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The Origin of the Name "Metatron" and the Text of 2 (Slavonic) Enoch[1]

The history of scholarship on *2 Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch* has produced no real consensus concerning the possible provenience of this apocalypse.[2] Rather, there are numerous scholarly positions.[3] These conclusions are most

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[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: 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*, 1.95.

[3] See Andersen, "2 Enoch"; F. Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967); C. Böttrich, *Das slavische Henochbuch* (JSHRZ, 5; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus, 1995); *idem*, *Weltweisheit, Menschheitsethik, Urkult: Studien zum slavischen Henochbuch* (WUNT, 2/50; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1992); C. Burkitt, *Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (London: Oxford University Press, 1914); R. H. Charles, "The Date and Place of Writings of the Slavonic Enoch," *JTS* 22 (1921) 163; J. H. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976); J. Collins, "The Genre Apocalypse in Hellenistic Judaism," in D. Hellholm (ed.), *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1983); L. Cry, "Quelques noms d'êtres mysterieux en II Henoch," *RB* 49 (1940) 195-203; J. Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964); J. Fossum, "Colossians 1.15-18a in the Light of Jewish Mysticism and Gnosticism," *NTS* 35 (1989) 183-201; K. Lake, "The Date of the Slavonic Enoch," *HTR* 16 (1923) 397-98; M. McNamara, *Intertestamental Literature* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983); N. A. Meshcherskij, "Sledy pamjatnikov Kumrana v staroslavjanskoj i drevnerusskoj literature (K izucheniju slavjanskih versij knigi Enoha)," Trudy otdela drevnerusskoj literatury 19 (1963) 130-47; *idem*, "K istorii teksta slavjanskoj knigi Enoha (Sledy pamjatnikov Kumrana v vizantijskoj i staroslavjanskoj literature)," *Vizantijskij vremennik* 24 (1964) 91-108; *idem*, "K voprosu ob istochnikah slavjanskoj knigi Enoha," *Kratkie soobshchenija Instituta narodov Azii* 86 (1965) 72-8; J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976); G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Books of Enoch in Recent Research," *RSR* 7 (1981) 210-17; H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch*

likely the consequences of the different backgrounds and perspectives which scholars have brought to their study of *2 Enoch*.

One of the important insights of research on *2 Enoch* is the view that the text has deep connections with so-called Merkabah mysticism.[4] Among the

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(New York: Ktav, 1973); M. Philonenko, "La cosmogonie du 'Livre des secrets d'Hénoch,'" in *Religions en Egypte: Hellénistique et romaine* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969); S. Pines, "Eschatology and the Concept of Time in the Slavonic Book of Enoch," in R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and J. Jouco Bleeker (eds.), *Types of Redemption* (SHR, 18; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 72-87; H. H. Rowley (ed.), *A Companion to the Bible* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963); A. Rubinstein, "Observations on the Slavonic Book of Enoch," *JJS* 15 (1962) 1-21; G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1954); *idem*, *Origins of the Kabbalah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); M. E. Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (CRINT, 2.2; Assen: Van Gorcum/Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 2.406-408; A. Vaillant, *Le livre des secrets d'Hénoch: Texte slave et traduction française* (Paris: L'Institut d'Etudes Slaves, 1952; repr. Paris, 1976); H. Wicks, *The Doctrine of God in the Jewish Apocryphal and Apocalyptic Literature* (New York: Ktav, 1971).

[4] The term "Merkabah" is closely connected with the term which designates the mystical interpretation ("*Ma*^{c}*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 Kabbalistic writings (the *Zohar*).

The term "Hekhalot" ("Divine Palaces") designates the corpus of literature that first gives a full-scale presentation of Merkabah mysticism (the beginning of the tradition is connected with the circle of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai and his pupils). According to Gruenwald the main subjects dealt with in the Hekhaloth literature are heavenly ascensions and the revelation of cosmological secrets. I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (AGAJU, 14; Leiden: Brill, 1980). The term "Merkabah" (the "Chariot") can be used also in its technical Kabbalistic meaning as the link between the physical and the divine worlds or as one of the upper worlds. On the Merkabah and the Hekhaloth traditions, see the following sources: D. Blumenthal, *Understanding Jewish Mysticism: A Source Reader: The Merkabah Tradition and the Zoharic Tradition* (2 vols.; New York: Ktav, 1978); I. Chernus, *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism* (SJ, 11; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1982); M. Cohen, *The Shi*^{c}*ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy in Pre-Kabbalistic Jewish Mysticism* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983); I. Gruenwald and M. Smith, *The Hekhaloth Literature in English* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983); D. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision* (TSAJ, 16; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1988); D. Halperin, *The Merkavah in Rabbinic Literature* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1980); M. Idel, "Enoch is Metatron," *Immanuel* 24-25 (1990) 220-40; L. Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977); N. Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent: Theories of Language in a Rabbinic Ascent Text* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989); M. Morgan, *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of Mysteries* (TTPS, 11; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983); P. Schäfer with M. Schlüter and H. G. von Mutius, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (TSAJ, 2; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1981); P. Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965); *idem*, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1954); M. Swartz, *Mystical*

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 origins 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 the Presence." The Slavonic text provides rudimentary descriptions of several traditional Merkabah titles of Enoch-Metatron, (e.g., "the Lad," "the Scribe," "the Prince of the World," "the Prince of Presence").[6] Keeping these manifestations of Merkabah symbolism in mind, this study 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."[7] *Sefer Hekhalot* 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"[8] 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:

> And behold my children, I am the Governor of the earth, *p(r)ometaya* [π(ρ)ομετα□], 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.[9]

Prayer in Ancient Judaism: An Analysis of Ma^c^aseh Merkavah (TSAJ, 28; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1992).

[5] H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch* (New York: Ktav, 1973); G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1954); *idem, Origins of the Kabbalah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

[6] See A. Orlov, *"Merkabah Stratum" of the Short Recention of 2 Enoch* (M.A. Thesis; Abilene: Abilene Christian University, 1995).

[7] Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, p. 81.

[8] "The Just Balance" (*Merilo Pravednoe*) is the Slavonic collection of ethical writings in which the existence of *2 Enoch* was made public. See M. N. Tichomirov, *Merilo Pravednoe po rukopisi XIV veka* (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1961).

[9] Andersen, "2 Enoch," 217-219.

An important aspect of both passages is the Slavonic term π(ρ)ομετα (*prometaya*), which follows Enoch's title, "The Governor of the World."[10] This term was deliberately left in its original Slavonic form in order to preserve its authentic phonetic image. *Prometaya* 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 *prometaya* is documented.

The prominent Russian linguist I. Sreznevskij, in his Slavonic dictionary, which is still considered by scholars as a primary tool of Slavonic etymology, was unable to provide a definition for *prometaya.*[11] He simply added a question mark with the meaning for the word.[12] The variety of readings for this term in the manuscripts of *2 Enoch*[13] 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 *prometaya* 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 transliterated Hebrew and Greek words preserved in their original phonetic form (e.g., *Grigori, Ophanim, Raqia Araboth).* But if we investigate the term *prometaya* more closely, the root *meta* draws our attention nesessitating further examination of the relationship between the words *prometaya* 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 me&tron (measure, rule). Adolf Jellinek may well be the first scholar who suggested me&tron as an alternative explanation of Metatron, on the assumption that Metatron was identical with Horos.[14] Gedaliahu Stroumsa in his article, "Forms of God:

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[10] Andersen translates the title as "The manager of the arrangements on earth." Andersen, "2 Enoch," 217.

[11] On the other hand, Vaillant in his edition states that *prometaya* could be identified as a rare verb corresponding to the Greek basani&zwn. 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," 217.

[12] "promitati, promita (*promitati, promitaja*) — ?" I. I. Sreznevskij, *Slovar' drevnerusskogo jazyka* (Moscow: Kniga, 1989), 2.1544.

[13] Andersen stresses that the variations show "theological embarassment" among the Slavic scribes ("2 Enoch," 217).

[14] Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 134.

Some Notes on Metatron and Christ," gives some convincing 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 *Shi*^{c}*ur Qomah* (the measurement of the Divine Body).[15] In light of this observation, Stroumsa stresses that "renewed attention should be given to me&tron and/or *metator* as a possible etymology of Metatron."[16]

Matthew Black, in his short article devoted 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[17] *Quaest. in Gen.*, where, among other titles of the Logos, Black finds the term *praemetitor*.[18] He further suggests that *praemetitor* could be traced to the Greek term metrhth&j,[19] the Greek equivalent of the Latin *metator*, "measurer," applied to the Logos.[20]

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[21] and noted the hours. And I have distinguished every seed on the earth, and every measure[22] and every righteous scale. I have measured[23] and recorded them.[24]

A similar passage in the previously mentioned collection, "The Just Balance" also emphasizes the functions of Enoch as the measurer:

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[15] G. G. Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God: Some Notes on Metatron and Christ," *HTR* 76 (1983) 287.

[16] Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God," 287.

[17] The idea that the Metatron figure originally came into Judaism from Philo's Logos speculations was popular in German scholarship of the 19th century. Cf. M. Friedländer, *Der vorchristliche Jüdische Gnostizismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1898); M. Grünbaum, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sprach-und Sagenkunde* (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1901); M. Sachs, *Beiträge zur Sprach-und Alterthums-forschung* (Berlin, 1852); N. Weinstein, *Zur Genesis der Agada* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901).

[18] M. Black, "The Origin of the Name Metatron," *VT* 1 (1951) 218.

[19] Black, "The Origin of the Name Metatron," 218.

[20] Black, "The Origin of the Name Metatron," 218.

[21] ιζμ῾ριη.

[22] μ῾ρ%.

[23] ιζμ῾ριη.

[24] Andersen, "2 Enoch," 171.

> 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. And I wrote (them) down, just as the Lord commanded. And in everything I discovered differences.[25]

These two passages echo the passage from Philo's *Quaest. in Gen.* which discusses the Divine Logos as the "just measure":

> And "Gomorra," "measure" true and just is the Divine Logos, by which have been measured and are measured all things that are on earth—principles, numbers and proportions in harmony and consonance being included, through which the form and measures of existing things are seen.[26]

The text of *2 Enoch* uses the identical term "just measure" (μ⸗ρα πραϖεδνα), immediately after the passage dedicated to the function of Enoch as a measurer.

In addition to Stroumsa's suggestion about possible connections between "the measurer" and "the measurement of divine body," it is noteworthy that there is another hypothetical link between the functions of Enoch-Metatron as "the measurer" and his "measurement" of human sin for final judgement in the text of *2 Enoch*. Following Enoch's introduction as "the measure," the text mentioned the "measurement" of each person for final judgment:

> ...in the great judgement day every measure and weight in the market will be exposed, and each one will recognize his own measure, and in it he will receive his reward.... Before humankind existed, a place of judgment, ahead of time, was prepared for them, and scales and weights by means of which a person will be tested.[27]

A second possible interpretation of the term *prometaya* can be traced to Enoch's title, "Governor of the World," after which the Slavonic term *prometaya* occurs. It can be assumed that *prometaya* in this situation is a Greek word, which is somehow connected with this title. Possible hypothetical Greek prototypes of *prometaya* could be promh&qeia (promhqeu&v, promhqe&omai), in the sense of protection, care, or providence, which could be directly related to the preceding title of Enoch – Governor, or 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, Gershom Scholem, in his analysis of the term "metatron," shows that the reduplication of the letter *tet* (++) 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

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[25] Andersen, "2 Enoch," 217.
[26] Philo, *Quaest. in Gen.*
[27] Andersen, "2 Enoch," 219.

observable, for instance, in names like Zohariel and Adiriron."[28] 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.[29]

Thus, keeping in mind the possible date of *2 Enoch* in the first century of the common era before the destruction of the Second Temple, *prometaya* could be one of the earliest traces connecting the names Enoch and Metatron. [30]

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[28] Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 69

[29] Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 69-70.

[30] On the hypothetical date of *2 Enoch* see: Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1965), 17; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 50.