



Faith, Law, and Redemption in Jesus and Paul:  
Reformation Themes and Christian-Jewish Relations

Geloof, wet en verlossing bij Jezus en Paulus:  
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## Forgiveness of Sins: An Enochic Problem, a Synoptic Answer

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### **1. Introduction**

In the Synoptics there are no explicit references to the character of Enoch (except as a name in the genealogy of Jesus by Luke), even when, like in the episode of the Transfiguration, the ancient patriarch would have fit very well in a narrative located in Upper Galilee, near Mount Hermon, where the exalted Jesus met the other exalted figures of the ancient Jewish tradition (Elijah of course, but why Moses and not Enoch?). In the Synoptics there are no direct quotations from the Enoch texts (apart from the complex and controversial issue of the "Son of Man"). The Synoptics seems to ignore completely the existence of that written tradition mentioned in the Book of Jubilees or in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, which through Enoch many Second Temple Jews believed went back to the Tablets of Heaven.

Nonetheless the modern interpreter cannot help "feeling" a special connection between the Jesus and the Enoch movement: they share a common apocalyptic worldview, a common understanding concerns about the disruptive presence of the evil spirits and the power of Satan on earth, they both hope for the coming of the kingdom of God and the redemption of the poor. The relations between the Enoch and the Jesus movement are enigmatic.

The problem of the kind of Judaism from which the Jesus movement was born is inescapable. In history there is no such thing as a social group that suddenly emerges coming from nowhere, taking a little from everywhere. The puzzle cannot be easily solved by arguing multiple (and equally relevant) influences. Origins and influences are not coincidental. Obviously, if we compare the Synoptics with what we know about any of the Jewish movements of the Second Temple period we can only reach the conclusion that they did not belong to any. The Synoptics are not a product of "Enochic Judaism": they are evidence of a stage in the formation of the Jesus movement in which the new group had already reached a conceptual and distinctive autonomy not only from the Enochic movement but from all the other Second Temple Jewish movements of the time. The Jesus movement was - according to all parameters -- a Jewish messianic and apocalyptic movement but it would be incorrect to try and label it according to any other known Jewish movement of the time (Pharisaic, Essene, Sadducean, Enochic, Zealot, or Jewish Hellenistic). The Synoptics present a new "building" centered around the figure of Jesus the Messiah, a building that stands along the other buildings to form the skyline of Second Temple Judaism, with an identical mixture of continuity and discontinuity with the previous Jewish traditions. The problem is simply ill-posed. When we ask the question of the origins of the Jesus movement, in reality we inquire about the kind of Judaism from which the early followers of Jesus developed their own interpretation of Judaism and inherited the open questions they tried to answer.

The goal of my paper is to go beyond the search for quotations, allusion, parallels and influences. I aim to explore the relationship between the Jesus and the Enoch tradition from a different angle, that of "premises". Was the Enochic worldview the starting point, the necessary premise (or at least one of the fundamental premises) of the theology of the Synoptics? My exploration will focus on a central theme, that of God's forgiveness of sins.

## **2. Forgiveness of sins in the Synoptics**

There are discussions whether, how, or to what extent the theme of forgiveness of sins was part of the teachings of the historical John the Baptist and Jesus. Some scholars have suggested that it was rather a later addition of the Synoptics but the issue here is not about the historical John the Baptist or Jesus but about Enoch and the Synoptics (see Tobias Hägerland, *Jesus and the Forgiveness of Sins*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012). However, one cannot deny that in the tradition of the Synoptics "forgiveness of sins" is (or has become) a central element: John preached a baptism for "forgiveness of sin", Jesus was the "Son of Man who had the authority on earth to forgive sins," and after the death of Jesus his followers began baptizing in his name a baptism for the forgiveness of sins. In the Synoptics, God's forgiveness of sins through Jesus is a crucial piece of good news connected with the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The Gospel of Mark claims that "John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk 1:4). Mark then introduces Jesus as a man

of authority, somebody who could tell the paralytic: "My son, your sins are forgiven" without committing blasphemy, since "the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Mk 2:1-10). Mark sees Jesus' power of healing as a manifestation of God's forgiveness: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners." (Mk 2:17). Apart from the sin of "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit", there are no limits to God's forgiveness--"everything will be forgiven to the children of man, the sins and the blasphemies" (Mk 3:28-29).

Matthew and Luke basically repeat Mark's message on these issues, with some significant additions. Matthew claims that Jesus' blood was "poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28), thus attributing a forgiving power to the death of Jesus--a theme already dear to Paul and destined to become central in later Christian traditions. Luke adds the episode of the sinful woman who in the Pharisee's house anointed the feet of Jesus. That the episode is likely a secondary transformation of the narrative of the anointing of Jesus at Bethany, does not reduce the importance of the episode. Whatever reason Luke may have had to censor the anointing at Bethany, he could have simply suppressed the narrative. Instead he decided to turn it into a new episode, which combines elements from the healing of the paralytic (i.e., the questioning by the Pharisees and the explicit declaration of authority by Jesus) with elements from the calling of the tax collector (Mk 2:13-17; Mt 9:9-13; Lk 5:27-32), where in a similar context of a banquet the recipient of the gift of forgiveness is not symbolically a sick person but explicitly a sinner. Rhetorically, the centrality of the idea of forgiveness of sins is emphasized by the creation of an episode in which Jesus himself reiterates Luke's own belief that the Messiah had "authority" to say: "Your sins are forgiven" (Lk 7:36-50). In both Matthew and Luke, the tendency is thus to reiterate Mark's message on forgiveness and expand it by building new narratives around this theme or interpreting other aspects of Jesus life (like his death on the cross) in light of it.

The way in which Acts consistently retells the life of Jesus and the message of the early Church, attests and confirms that the announcement of forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus was perceived as a central belief by the new community. Peter's first speech in Jerusalem at Pentecost set the tone: "And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2: 38). The numerous references to this theme in Acts (5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18) and in the letters of Paul seems to indicate that the preaching of forgiveness of sins was indeed an established practice and belief in the early Jesus movement at the time in which the Synoptic were composed.

### **3. Forgiveness of sins in the Enoch tradition**

While the centrality of forgiveness of sins in the theology of the Synoptics (and in the practice of the early Church) is obvious, it is more difficult to understand *why* this theme became so central, if not in Jesus himself, at least in his movement. At first the comparison with the Enochic tradition may look like an odd choice. The early Enochic literature, from the Book of the Watchers to the Epistle of Enoch, does not provide any parallel. On the contrary, not only is there no reference to forgiveness of sins but the very idea of forgiveness of sins seems to be radically denied. The first mission given to Enoch is to announce to the fallen angels that "there will be no forgiveness for them." (1 En 12). Enoch was chosen by God not as a preacher of forgiveness, but rather as a

messenger of unforgiveness. A compassionate Enoch indeed accepted to intercede on behalf of the fallen angels and "drew up a petition for them that they might find forgiveness, and to read their petition in the presence of the Lord of Heaven." (13: 4-5) but only to be lectured by God. Enoch had to report back to the fallen angels that such a petition "will not be accepted." The last word of God leaves no room for any hope of forgiveness. "Say to them: You have no peace" (16:4).

The result is that the best parallel provided by the early Enoch tradition is with the only passage in the Synoptic tradition where God's unforgiveness is announced against those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit ("whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" Mark 3:29; cf. Matthew, Luke). The Synoptics seem to have learned well from Enoch that even a tradition which proclaims that everything can be forgiven, has to set a limit to God's forgiveness.

Both Dream Visions and the Epistle of Enoch draw a clear distinction between the righteous and the sinners and make no reference to forgiveness of sins. In the Animal Apocalypse there are white sheep who open their eyes but no black sheep becomes white. In the Epistle of Enoch the opposition between the righteous and the sinners is turned into a sociological conflict between the rich and the poor, the oppressors and the oppressed, the haves and the have nots.

Once again this is a lesson that the Synoptics seem to share, especially Luke, whose series of blessings and woes in the Beatitudes echoes the language of the Epistle of Enoch. Once again, the Enoch tradition shows no interest in any call for repentance, but rather in the good news of God's vengeance. We might conclude that the idea of an uncompromised opposition between God and evil and the idea of an equally uncompromised opposition between the rich and the poor is what the Synoptics seem to have learned from the early Enoch tradition, in spite of the new emphasis on forgiveness of sins.

The question then arises from where the Synoptics derived their idea of repentance and God's forgiveness. The tension between these two concepts—God's unlimited forgiveness and God's uncompromised opposition to evil—is so strong that the Synoptics feel compelled to explain why not everybody is expected to convert and repent: "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; 12 in order that 'they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.'" (Mk 4:11-12).

Should we then look at the Enochic tradition as an apocalyptic tradition that limited the Synoptics, "forcing" or "helping" them not to go too far in the path of forgiveness? Or were the Enoch texts evidence of a tradition that the early Christians had to fight against? In both scenarios, the idea of forgiveness of sins would be then a unique original development by the Synoptics, beyond the limits originally set by the Enochic tradition, perhaps the result of "other" influences from unidentified sources or from the heritage of the earlier prophetic tradition. But is this the case?

#### **4. The Book of Parables of Enoch**

At first the Book of Parables seems to reiterate in its language and imagery the same uncompromised opposition between the oppressed and the oppressors, which we have seen in the Epistle of Enoch. In 1 Enoch 48 the emphasis is on the Last Judgment and the revelation of the Messiah Son of Man. The reference is explicitly to Daniel 7, but contrary to the source text, the Son of Man is not the recipient of God's judgment but is now the Judge, sitting on the throne of God.

The oppressed are saved in the name of God as they are filled with good works and have hated the world of unrighteousness:

"And the wisdom of the Lord of Spirits has revealed him to the holy and righteous; for he has preserved the lot of the righteous, because they have hated and despised this world of unrighteousness, and have hated all its works and ways in the name of the Lord of Spirits: for in his name they are saved, and according to his good pleasure has it been in regard to their life." (1 En 48:7)

An opposite destiny awaits the sinners; they will not be saved "because of the works of their hands":

"In those days, downcast in countenance shall the kings of the earth have become, and the strong who possess the land because of the works of their hands, for on the day of their anguish and affliction they shall not (be able to) save themselves. And I will give them over into the hands of my elect: as straw in the fire so shall they burn before the face of the holy: as lead in the water shall they sink before the face of the righteous, and no trace of them shall any more be found. And on the day of their affliction there shall be rest on the earth, and before them they shall fall and not rise again: and there shall be no one to take them with his hands and raise them: for they have denied the Lord of Spirits and His Anointed. The name of the Lord of Spirits be blessed. (1 En 48:8-10).

Then after a brief interlude (ch. 49) praising the justice of God and the Elect, suddenly in chapter 50 a third group ("the others") is singled out besides the righteous and the sinners--they are "those who repent and abandon the works of their hands."

"1 And in those days a change shall take place for the holy and chosen, and the light of days will dwell upon them, and glory and honor will return to the holy, 2 On the day of distress, evil will be stored up against the sinners. And the righteous will be victorious in the name of the Lord of Spirits: and He will cause the others to witness (this), so that they may repent and abandon the works of their hands. 3 They will have < no > honor in the presence of the Lord of Spirits, yet through His name they will be saved, and the Lord of Spirits will have mercy on them, for great is His mercy. 4 And He is righteous in His judgement, and in the presence of His glory unrighteousness will not stand: at His judgement the unrepentant will perish in His presence. 5 "And hereafter I will have no mercy on them," says the Lord of Spirits.

In the context of the Enochic tradition, the passage is extremely important as for the first time introduces the idea of repentance at the time of the Last Judgment, yet it has not received the

attention it deserves and has been mistranslated and misinterpreted even in the most recent and comprehensive commentaries to the book of Parables by Sabino Chiala' (1997) and George Nickelsburg (2012).

With the majority of manuscripts and all previous translations, Chiala' correctly translates verse 3 as 'they will have no honor' (Eth. kebr)", in the sense that they will have no "merit" before God. In the commentary however Chiala understands the verse as referred to the "righteous": "they" (not the others) are the subject of the sentence. Chiala' takes then the verse as a general statement that God's judgment is based exclusively on God's Mercy even for the "righteous," who cannot claim any "honor" before God. But this contradicts what the Book of Parables had said in chapter 48; the righteous have good works, while the sinners do not. Besides, here the author refers to "the others" (the ones who repent and abandon the works of their hands) as it is proved by the fact that the following verses (4-5) continue the discussion about repentance not "righteousness", to the extent that "the sinners" are now denoted as "the unrepentant."

Nickelsburg correctly identifies the "others" as a distinctive group—an intermediate group between the righteous and the sinners, but understands them as a subgroup of "the righteous" who may not have the same merits but will share the same destiny. "Given the references to the righteous and their oppressors in vv. 1-2b, 'the others' mentioned in this action must be either the gentiles not included among the oppressors of the righteous or other Israelites not included among the righteous, the holy, and the chosen" (Nickelsburg, p. 182). To reinforce his own interpretation Nickelsburg quite arbitrarily "corrects" the text, based on the testimony of only two manuscripts against most mss. (and previous translations, like Charles and Chiala'), and suppress the negative ("they will have *no* honor"). Like the righteous, the others will have "honor" before God and will be saved in His Name. But "the others" are not defined in the text for who they are but for what they do ("they repent and abandon the works of their hands"). Nickelsburg's interpretation that the "works of their hands" is a reference to idolatry is contradicted by the fact that the text here repeats the same phrase used in 48:8 to denote the sinners ("the strong who possess the land because of the works of their hands... will not be saved"). "The others" are not "good gentiles" or "not-so-bad Israelites"; like the sinners they can claim no honor before God.

Both Chiala' and Nickelsburg miss the revolutionary importance of the text, which at the end of times envisions the emergence of a third group beside "the righteous" and "the sinners." The righteous have "honor" (merit, good works) and are saved in the name of God, while "the sinners" have no honor (no good works) and are not saved in the name of God. The others are not a subgroup of the righteous nor a less guilty group of sinners or gentiles, but as the text explicitly states, they are rather a subgroup of the sinners who will repent and abandon the works of their hands. Like the sinners (and unlike the righteous), the "others" have no "honor" (no merit or good works) before God, but because of their repentance they will be saved in the name of God, like the righteous (and unlike the sinners).

In other words, the text explores the relation between the Justice and Mercy of God, a theme that we would find at the center of the Jesus movement and broadly discuss also in the early rabbinic movement. According to the Book of Parables, the righteous are saved according to God's Justice and Mercy, and the sinners are condemned according to God's Justice and Mercy, but those who repent will be saved by God's Mercy even though they should not be saved according to God's

Justice. Repentance makes God's Mercy prevail on God's Justice. No reference is made to the traditional means of atonement related to the Temple or good works; the Book of Parables refers to the time of the manifestation of God and the Messiah as a (short) time in which a last opportunity of repentance will be offered to the sinners. The time is limited: after the judgment absolutely no further chance of forgiveness will be offered to "the unrepentant." The ones who do not repent will be lost forever.

The Book of Parables does not attribute forgiveness to the Messiah, who remains the judge and destroyer of evil. Yet the text signals a radical turn in a tradition that had never paid attention to the problem of repentance or forgiveness of sin, if not in order to exclude such a possibility. Repentance is now a central theme in the book of Parables; it is so important that it becomes now clear why one of the four archangels (besides Michael, Raphael and Gabriel) was said to be specifically entitled to this task--"Phanuel, who is set over the repentance unto hope of those who inherit eternal life" (1 En 40:9). The text does not further elaborate on these points, but if we read the Synoptics about the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus, it is like reading a midrash of 1 Enoch 50. Regardless of the issue whether or not this interpretation reflects, "adjusts" or corrects what the historical John the Baptist and the historical Jesus "really" did or meant to do, from the view point of the Synoptics the time of the end has come and God's Messiah has been revealed in Jesus. The prophecy of 1 Enoch 50 does no longer belong to the future but has become true in the manifestation "on earth" of the Son of Man Jesus and his precursor John. Their entire mission would be devoted to "the others."

## **5. Reading the Synoptics in light of Enoch**

From the vantage point of the Synoptics John the Baptist was not primarily the popular preacher recorded by Josephus, the "wise man" who lived in the wilderness, had numerous disciples and was executed by Herod Antipas. John was the precursor of the Son of Man Jesus. He came to announce (or should we now say to remind people?) that "those who repent and abandon the works of their hands" will be saved by God's Mercy, even though they have "no honor" before God.

This was the mission of John the Baptist, as interpreted by the Synoptics. His mediation was essential to prepare the path for the preaching of Jesus as well as the development of his movement. The function of eschatological judge immediately connects the Messiah announced by John to the "Son of Man" of the Parables of Enoch (and not to the traditions related to the Messiah Son of David). The imminent coming of the eschatological Judge who will cleanse the earth with fire, makes urgent repentance and "forgiveness of sins" for those who in this world have "no honor." The urgency of John's call is consistent with the Book of Parables' view that that at the end only a small window will be opened to repentance and there will be no time afterwards.

Facing the Judge and the "fire" of judgment only means certain annihilation for the sinners. The solution indicated by John the Baptist is also based on a narrative central in the Enochic tradition--the purifying value that the Enochian tradition attributed to the water. The model was that offered by the Flood, when the earth had already been immersed in order to limit the spread of evil. "Be baptized with water; otherwise, you will be baptized with the fire of judgment by the Son of Man"—this seems to be in essence the original message of John the Baptist, as understood by the

Synoptics, an interpretation that does not contradict the interest of the Christian authors to present it as a prophecy of the Christian baptism (by the Holy Spirit). That expressed by John the Baptist was a call based on the prophecy of the Book of Parables (ch. 50). At the end of times God will offer the sinners a last chance. If a sinner sincerely repents and abandons the works of his/her hands, even though such a person has no honor before God, God's Mercy will prevail on God's Justice, and he/she will be saved in God's Name. As in the Parables (and contrary to what the Synoptics would claim about Jesus), the Messiah has no part in the work of forgiveness and remains the judge and destroyer of evil.

Similar ideas find an echo also in the Life of Adam and Eve, a text also generally dated in the first century CE, in which the sinner Adam does penance for 40 days immersed in the waters of the Jordan (and it is not by accident that John baptized in living water of the Jordan). The first man (and first sinner) is driven by one steadfast hope: "Maybe God will have mercy on me" (Vita 4.3). His plea to be allowed back in the Garden of Eden will not be accepted, but at the time of his death, his soul will not be handed over to the devil, as his crime deserved, but carry out to heaven, as God decided in His mercy, despite the complaints of Satan.

While John the Baptist was the precursor who announced the urgency of repentance, Jesus is the Son of Man who had authority on earth to forgive sins, left to his disciple the power of forgiveness through baptism "with the Holy Spirit," and will return with the angels to perform the judgment with fire. The relative absence of explicit messianic statements by Jesus in the Synoptics is also not surprising. "Messiah", as it should now be evident, was in the first century an extremely vague and ambiguous term (the Parables also used it only once). The primary need and challenge for any messianic pretender in the first century was rather to clarify the characteristics of his messianic claims. It then becomes even more relevant that Jesus was assigned only and exclusively sayings that related him to the "Son of Man." The only case in which Jesus mentions the Messiah "son of David" is to deny the concept entirely. To the "[Pharisaic] scribes [who] say that the Messiah is the son of David", Jesus polemically replies that it cannot be because "David himself calls him 'Lord': How then can he be his son?" (Mark 12:35-37). The messianic idea that the Synoptics refer to is the same as the Enochian belief in "Son of Man," a pre-existing heavenly figure, whose name is "hidden" from the moment of creation to the time of the end, when he reveals himself as the Judge, and "comes in the glory of the Father with his angels" (Mark 8.38). With the coming of the Son of Man, the power of the 'strong man' of this world is put to end, for "someone stronger than he" has come (Luke 11:22), one who has the power to "tie him up" and "plunder his house" (Mark 3:27). The "blasphemy" of which Jesus was guilty before the high priest was neither the messianic self-proclamation by a prisoner without power (such proclamation would have been a matter of pity or laughter) nor a statement of divine identity (which is not implied in the question of the high priest nor in the answer of Jesus). Facing the question of his messiahship, which for all Jews involved a special father-son relationship with the Father ("Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed?"), Jesus claimed a superhuman, heavenly identity, "Yes, I am! And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mk 14:61-62).

Jesus' answer reveals the significant and scandalous variations that the Synoptics introduced into the Enochic model, where forgiveness of sins is promised at the end but no role is given to the Messiah in this task. From the Synoptic perspective, the Son of Man who will come from heaven



as the eschatological Judge, has already been manifested on earth in Jesus of Nazareth. The Christian uniqueness lies exactly in this: "The Son of Man has power [and the mission] on earth to forgive sins (Mk 2:1-12, cf. Mt 9:1-8, Luke 5:17-26). The statement sounds like "blasphemy" for those who maintain that the Messiah (the son of David) will be the leader of Israel in the world to come, but not the savior and redeemer of the individual, whose justice is measured by God the Judge according to the Torah, but also breaks the tradition of Enoch that had presented the Son of Man exclusively as the final judge from heaven, and not as the forgiver "on earth."

In this, according to the Synoptics, also lies the superiority of Jesus over John. The baptism of John was a call to the sinners to become "the others" through repentance. At the end only "the unrepentant" will be damned. But John could only express a hope, based on the prophecy of Enoch and the belief that God is good and merciful and cannot remain insensitive to the cries of anguish of sinners who, like Adam in the Life of Adam and Eve, plea to God in repentance and faith. According to his followers, Jesus offered a more concrete perspective as the promise of forgiveness comes from the Son of Man himself. Who can have more authority to forgive than the one whom God has delegated as the eschatological Judge?

The Synoptics do not merely repeat the Enochic model of the Parables. Yet, the Enochic concept of the existence of a time of repentance immediately before the judgment and the prophecy that at that point "the sinners" will divide between "the repentant" (the others) and "the unrepentant" is the necessary "premise" of the mission of the Son of Man on earth. Jesus was not sent to "the righteous" but to "the sinners" so that they may repent. God is like a good shepherd who search for the lost sheep; Jesus was sent to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 10:6) There is no evidence in the Synoptics of a universal mission of Jesus to every person; the righteous do not need the doctor; Jesus was the doctor sent to heal the sinners (Mark 2:17; Matthew 9:13), as Luke makes explicit: "I have come to call not the righteous but the sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32).

Reading the Synoptics in light of the book of Parables sheds light also on some parables that the Christian tradition attributed to Jesus. The parable of the Lost Sheep (Mt 18:10-14; Luke 15:1-7) defines the relationship between God and "the others": Luke's parables of the Prodigal son (15:11-32) reiterates the theme but also adding a teaching about the relationship between "the righteous" and "the others", between those who have honor and are saved because have never abandoned the house of the Father and those who have no honor and yet are saved as well since they have repented and abandoned the works of their hands. The examples could be multiplied, but no parable seems more effective to me than the one narrated by Matthew on the Workers in the Vineyard (Mt 20:1-16). The householder who pays the same salary for different "measures" of work, gives the full reward (salvation) to the "righteous" and to the "others" as 1 Enoch 50 (in the Parables) claimed that God will also do in the Last Judgment. God's Mercy ("Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or to you begrudge my generosity?") wins God's Justice, or as the Letter of James would say, "Mercy triumphs over judgment (Gk. katakauchatai eleos kriseos)" (James 2:13).

The contrast with the Rabbinic tradition could not be stronger. The rabbis freely discuss the relation between the two middot, God's measures of Justice and Mercy, providing flexible answers to the issue. Mishnah Sotah (1:7-9) sticks to the principle, "With what measure a man metes it shall be measured to him again," and affirms that "with the same measure" God gives Justice when

punishing evil deeds and Mercy when rewarding good deed. On the other hand, the parallel text in Tosefta Sotah (3:1--4:19) claims that "the measure of Mercy is five hundred times greater than the measure of Justice." But the two divine attributes are never opposed as in the Book of Parables and in the early Christian tradition; on the contrary, their necessarily complementary nature is emphasized. Not accidentally, the "rabbinic" version of the parables will end with different words in which God's Mercy is praised but God's Justice is not denied: "This one did more work in two hours than the rest of you did working all day long" (Jerusalem Talmud, Berakhot 2:8).

## **6. Conclusion**

Although there is no evidence of literary dependence, the Synoptic tradition reads and interprets the experience of John the Precursor and Jesus the Messiah by borrowing its categories from the Book of Parables, or better from the traditions of the Book of Parables, to the point that the gospels could be understood almost as a midrash to 1 Enoch 50 in a perspective of realized eschatology-- John the Baptist and Jesus have fulfilled the Enochic prophecy. At the center is the destiny of the righteous, the sinners and the others now that "end is near." The Synoptics add some new elements, which indeed differentiate the Jesus movement from the Enochic model, and yet do not separate it from the world of Second Temple Judaism at large. These elements enhance the specificity of the Jesus movement in relation not only to the Sadducees and the Pharisees, but also in relation to its Enochic roots and to the message of John the Baptist himself. In the Synoptics, Jesus becomes the protagonist of a "prologue on earth" that precedes, and prepares for, the heavenly judgment of the Messiah Son of Man, who is now both the forgiver on earth and the eschatological Judge. The possibility of repentance announced by the Parables of Enoch and John the Baptist as one of the signs of the end becomes the center of the activity of the Messiah Jesus, who came as the Son of Man who has authority on earth to forgive sins. In baptizing in his name the early church continues and prolongs Jesus' message of forgiveness as an instrument of God's Mercy, until Jesus will return to perform the judgment and no further time for repentance will be then allowed. The Jesus movement was not an Enochic movement but an outgrowth of the Enochic movement. The Synoptics are not Enochic texts, but an answer to an Enochic problem.