CHAPTER FIVE

2 (SLAVONIC APOCALYPSE OF) ENOCH

The text known as 2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch is known only from a number of manuscripts written in various dialects of Church Slavonic\(^1\) and dating from the 14th–18th centuries. The oldest of these manuscripts is the fourteenth century ethical treatise Merilo Pravednoe ("The Scales of Justice"). This document, however, contains a heavily edited and reworked version of 2 Enoch and, therefore, while being the oldest witness to the work it is also the witness of a very late stage in its transmission. Thus, one of the viewpoints universally agreed by scholars is that 2 Enoch significantly pre-dates the 14th century. The manuscripts bear witness to two primary recensions of the work, generally known as the longer and shorter recensions, although if we are to be precise there are, in fact four recensions: very long, long, short and very short.\(^2\) Vaillant, in his critical edition of the text\(^3\) made the judgement that, for the most part, the shorter recension was original and relegated the material of the longer recension to an appendix, regarding it as the work of a later redactor. Against Vaillant, however, Böttrich made the simple statement that "spätere Kürzungen müssen nicht mit früheren Erweiterungen identisch sein,"\(^4\) a comment that exposed a major methodological problem with Vaillant’s approach and reminds us that there is no avoiding the difficult process of weighing up each point in the text and its diverse witnesses in order to establish which reading might be original.\(^5\)

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\(^1\) The manuscripts fall outside of the defined period within which Slavists will speak of Old Church Slavonic and reflect later linguistic development into the regional Slavic languages.

\(^2\) See Francis I. Andersen, “2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in OTP 1.92–221. Comments on the recensions are found on page 93.


\(^4\) C. Böttrich, Weltweisheit, Menschheitsethik, Urkult, (WUNT 2:50; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 56. The statement is part of a wider discussion (54–56) in which he argues that it is too simplistic to identify either recension as the “Grundstock” of 2 Enoch.

\(^5\) For Böttrich, however, this statement is made as part of his argument for the priority of the longer recension, an argument that I am unconvinced by. See the discussion below.
Also problematic was Vaillant’s suggestion that the work was a Christian revision of the Jewish Enoch traditions (that is, 1 Enoch); as Francis I. Andersen notes “very little can be demonstrated by way of direct connection between the two works, and the divergences are numerous and substantial. In particular, 1 Enoch has an interest in history not present in 2 Enoch, while 2 Enoch has an interest in creation not present in 1 Enoch.”

Even in the extensive calendrical details found in 2 Enoch, there is little that seems to have been directly lifted from the Book of the Luminaries. This is not to categorically reject Christian authorship—more will be said on this below—but it is to stress that the question of the relationship between the two Enochic texts is not one of simple dependency; a proper answer to this question must await the results of the present scholarly interest in the Enochic texts and the traditions that may have lain behind their development.

In fact, as Orlov notes, “contemporary scholarship still does not furnish a consensus concerning the possible provenance of 2 (Slavonic) Enoch.” Hugely divergent suggestions have been put forward: Milik claimed the work was written by a 10th century Byzantine monk, while Charles had classically seen it as the work of a Hellenized Jew in Alexandria. Interacting with the findings of earlier research, Böttrich proposed a rather complex process of development: from an original turn-of-the-era Jewish work, through Jewish-mystical and then Byzantine expansion and then later editing back into what is now the shorter recension.

My own contribution to this dilemma has been to apply James Davila’s methodological criteria for distinguishing Jewish and Christian works.

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6 Francis I. Andersen, “2 Enoch,” 95.
7 I will refer often in this chapter to articles by Andrei Orlov, who has published extensively on 2 Enoch. Much of the material originally published in these articles has, since I first wrote this chapter, appeared in his monograph, The Enoch-Metatron Tradition (TSAJ 107; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). I will continue, however, to reference the original articles. I am deeply grateful to Professor Orlov for his willingness to assist me in the difficult process of obtaining copies of the manuscripts of 2 Enoch.