

FAITH-PROMOTING RUMOR

exploring mormon culture, thought and texts

SEPTEMBER 24, 2017 BY YAKOV BEN TOV

The Book of Enoch, the Book of Moses, and the Question of Availability

In the second edition of his book,[1] D. Michael Quinn added about fourteen pages to the first part of chapter six, “Mormon Scriptures, the Magic World View, and Rural New York’s Intellectual Life,” than what was previously there in the first edition (1987). Quinn’s added material explored the availability of ideas and documents about the biblical figure of Enoch to Joseph Smith, Jr. up to his revisionary work on the first six chapters of the Bible in mid to late 1830. All of this material was new to the revised, second edition, and reflected Quinn’s continued engagement with other Mormon scholars on the subject of Mormon history.

In a lengthy section Quinn responded directly to several claims made by Dr. Hugh Nibley of Brigham Young University. Nibley’s book, *Enoch the Prophet*, had been published a decade earlier in 1986 and brought together several essays Nibley had written over the decades prior to the 1980s. Quinn notes that:

‘[Richard] Laurence’s Book of Enoch had another printing in 1828. Nibley did not know this at the time of writing his article, because even the British Museum-Library’s published catalog mentioned no imprint between 1821 and the 1833 ‘Second edition, corrected and enlarged.’ However, published five years after Nibley’s article, the more comprehensive National Union Catalog of Pre-1956 Imprints showed that the 1833 edition actually ‘corrected and

enlarged” an 1828 reprinting of Laurence’s Enoch-translation. Only one copy of this 1828 imprint now survives, and it is in the New York Public Library.” [2]

In a fascinating development, Quinn had made a significant discovery. The question of the availability of Laurence’s translation of 1 Enoch had moved from the possibility of only one printing being available to Smith (the first printing from 1821) to two printings, the 1821 and 1828. Besides these printings Quinn made it clear in the revised chapter that Nibley downplayed the interest in 1 Enoch at this period. There were several volumes, some available in print in Smith’s area, that not only mentioned Laurence’s new translation, but there was also a commentary on the Bible, “which discussed Laurence’s *Book of Enoch*.”[3] Therefore, from 1998 on it would be difficult to ignore this note made by Quinn if one was going to engage in the history of Smith’s revision of the first several chapters of the Bible, and particularly in the section that came to be known as, “The Extract of the Prophecy of Enoch.”[4]

This is reflected in Salvatore Cirillo’s master’s thesis, completed in 2010 at Durham University.[5] Cirillo’s thesis has been an important contribution to this area of study, and has been cited in several articles exploring the availability of Laurence’s Book of Enoch to Smith.[6] In a section entitled, “Access to Materials,” Cirillo reviews Nibley’s book in ways not dissimilar from Quinn’s (and he notes his dependence on Quinn throughout this section in the footnotes). In response to Nibley’s argument that the Book of Enoch was unknown in America up to the time Smith created the “Extracts of the Prophecy of Enoch,” Cirillo quotes Quinn’s discovery that there was an 1828 printing of Laurence’s Enoch, but his quote is slightly different from what one finds in Quinn’s book. According to Cirillo, Quinn states that “Laurence’s 1821 translation had another printing in 1828 just in America.”[7] The problem is, Quinn doesn’t say anything about this publication being in America on page 191, or in the endnotes for this chapter that are tied to this page. Instead, as noted above, all Quinn says in this section is, “Laurence’s *Book of Enoch* had another printing in 1828.” The similarities are obvious between Cirillo’s quotation and Quinn’s original, but it is clear that Cirillo is misquoting Quinn. Cirillo changes out “*Book of Enoch*” for “1821 translation” and added “just in America” at the end. Then, there is the problem of whether or not this printing actually

happened, and if it did, where?

The resource that Quinn mentioned in his second edition is an incredibly important repository of bibliographic information. Spanning 754 volumes and taking several decades to publish and hundreds of participating institutions, the *National Union Catalog of Pre-1956 Imprints* aimed to collect and publish all of the holdings of public libraries and archives in America to have a systematic presentation of what was available and where. The project was headed by both the Library of Congress and the American Library Association,[8] and it took from 1968 to 1981 to publish all of the volumes. Quinn was wise to consult this massive resource for the availability of Laurence's Enoch during this early period. In the relevant sections of the catalog, in volumes 55 and 318, you find information about the publication of the Book of Enoch and publications from Richard Laurence, respectively. As Quinn notes, the volume he is citing is 55, page 313. This is what is found on that page:

'Bible. O. T. Apocryphal books. 1 Enoch. English. 1828. Laurence.

The book of Enoch the prophet, an apocryphal production supposed to have been lost for ages, but discovered at the close of the last century in Abyssinia. Oxford. 1828. 8°

NBi 0041105 NN"

The final line is the catalog's assigned number for this printing and that it is only found in the New York Public Library (NN). It is not clear how exactly Cirillo got the idea that the 1828 printing listed here was printed in America. Quinn makes this claim nowhere in his book, especially not the section that Cirillo is quoting. In any case, the catalog states that it was published in Oxford. There is also no note, as Quinn suggests, that the 1833 second edition was a corrected and enlarged version of the 1828. All that the entry for the 1833 printing says is, "2d ed., cor. and enl.," there is no connection to the 1828 at all with the other editions.

I found it a little strange that only the New York Public Library would have a copy of this printing, so I decided I would try to find the copy at the New York Public Library. I searched through their databases and spoke with several people on staff, having no luck at all of finding the printing. Since the 55th volume of the *National Union Catalog of Pre-1956 Imprints* was printed in 1980 it would have surprised me if the New York Public Library had gotten rid of their copy since then, but kept the other copies they have. The Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books team investigated this question for me, and came back with a negative—they simply do not have any record of having an 1828 printing.[9] After speaking with them I found an old 87 page catalog published in 1928 by the New York Public Library that specifically lists their holdings in Ethiopic and Amharic at that point.[10] In this catalog there are two entries on page 42 for the Book of Enoch printed in 1838: one in Ethiopic and the other in English.[11] The *National Union Catalog* only lists one version of the 1838, the English. Is it possible that this second, Ethiopic edition Laurence produced is the 1828 entry? There are still issues for making this connection directly, but it is also looking increasingly difficult to claim that there was an 1828 printing.

What likely happened was that during the creation of the catalog there was a mistake made when creating the entries for the section on “Bible. O. T. Apocryphal books. 1 Enoch.” An editor must have mistakenly read 1838 as 1828 when the entries were made for publication, which means it is unlikely there was an 1828 publication of Laurence’s translation of the Book of Enoch at all. Whether or not it did exist (currently I am doubting it) the following points are mistaken in the contemporary literature on this printing:

- Quinn states that the 1833 second edition is a revision of the 1828 printing. This is inaccurate, the entry for the 1833 says nothing about an 1828 printing.
- Cirillo badly misquotes Quinn as stating that the supposed 1828 printing happened in America. Not only does Quinn not say that, the *National Union Catalog* says explicitly that it was Oxford.

Lastly, although not mentioned previously in this post, none of the previous literature on this topic has attempted to resolve the issue of authorship and dating of Joseph Smith’s

additions to Gen. 1-6 by detailed analysis of its contents. Nibley and a few others have searched for and found some parallels between Smith's *Book of Moses* and 1 and 2 Enoch, among other early Jewish and Christian pseudepigraphic literature, but a systematic and detailed analysis of other literary influences on Moses 1 or the major additions in Moses 6-8 has not yet been completed. This much is clear: it is very unlikely that Smith actually had a copy of Laurence's translation of 1 Enoch while he was working on his initial revision of Gen. 1-6 during the second half of 1830. It is very likely that Smith heard about the Book of Enoch from several people around him and might have come across references to Laurence's Book of Enoch himself. The literary connections between Moses 6-8 and 1 Enoch are in my opinion very loose, and more time and attention should be placed elsewhere if we are going to understand not only how the text came to be written, but also how best to interpret it as well.

[1] D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (2nd ed.; Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998).

[2] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 191.

[3] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 191.

[4] Terry L. Givens has argued that this section of Smith's revision became the "blueprint" of the restoration. See http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/arrington_lecture/19/ (Last accessed 9/23/2017).

[5] Salvatore Cirillo, "Joseph Smith, Mormonism and Enochic Tradition" (unpublished master's thesis; Durham: Durham University, 2010) <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/236/> (Last accessed 9/23/2017).

[6] Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen have noted Cirillo's work a handful of times. Representative examples include, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God's*

Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel (Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2014), 45, nt. 96; and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, “Ancient Affinities within the LDS Book of Enoch, Part One,” in *Mormon Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* Vol. 4 (2013), 10, nt. 25. To see an almost verbatim description from the *Interpreter* publication printed again by Bradshaw, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Sorting Out the Sources in Scripture,” in *Mormon Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* Vol. 9 (2014), 255-256, nt. 156, and 259, nt. 169. See also Cheryl L. Bruno, “Congruence and Concatenation in Jewish Mystical Literature, American Freemasonry, and Mormon Enoch Writings,” in *Journal of Religion and Society*, Vol. 16 (2014), 4, nt. 8.

[7] Cirillo, “Joseph Smith, Mormonism and Enochic Tradition,” 73. According to Cirillo’s footnote, this quotation is found in Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 191.

[8] All of these volumes can be found on the Hathi Trust digital library here: <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000140237> (Last accessed 9/23/2017).

[9] Email in author’s possession.

[10] George F. Black, *Ethiopica & Amharica: A List of Works in the New York Public Library* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1928). To view a digital version, go here: <https://archive.org/stream/ethiopicaamharic00newy#page/42/mode/1up/search/laurence> (Last accessed 9/23/2017)

[11] The *National Union Catalog* also claims that the library had a copy of the 1821 printing, but both this 1928 catalog and their current catalog do not say they have a copy of that printing.

 **HISTORY, LDS CHURCH HISTORY, MORMON STUDIES, SCRIPTURE, UNCATEGORIZED**

1 ENOCH, BIBLE, BOOK OF ENOCH, BOOK OF MOSES, D. MICHAEL QUINN, EARLY MORMONISM AND THE MAGIC WORLD VIEW, ENOCH, GENESIS, JOSEPH SMITH REVISION OF THE BIBLE, JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION, RICHARD LAURENCE, SALVATORE CIRILLO, ZION

2 Replies to “The Book of Enoch, the Book of Moses, and the Question of Availability”



Steve

SEPTEMBER 24, 2017 AT 4:04 PM

Thank you for that detailed research. While I don't agree with everything you write(and who agrees with everything anyone writes??), I appreciate your posts.



Yakov Ben Tov

SEPTEMBER 25, 2017 AT 10:13 AM

Thank you Steve! It's a good thing that we have different opinions on some things but being able to interact kindly like this is always welcome!