THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME ‘METATRON’
AND THE TEXT OF 2 (SLAVONIC APOCALYPSE OF) Enoch

Andrei Orlov
Abilene Christian University
ACU Station, Box 27873,
Abilene, TX 79699, USA

The history of scholarship on 2 Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch (hereafter 2 En.) has produced no real consensus concerning the possible provenience of this apocalypse. Rather, there are numerous scholarly positions. These conclusions are most likely the consequences of the differ-

1. This study has benefited considerably from the comments and kindnesses of the following scholars who read the MS and preliminary materials at various stages: Professors Christfried Böttrich, James Charlesworth, John Collins, April De Connick, Ian Fair, Everett Ferguson, Daniel Matt, André Resner, E.P. Sanders, Alan Segal, Carolyn Thompson, James Thompson, James VanderKam, Ben Zion Wacholder.

2. F.I. Andersen in his English translation of 2 Enoch notes that ‘there must be something very peculiar about a work when one scholar concludes that it was written by a hellenized Jew in Alexandria in the first century BCE while another argues that it was written by a Christian monk in Byzantium in the ninth century CE’. See F.I. Andersen, ‘2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch’, in OTP, I, p. 95.

ent backgrounds and perspectives which scholars have brought to their study of 2 Enoch.


4. The term ‘Merkabah’ is closely connected with the term which designates the mystical interpretation (‘Ma’ase Merkabah’—‘The Account of the Chariot’ or ‘The Works of the Divine Chariot’) of the first chapter of Ezekiel. Earliest traces of the Merkabah tradition are situated in apocalyptic and Qumran literature. However, as Gruenwald notes, the main corpus of the Merkabah literature was composed in Israel in the period 200–700 CE. Some references to this tradition can be found also in the literature of German Hasidim (twelfth to thirteenth centuries CE) and medieval Cabalistic writings (the Zohar).

The term ‘Hekhaloth’ (‘Divine Palaces’) designates the corpus of literature that first gives a full-scale presentation of Merkabah mysticism (the beginning of the circle of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai and his pupils).

Among the leading pioneers of this approach stand Gershom Scholem and Hugo Odeberg.5 Odeberg may well be the first scholar who pointed out that the descriptions of celestial titles for Enoch in 2 Enoch are the most important evidences of possible connections between it and texts of the Merkabah tradition.

In these descriptions of celestial titles, one may find the origin of another image of Enoch, quite distinct from early Enoch literature, which was later developed in Merkabah mysticism—the image of the angel Metatron, ‘The Prince of Presence’. The Slavonic text provides rudimentary descriptions of several traditional Merkabah titles of Metatron-Enoch, (e.g., ‘the Lad’, ‘the Scribe’, ‘the Prince of the World’, ‘the Prince of Presence’).6 Keeping these manifestations of Merkabah sym-


bolism in mind, this article will focus upon only one of these titles of Enoch, namely, ‘The Prince, or the Governor, of the World’. The article will also explore some Slavonic terminology related to this title which may yield insight into the origin of the name ‘Metatron’.

The Merkabah tradition stresses the role of Metatron as the ‘governing power over the nations, kingdoms and rulers on earth’. 

Sefer Heikhaloth pictures Metatron as the Prince of the World, the leader of 72 princes of the kingdom of the world, who speaks (pleads) in favor of the world before the Holy One. Chapter 43 of the short recension of 2 Enoch and a similar passage of the text of 2 Enoch in the Slavonic collection ‘The Just Balance’ reveal Enoch in his new celestial role. Both texts outline Enoch’s instructions to his children, during his brief return to the earth, in which he mentions his new role as the Governor or the Guide of the earth:

Blessed is he who understands all works of the Lord (and glorifies Him): and, because of His work, knows the Creator. And behold my children, I am the Governor of the earth, promotaya, I wrote (them) down. And the whole year I combined and the hours of the day. And the hours I measured: and I wrote down every seed on earth. And I compared every measure and the just balance I measured.

An important aspect of both passages is the Slavonic term promotaya, which follows Enoch’s title, ‘The Governor of the World’. This term was deliberately left in its original Slavonic form in order to preserve its authentic phonetic image. Promotaya represents an etymological enigma for experts in Slavonic, since it is found solely in the text of 2 Enoch. It should be stressed again that there is no other Slavonic text where the word promotaya is documented.

Prominent Russian linguist I. Szeznecsky, in his Slavonic dictionary, which is still considered by experts as the most reliable tool of Slavonic etymology, was unable to provide a definition for promotaya. He simply added a question mark with the meaning for the word. The variety of readings for this term in the manuscripts of 2 Enoch shows similar ‘linguistic embarrassment’ among Slavic scribes who most likely had some difficulties discerning the meaning of this ambiguous term. The readings of other manuscripts include promitaya, prometaemaa, pometaya, pametaa.

One possible explanation for the singular occurrence of promotaya is that the word may actually be a Greek term that was left untranslated in the original text for some unknown reason. In fact, 2 Enoch contains a number of transfixed Hebrew and Greek words preserved in their original phonetic form (e.g., Grigori, Ophanim, Raqia Araboth). When I started to investigate the term promotaya more closely, what drew my attention was the root meta, which necessitated further examination of the relationship between the words promotaya and metatron.

Contemporary scholarship does not furnish a consensus concerning the origin of the name ‘Metatron’. In scholarly literature, there are several independent hypotheses about the provenance of the term. I want to draw our attention to one possible interpretation, which could be connected with some materials in 2 Enoch. According to this interpretation, the name ‘Metatron’ may be derived from the Greek word μεταρχή (measure, rule). Adolf Jellinek may well be the first scholar who suggested meta as an alternative explanation of Metatron, on the assumption that Metatron was identical with Horos. 

Gedalialhu Stroumsa in his article, ‘Forms of God: Some Notes on Metatron and Christ’, gives some con-

7. Odeberg, 3 Enoch, p. 81.
8. Here and later I have used Andersen’s English translation and follow his division in chapters (Andersen, ‘2 Enoch’, pp. 102-221).
9. ‘The Just Balance’ (Merilo Prazbednko) is the Slavonic collection of ethical writings in which the existence of 2 Enoch was made public. See M.N. Tichomirov, Merilo Prazbednko po rukopisi XIV veka (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1961).

13. On the other hand, Vaillant in his edition states that promotaya could be identified as a rare verb corresponding to the Greek μεταρχή. The linguistic source of this suggestion remains unknown. Andersen criticizes this translation, pointing out that the meaning is not quite suitable and does not correspond to earlier materials. See Andersen, ‘2 Enoch’, p. 217.
15. Andersen stresses that the variations show ‘theological embarrassment’ among the Slavic scribes (‘2 Enoch’, p. 217).
ving new reasons for the acceptance of this etymology, on the basis that Metatron not only carried God's name, but also measured Him; he was His shiur qomah (the measurement of the Divine Body). Th. In light of this observation, Stroumsa stresses that 'renewed attention should be given to μέτρον and/or metator as a possible etymology of Metatron'. Th.

Matthew Black, in a short article dedicated to the origin of the name Metatron, expounds upon an additional etymological facet of this interpretation of the name. He traces the origin of the name to a previously unnoticed piece of evidence which can be found in Philo's Quaest. in Gen., where, among other titles of the Logos, Black finds the term praemetitor. Th. He further suggests that praemetitor could be traced to the Greek term μέτρησις, the Greek equivalent of the Latin metator, 'measurer', applied to the Logos. Th.

The term praemetitor in its hypothetical meaning as a 'measurer' is an important piece of evidence because it is almost phonetically identical with the Slavonic term prometaya.

Additionally, the term prometaya is incorporated into the passage which describes Enoch as the Measurer of the Lord. In ch. 43 of 2 Enoch, immediately after the use of this term, Enoch makes the following statement:

I have arranged the whole year. And from the year I calculated the months, and from the months I calculated the days, and from the day I calculated the hours. I have measured and noted the hours. And I have distinguished every seed on the earth, and every measure and every righteous scale. I have measured and recorded them. Th.

18. Stroumsa, 'Form(s) of God', p. 287.
19. The idea that the Metatron figure originally came into Judaism from Philo's Logos speculations was a popular thought in German scholarship of the last century. Cf. M. Friedländer, Der vorchristliche Jüdische Gnostizismus (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1898); M. Grünbaum, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sprach-und Sagenkunde (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1901); M. Sachs, Beiträge zur Sprach-und Altertumsforschung (Berlin, 1852); N. Weinstein, Zur Genesis der Agada (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901).
22. Black, 'The Origen of the Name Metatron', p. 218.
29. Philo, Quaest. in Gen.
hypothetical Greek prototypes of *prometaya* could be προμηθεία (προμηθεύς, προμηθεόμαι), in the sense of protection, care, or providence, which could be directly related to the preceding title of Enoch, Governor, Guide of the earth—'I am the Governor of the earth, *prometaya*, I have written them down'.

In conclusion, it is important to note that *prometaya* could represent a very early, rudimentary form of the title that later was transformed into the term 'metatron'. In relation to this, Gershon Scholem, in his analysis of the term 'metatron', shows that the reduplication of the letter tet (τετ) and the ending ron represent a typical pattern that runs through all Merkabah texts. In his opinion, 'both the ending and the repetition of the consonant are observable, for instance, in names like Zoharriel and Adiron'.\(^{31}\) Further, he stresses that it must also be borne in mind that on and ron may have been fixed and typical constituents of secret names rather than meaningful syllables.\(^{32}\)

Thus, keeping in mind the possible date of 2 Enoch in the first century of the common era\(^{33}\) before the destruction of the Second Temple, *prometaya* could be one of the earliest traces connecting the names Enoch and Metatron.

