[[32]](#footnote-32)

Tertullian's strategy is clear: he tries to show that Marcion's reading and his version of Paul's text does not differ in anything from the Jewish tradition of Scripture, that is, that there is no ethical difference between the "new" and the conventional "Torah". However, he indirectly admits right at the beginning that the abhorrence of evil and the adherence to good contains the commandment of "the new God", with which Marcion wanted to set it apart from the old God. With the long sequence in which Tertullian follows Marcion's Pauline text by inserting parallel texts from the Jewish scriptures, he wants to prove that the alleged "new" is not so new at all.

With his reference to Dt 17:7 and 21:21, Tertullian takes up what Paul had formulated in 1 Cor 5:13 (according to both versions), while just the passage before, 1 Cor 5:12-13a, according to which God judges ("12 What is it to me to judge the outsiders? Do you not have to judge those who belong to you? 13 God will judge the outsiders"), is not attested to Marcion's Paul and presumably was not in his text. Even though Tertullian adds parallels from Jewish Scripture to other passages Dt 17:7 and 21:21 and also refers to Christian parallels (Lk 10:27; Mt 22:39; Mk 12:31) - a verse that was not present in \*Ev -,[[33]](#footnote-33) Tertullian cannot name a Jewish or Christian parallel for the most important passage Rom 12:14 ("Bless and curse not"), but recurs generalisingly to the Creator "who established all things with blessings". At the end of the passage, Tertullian reads a changed order in Marcion's Paul, as the comparison shows. Whereas in the canonical text retribution is the Lord's last word, in Marcion's Paul it is keeping peace with men.

In this commentary, too, Tertullian correctly captures the sense of Marcion's Paul, according to which the new God has abolished retribution altogether, but Tertullian indicates that already the Creator had at least limited retribution. When Tertullian then claims that Christ took up the entire moral law of the Creator with the commandment to love one's neighbour, he is referring precisely to a verse that is not encountered in \*Ev. As will be shown in a moment, Tertullian understands the morality of the Creator in precisely the limited sense that he understands as the right one in contrast to Marcion. One is not surprised that Tertullian claims to be "at a loss", since he had shortened Paul's message, which he read in Marcion's Apostolos, and deprived it of its radicality, so that the new Torah is only a fulfilment of the old one. Tertullian's argumentation, however, reveals that he was aware of this restrictive interpretation of Paul in comparison to Marcion.

In order to understand the difference between the two versions (of Marcion in \*Ev and Lk) and the interpretation of Tertullian even better, let us refer to the discussion between the teacher of the law and Jesus as found in \*Ev 10:25-28a and the parallel passage Lk 10:25-37:[[34]](#footnote-34)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **\*Ev 10:25 [26]27, 28a [28b-37]** | **Lk 10:25-37** |
| 25 See, a teacher of the Law stood up; he tested him, saying, “What must I do to inherit life?”  | 25 And behold, a teacher of the Law stood up to put Jesus to the test and asked him, "Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life? |
|  | 26 Jesus said to him, "What is written in the Law? What do you read? |
| 26 But he answered, saying, 27 “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your life and with all your strength.” 28 But he said to him, “You have spoken correctly.” | 7 He answered, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself. 28 Jesus said to him: You have answered correctly. Act accordingly and you will live! 29 The teacher of the Law, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbour? 30 Jesus answered him, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and was attacked by robbers. They plundered him and beat him down; then they went away and left him half dead. 31 By chance a priest came down the same way; he saw him and passed by. 32 Likewise also a Levite came to the place; he saw him and passed by. 33 But a Samaritan who was travelling came to him; he saw him and had compassion, 34 went to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him on his own mount and took him to an inn and cared for him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Look after him, and if you need more for him, I will pay you when I come back. 36 Which of these three do you think became next to him who was attacked by the robbers? 37 The teacher of the Law answered, He who was merciful to him. Jesus said to him, "Then go and do likewise.” |

In both versions the same starting point is chosen: A teacher of the Law tries to put Jesus to the test by asking him what he must do to acquire eternal life.[[35]](#footnote-35) The subsequent answer, however, as well as its clarification, show a weighty change in Lk. First of all, in Lk a master title is introduced for Jesus, which contrasts Jesus as an authority with the teacher of the Law. Accordingly, Lk also puts into Jesus's mouth the explicit reference to what is "written in the Law", reinforced with the question "What are you reading?" In contrast, \*Ev simply had the saying of verse 27, which is taken from Jewish Law (and specifically Dt 6:5) and is known as the Shema' Israel. Tertullian therefore also explicitly refers to the fact that the Lord himself answered the teacher of the Law from the Law.[[36]](#footnote-36) This means, however, that according to \*Ev every explicit reference to the Law was missing, Jesus merely gives the teacher of the Law the answer he expects, which he also explicitly confirms in verse 28. Jesus has passed the test, even if the teacher of the Law does not achieve what he wanted with this test.

The author of Lk uses this passage with the intention of bringing Jesus closer to the Law, even though he makes him more critical of the teacher of the Law. After Jesus has already explicitly referred to the Law, he has the teacher of the Law himself quote the Law, and here it is Jesus who confirms the teacher of the Law and his quotation. In this way, Jesus is stylised as the master and superior authority of the Law, in that he finally also calls on the teacher of the Law to act accordingly. This call, however, refers in particular to the last part of the quotation of the Law, which was no longer listed in \*Ev: "and your neighbour as yourself". But it is precisely this part of the quotation that is at issue in Lk. Here the teacher of the Law asks, "And who is my neighbour?" In response, Lk cites the parable of the "Good Samaritan", which is special Lukan material and does not appear in \*Ev or in any other Gospel. With this parable, Lk takes the pericope away from the emphasis on Marcion’s antithesis, which does have Christ emphasise the love of God with Dt 6:5 - which, as Tertullian correctly sees, does not mean the Creator, but rather the heavenly God and giver of the new Torah[[37]](#footnote-37) - but without an explicit reference to the Law. Instead, in Lk the passage is directed towards the fact that the positive evaluation of the Law, which is explicitly confirmed by Jesus, also includes gentiles, with whom consequently the teacher of the Law should also seek contact.[[38]](#footnote-38) A discussion about the Law and its validity in Marcion, which has its appropriate historical place in the time after the end of the so-called Bar Kokhba war, becomes a discussion that belongs to the Christian-Jewish separation process on the topic of "who is my neighbour". This question was also addressed at this time, as we can see from the Christian Apologies, but the discussion on this intensified precisely at the time of Irenaeus and occupied the Fathers of the next decades, as we can see from Clement of Alexandria.

Let us return to the Beatitudes and the Woes: From the preceding considerations, we can see why Tertullian already complained about Marcion's interpretation of the Woes, that they were no longer curses, announcements of retribution, judgement and punishment, but that they aimed at forgiveness, peace and kindness, which was already clarified in the previous sub-chapter. This new conception of the Woe is briefly summarised in \*Rom 12:14: "Bless and curse not!"

In contrast, according to Tertullian, a God who renounces curses or formulates ones that turn cursing on its head and presents himself as the supreme God of love seems like a "God of Epicurus", "who does not punish man even for his own sins".[[39]](#footnote-39) Tertullian quotes the first theological poem of Lucrece:[[40]](#footnote-40) "In the midst of the present troubled times" (*belli fera moenera* [32], *patriai tempore iniquo* [41]), in which Venus is invoked as the fine servant of *Mavors* *armipotens*, there exists an image "in which Mars lies in the womb of Venus, embracing and nestling with the wish: give us peace!"[[41]](#footnote-41)

It is not by chance that Tertullian cites this Epicurean passage to ridicule Marcion's Paul. For Tertullian, as with Lucretius, Paul's God evoked a peaceful existence of a carefree life that was blessed and undisturbed.[[42]](#footnote-42) Marcion's Woes were consequently nothing more than exhortations without a trace of a hint of punishment,[[43]](#footnote-43) inconceivable for Tertullian that God should be degraded, as one would say since the 18th century, to a *laissez-faire* or *dolce far niente* symbol who exhorts but "does not punish".[[44]](#footnote-44)

This radicalism of Marcion's Paul and Marcion's Gospel, which even the rich does not threaten, neither with vengeance nor with punishment, accepts those who laugh and who are in good standing, seems absurd to Tertullian. However, Tertullian also mentions other interpreters than Marcion, "who, though they take the curses seriously, do not derive these Woes from Christ's own judgement", but put them into the mouth of the Creator.[[45]](#footnote-45) Possibly Tertullian is thus criticising Marcionites, perhaps he is also complaining about Gospels, above all Mt, which he otherwise often uses, which suppressed the Woes. However, both positions lead to the same result for Tertullian. For both times he sees the strictness of the Creator criticised, because through the supreme God "a greater recommendation for tolerance" is given, which in Tertullian's eyes ultimately means a bankruptcy of Christian ethics.[[46]](#footnote-46)

Luccio, P. d. (2009). "Son of Man, Sons of the Woman, and Teachers of the Law: Eschatological Features of the Gospel Beatitudes, With a Selected Bibliography on the “Son of Man”." Estudios Eclesiásticos 85, 337-353.

1. H.D. Betz, The Sermon on the Mount (1995), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. P. DiLuccio, ‘The “Son of Man” and the Eschatology of the Q Beatitudes’ (2007); P.d. Luccio, Son of Man, Sons of the Woman, and Teachers of the Law: Eschatological Features of the Gospel Beatitudes, With a Selected Bibliography on the “Son of Man” (2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See chapter 2, p. xxx. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. P.d. Luccio, Son of Man, Sons of the Woman, and Teachers of the Law: Eschatological Features of the Gospel Beatitudes, With a Selected Bibliography on the “Son of Man” (2009), 341. See already before, chapter 2. DiLuccio sees the messianic interpretation of the Palestinian Targumim to Gen 3:15 to be a reflection and answer to Lk 6:22 (a text nearly identical with \*Ev 6:22). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Tert., Adv. Marc. I 6,1: „iudicem, ferum, bellipotentem.“ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Tert., Adv. Marc. I 24,3: „Quem enim iudicem tenes, dispensatorem.“ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Tert., Adv. Marc. II 2,6: „maxime magnus cum homini pusillus, et tunc maxime optimus cum homini non bonus, et tunc maxime unus cum homini duo aut plures.“ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Iren., Adv. haer. III 23,6: „ invidens.“ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Tert., Adv. Marc. III 4,1-2: „… acerbissimi creatoris.“ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Tert., Adv. Marc. III 14,7: „Sic bellipotens et armiger Christus creatoris.“ [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Tert., Adv. Marc. IV 27,1: „Ecce inaequalis et ipse, inconstans, levis, aliud docens aliud faciens, iubet omni petenti dare, et ipse signum petentibus non dat.“ [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Tert., Adv. Marc. I 24,3: „… si forte, bonitatis ostendis intellegendum, non profusorem, quod deo tuo vindicas.“ [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Tert., Adv. Marc. I 6,1: „alterum mitem, placidum et tantummodo bonum atque optimum.“ [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See A.R. Hands, Charities and social aid in Greece and Rome (1968), 77-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. It is probably also due to this tendency that Mt inserts the two further Beatitudes that are not found in Marcion and Lk (that the "meek" inherit "the earth" is possibly a criticism of Marcion, who despises this earth and the land; the anti-Marcionite tendency is also evident in the next Makarismos), as well as those concerning the hunger "for righteousness" (righteousness or justice as a divine attribute and therefore also as something desirable had just been rejected by Marcion, as we have seen above, cf. also Tert, Adv. Marc. IV 29,16; V 14,6-7, and in contrast the further Makarismos in Mt 5:10), the "merciful", "pure in heart" and "peacemakers". In contrast to Marcion, "justice" or “righteousness” is the leading theme for Mt, according to U. Luz, Das Evangelium nach Matthäus. 1. Teilband: Mt 1-7 (1985), 199-202; W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew. Volume 1: Introduction and Commentary on Matthew I-VII (1988), 499; H.D. Betz and A.Y. Collins, The Sermon on the mount. A commentary on the Sermon on the mount, including the Sermon on the plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49) (1995), 130. On "justice" in Mt and the Jewish background see also J.C. Thom, Justice in the Sermon on the Mount: An Aristotelian Reading (2009), 338. Having made the comparison between Mt and Aristotle, Thom concludes that Mt is radically different, and as others have pointed out, draws on Jewish ideas, B. Przybylski, Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought (1980). See also M. Hengel, Zur matthäischen Bergpredigt und ihrem jüdischen Hintergrund (1987); H. Giesen, Christliches Handeln. Eine redaktionskritische Untersuchung zum Dikaiosyne-Begriff im Matthäus-Evangelium (1982).After all, "justice" occurs seven times in Mt, of which five times in the Sermon on the Mount alone, while in Lk this term is found only in the Lucan redaction (Lk 1:75), i.e. not in the textual inventory, which is identical with that of the \*Ev; in addition, it still occurs in Jn 16:8, 10, cf. J.C. Thom, Justice in the Sermon on the Mount: An Aristotelian Reading (2009), 314-315. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. G.M. Zerbe, Non-Retaliation in Early Jewish and New Testament Texts: Ethical Themes in Social Contexts (1993), 294; G.M. Zerbe, Economic justice and nonretaliation in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Implications for New Testament interpretation (2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. P.d. Luccio, Son of Man, Sons of the Woman, and Teachers of the Law: Eschatological Features of the Gospel Beatitudes, With a Selected Bibliography on the “Son of Man” (2009), 348. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. H. Schürmann, Das Lukasevangelium II 1. Kommentar zu Kap. 9,51-11,54 (1993), 331 n. 342; P.d. Luccio, Son of Man, Sons of the Woman, and Teachers of the Law: Eschatological Features of the Gospel Beatitudes, With a Selected Bibliography on the “Son of Man” (2009), 347. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. A rabbinic response in this regard is found in Cant. Rabb. 1:6, par. 1, where it is insisted that the killing of the prophets of 1 Kings 9:14 was a matter for the Jews and others should not care what Jews do to their prophets, H.-J. Schoeps, Aus frühchristlicher Zeit. Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen (1950), 126-143, 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Tert., Adv. Marc. V 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. H.-J. Schoeps, Aus frühchristlicher Zeit. Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen (1950), 126-143. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See, for example, Jes 3:10-11; Eccl 10:16-17; Tob 13:12-14; 2 Enoch 52; syr Bar 10:6-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. A.A. Orlov, The Enoch-Metatron Tradition (2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. A noticeable exception is S. Agouridès, La tradition des béatitudes chez Matthieu et Luc (1970), 23. However, Agouridès argues for Lk’s independence from Mt. In general, the Beatitudes of Lk are much less frequently studied than those of Mt, who manages without the inverted woes. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. P. Klein, Die lukanischen Weherufe Lk 6:24-26 (1980), 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. J.M. Robinson, The critical edition of Q synopsis including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French translations of Q and Thomas (2000), lxxii. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *Pace* H. Schürmann, Das Lukasevangelium II/1 (1993), 337. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. A.v. Harnack, Marcion. Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott. Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche (1924), 205-208\*. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. So also E.U. Schüle, Der Ursprung des Bösen bei Marcion (1964), 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Tert., Adv. Marc. IV 27,10. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Tert., Adv. Marc. V 14,11. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Tert., Adv. Marc. V 14,11-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Tert., Adv. Marc. IV 25,15.18. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. M. Klinghardt, The Oldest Gospel and the Formation of the Canonical Gospels (2021), 792-804. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. The same term κληρονομήσω sounds less commercial in Lk. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Tert., Adv. Marc. IV 25,15. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Tert., Adv. Marc. IV 25,1. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. See M. Klinghardt, The Oldest Gospel and the Formation of the Canonical Gospels (2021), 799. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Tert., Adv. Marc. IV 15,1. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Lucr. I. 44-49; see P. Friedländer, The Epicurean Theology in Lucretius' First Prooemium (Lucr. I. 44-49) (1939); R. Braun, Tertullien et les poètes latins (1992), 101-106. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. P. Friedländer, The Epicurean Theology in Lucretius' First Prooemium (Lucr. I. 44-49) (1939), 368. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid. 369. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Tert., Adv. Marc. IV 15,3. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Tert., Adv. Marc. IV 15,4. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)