



Enoch, by Gary Smith

# A Strange Thing in the Land

## The Return of the Book of Enoch, Part 4

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A much debated issue has always been, how *Christian* are the Enoch writings? "There is a possibility that the latest wording of I Enoch has been written by Christian hands, but nowhere do the various parts give cause to deem it of Christian origin or interpolation," is Van Andel's conclusion.<sup>179</sup> In such Jewish works as the XII Patriarchs, James II, Peter, Jude, Didache, Barnabas, and Hermas, he finds it "almost impossible to distinguish between the Christian and the non-Christian elements."<sup>180</sup> J.Z. Werblowsky holds that II Enoch "incorporates the messianic concepts of Alexandrian Jewry as well as many Christian additions . . . in circulation during the 2nd Temple Period."<sup>181</sup>

Christian scholars exercised to preserve the "originality" of Jesus in the case of Enoch, as with the Dead Sea Scrolls, have leaned over backwards in insisting that Enoch is a work totally alien to the New Testament. In 1840, M. Stuart finds that "the reader who has never pursued at much length the study of sacred criticism, cannot well imagine how much light is cast by it [I Enoch] on various parts of the New Testament; particularly on the Apocalypse . . . and yet,—how *different* are the two compositions, although partial and even general resemblances are so frequent!"<sup>182</sup> He assures us that Enoch and the book of Revelation were written by "two Jews writing at the same period, having the same general theme and object . . . both authors . . . deal together in visions and symbols."<sup>183</sup> To rescue the originality of the New Testament, he explains that the two books are independent inventions, as "both authors range the world of imagination" and freely fabricate.<sup>184</sup>

Still, Stuart is amazed to find what looks like "true Christology *before* the time of Christ!"<sup>185</sup> How could he account for it? It *must* be a Christian work: "The whole contour of the Messianic part of the book indicates more knowledge of Christology than any uninspired Jew could reasonably be supposed to possess . . . at any time before Christianity was published."<sup>186</sup>

How about an *inspired* Jew then? That, of course, is out of the question: "My full belief is, that our present Scriptures are the *only* and the *sufficient* rule of faith and practice,"<sup>187</sup> a position which obliges him, no matter what, to announce: "I have not the most distant intention to refer to the Book of Enoch as a book of *authority*. I can never be brought to believe that the Ethiopians had any good right to place it in their Canon."<sup>188</sup> Yet he frankly admits that the early Christians, including the first of the Fathers, placed it in *their* canon!<sup>189</sup> His conclusion: "The author was a Christian Jew."<sup>190</sup> Christian, because "no merely Jewish usage, which is known to us, would, at so early a period, have led the writers in the path that he has trodden."<sup>191</sup> Jewish, because he was "unusually familiar with the Old Testament scriptures, and probably having some acquaintance with those of

the New. It was composed in all probability in the latter half of the 1st century of the Christian era."<sup>192</sup>

In 1860, G. Volkmar, moved by the same arguments, insisted that Enoch was a purely Christian work, the idea that it was pre-Christian resulting from faulty translation; it had nothing to do with the sectaries of the first century B.C.<sup>193</sup> Then in 1864, the purely Jewish Hebrew Enoch texts began to appear,<sup>194</sup> but A. Vaillant, as a good Catholic, meets the challenge: While the Hebrew Enoch is "badly constructed, confused, and murky, the Christian Enoch is reasonable, orderly, and clear." So it was the Christians who really organized the old Jewish materials and in the process "invented another history," which lets the Jews out.<sup>195</sup> In the same spirit, Weisse, Hofmann, and Philippi all insisted that Enoch was a Christian work, on the "dogmatic principle," according to Charles, that Christianity had to be vindicated "in its pure originality."<sup>196</sup>

This is a question that has exercised all the students of early apocalyptic writings of recent years—what can we do when an undeniably Jewish work is full of undeniably Christian elements? That, of course, was one of the major stumbling blocks of the Book of Mormon—how could Jews before the time of Christ speak and act so much like Christians and vice versa? The apparent anomaly has led both Jews and Christians to restrain their enthusiasm for the Dead Sea Scrolls and even to discourage their publication.<sup>197</sup>

After listing a dozen references to Enoch in the New Testament, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* minimizes the tie-in on the theory that the "recurrence of similar ideas and phraseology need indicate no more than indebtedness to a common tradition."<sup>198</sup> Van Andel insists that the New Testament community that invented Enoch followed Christ, who was not an invention: "The real Enoch is lost in the mists of myth, while the real Christ is a historic figure. . . ."<sup>199</sup> And how did they invent Enoch? How much of the story came down to them beside the name? Nobody knows, and theories are cheap. Even R.H. Charles, to avoid giving too much credit to Enoch, has introduced things into his translation, according to Black, without "the slightest support from Ms. tradition. . . . He has in fact practically rewritten the end of the *Similitudes* in accordance with his view of what Enoch ought to have said."<sup>200</sup>

But P. Batiffol, with his usual insight, observed long ago that such works as Enoch are both a prolongation of the canonical prophets, and "at the same time a prologue to the Gospel. So and so alone can one explain the favor with which they met in the Primitive Church, and how, neglected by the Jews of the Talmudic tradition, they have been preserved for us by Christian hands."<sup>201</sup>

The purpose of this dull and sketchy summary is to make clear at the outset that when Joseph Smith produces pages of a book of Enoch for our perusal he cannot be borrowing from any known

ancient source, whether Ethiopian, Greek, Slavonic, Hebrew, Aramaic, or Arabic, etc., for none of them were available to him in 1830.

Of all the momentous concepts brought to the attention of mankind through the ministrations of the Prophet Joseph Smith, none has met with greater derision or merits greater respect than his account of how certain sacred records have been kept and transmitted to the saints of every dispensation down through the ages. He tells us how a depository of sacred writings has been preserved and expanded from the beginning of man to the present time; and if he is right, there exists somewhere on earth at this time, if only we knew where to find them, the equivalent of thousands of tapes and films recalling crucial events in human history. The equivalent? Better than that! The old science-fiction dream of some day recapturing the waves of sight and sound propagated by great historical events of the past turns out to be a mistake—physicists assure us that waves of light and noise have a way of losing definition and damping out soon after they begin their ambitious voyage in all directions, and it can be shown that the most powerful instruments conceivable can never unscramble their fused and mazy impulses.

This means that the skill of writing, a technique as old as history, still remains and probably always will remain, the most effective means of binding time and space. "But of all other stupendous inventions," wrote the stupendous Galileo, "what sublimity of mind must have been his who conceived how to communicate his most secret thought to any other person, though very far distant either in time or place, speaking with those who are in the Indies, speaking with those who are not yet born, nor shall be this thousand or even ten thousand year? And with no greater difficulty than the various arrangement of two dozen little signs upon paper? Let this be the seal of all the admirable inventions of man."<sup>202</sup> The sublimity of the thing brings its human invention into question—men never invented anything else like that before or since, and the idea that "primitive man" insensibly floundered into it inch by inch over tens of thousands of stumbling years is simply hilarious.<sup>203</sup>

Well, Joseph the Seer doth a tale unfold which when you put it together is as splendid as it is audacious. And it is not hard to put together, for it runs through all of the inspired scriptures of which he is the purveyor; the Book of Mormon in particular spells it all out for us. This is how it goes.

Enoch of old declared that in the days of Adam "it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration," that "a book of remembrance" was kept "in the language of Adam," and handed down to his own time, "written among us, according to the pattern given by the finger of God." (Moses 6:5, 46.) At the end of his

life Adam "predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation," and that information was carefully preserved: "These things were all written in the book of Enoch, and are to be testified of in due time." (D&C 107:56-57.)

Thus there is a written record that bridges all of human experience from the beginning to the end. And in between comes a busy operation of book-keeping to fill out the record, bring it up to date, condense and abridge where necessary, and transmit it into the proper hands for still further transmission. "For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them. . . . I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it." (2 Ne. 29:11-12.)

As writing bridges space, so it bridges time—as the bronze plates that Lehi took from Jerusalem "go forth unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people who were of his seed," we are assured that they "should never perish; neither should they be dimmed any more by time." (1 Ne. 5:18-19.) The world by this account is covered with a sort of mesh of communications, something like Tielhard de Chardin's mesh of organic life, by which the righteous regardless of time or place can share in a common universe of discourse: "He did surely show . . . unto many concerning us; wherefore, it must needs be that we know concerning them . . . that they might know concerning the doings of the Lord in other lands, among people of old." (1 Ne. 19:21, 22.)

Even the angels enter into the game: a bit of cross-referencing will show that when Gabriel came to put Zacharias and Mary "into the picture," as it were, his whole discourse to them was simply a pastiche of ancient prophetic writings that were about to be fulfilled (Luke 1); and when Moroni inaugurated a subsequent dispensation he did so in the same way, "quoting the prophecies of the Old Testament . . . about to be fulfilled," and others both properly corrected and "precisely as they stand in our New Testament," with the necessary explanations. (Joseph Smith 2:36, 40.)

In the handing down of the sacred record, everything is under strict control from on high, "given by inspiration, and . . . confirmed . . . by the ministering of angels . . . proving to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old." (D&C 20:10-11.) Everything is timed to the hour, done in "the own due time of the Lord." (2 Ne. 27:10, 21; Eth. 4:16-17; esp. Joseph Smith 2:53-59.) The perfect matching of the records from widely scattered times and places attests their authenticity, for "these last records . . . shall establish the truth of the first." (1 Ne. 13:40.) And from first to last, all is done "by the spirit of inspiration." (Moses 6:5.)

The Prophet is good enough to tell us just how the thing operates. As the material is passed down from one hand to another, it snowballs as only libraries can, so that an abridged version must be made from time to time if the main message is to be kept to the fore, with the editor selecting for special attention what he deems primary and preserving the rest under various categories.

"And there had many things transpired which, in the eyes of some, would be great and marvelous; nevertheless, they cannot all be written in this book; yea, this book cannot contain even the hundredth part of what was done. . . .

"But behold there are records which do contain all the proceedings of this people; and a shorter but true account was given by Nephi [an earlier editor].

". . . I [Mormon] have made my record . . . according to the record of Nephi . . . on plates which I have made with mine own hands." (3 Ne. 5:8-11, see 1 Ne. 1:16-17.)

The last phrase is the standard colophon by which an ancient editor certifies the accuracy of the record both as he received it and as he is passing it on: "And we know our record to be true, for behold, it was a just man who did keep the record . . . if there was no mistake made by this man." (3 Ne. 8:1-2); the editor himself certifies, "I make a record of my proceedings in my days . . . and I know that the record which I make is true; and I make it with mine own hand; and I make it according to my knowledge." (1 Ne. 1:1-3, see 3 Ne. 5:17.) Jacob the brother of Nephi tells us that he took notes from the older records, of the things that might be of particular interest to his people, jotting down "the heads of them" (ancient *kephalaia*), to "touch upon them as much as it were possible . . . for the sake of our people." (Jac. 1:4.) For relevance is the keynote: "for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning." (1 Ne. 19:23.)

Methods of handling sacred writings are conditioned by the hostile world in which they find themselves. There are those who have sworn "in their wrath that, if it were possible, they would destroy our records and us, and also all the traditions of our fathers." (Enos 14.) Failing that, they can damage and corrupt them: "They have taken away . . . many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away," with the disastrous effect that "an exceeding great many do stumble." (1 Ne. 13:26, 29.)

Why should anyone want to do that? For whatever reason, the burning of the books is a stock motif of real history. Ray Bradbury's novel, *Fahrenheit 451*, tells of a time in the future when the government and people of the United States systematically destroy all books, which are the disturbing element in a world dedicated to TV and the avoidance of serious thinking. But the author misses the main point: the books that are burned are not

the sacred depository of which we have been speaking, but the books in the college "Survey of Western Civilization," a second-growth at best, a covering of beautiful fire-weed that sprang up on the ashes of the holy books that had been burned by the very schoolmen who now sponsor their successors. The question right now is not whether the sad and moving chorus of the "Great Books," all admittedly groping in the dark, can answer the great questions of life (by their own admission they cannot), but whether there ever were books that could do so, a lost library which they replaced. Joseph Smith was aware of the blank emptiness that exists between modern man and any such writings. "You may think this order of things to be very particular," he said to the brethren when he introduced them to the record keeping system of the Church (D&C 128:5); and Moroni, the editor-in-chief of the Book of Mormon, despairs of approaching or even describing the inconceivable power and grandeur conveyed by the written word in the hands of such inspired masters as the brother of Jared. (See Eth. 12:23-25.) The point is that such writing operates on a different wavelength from the ordinary; from it the receptive reader can get something that no other writing will give. The last dispensation was inaugurated by such a communication: "Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine." (Joseph Smith 2:12.) The passage was familiar, but until then the power had been shut off.

Because the world is touchy and resentful of what it does not understand—"Dogs bark at strangers," says the immortal Heraclitus—the keeping of the record is much concerned with hiding, withholding, dissembling, rationing, and disguising: "Having been commanded of the Lord that I should not suffer the records which had been handed down by our fathers, which were sacred, to fall into the hand of the Lamanites, (for the Lamanites would destroy them) therefore I . . . hid up in the hill Cumorah all the records which had been entrusted to me by the hand of the Lord." (Morm. 6:6); "Those who have dwindled in unbelief shall not have them, for they seek to destroy the things of God." (2 Ne. 26:17.) Such things are "sealed up" and "shall not be delivered in the day of the wickedness and abominations of the people. Wherefore the book shall be kept from them." (2 Ne. 27:8.)

The safest way to preserve a book from destruction, and the *only* way to protect it from the inevitable corruption of contents that comes with copying and handling, is simply to bury it: "sealed up to come forth in their purity" (1 Ne. 14:26); "then shalt thou seal up the book again, and hide it up unto me, that I may preserve the words which thou hast not read, until I shall see fit in mine own wisdom to reveal all things" (2 Ne. 27:22, see Eth. 4:4-6, D&C 6:26-27). The problem of finding the thing again raises no difficulty, of course, since they

are hid up "unto God" by his instructions: "Touch not the things which are sealed, for I will bring them forth in mine own due time. . . ."

"Wherefore, when thou hast read the words, . . . then shalt thou seal up the book again, and hide it up unto me." (2 Ne. 27:21-22.) And when they are found again, they are to be shown "only to those to whom [the finder] should be commanded to show them," on pain of the finder's own destruction. (Joseph Smith 2:42.) When they are "had again among the children of men," it is only "among as many as shall believe. . . . Show them not unto any except them that believe." (Moses 1:41-42.) Some things are never to be circulated publicly, but are only "to be had in the Holy Temple of God" (Abraham, facsimile 2, Fig. 8); others may not be written down save by a special agent at a special time. (1 Ne. 14:25, 28.)

Sacred writings are often secured from unworthy eyes by the device of recording in *code*. In a sense, all writing is codified and can be read only by those who have received special instruction: to "read" means to "riddle" or decipher. King Benjamin had to learn a special language before he "could read these engravings," and had his sons learn the language so they could keep the record (Mosiah 1:4); and the brother of Jared was ordered to guard the teachings, to "write them and . . . seal them up, that no one can interpret them; for ye shall write them in a language that they cannot be read." (Eth. 3:22.)

To bridge the cultural and linguistic gap between the hider and the finder, thousands of years apart, special *gifts and implements* are provided, notably the seer-stones and Urim and Thummim. (Eth. 3:23.) These are no mere mechanical gadgets, but "work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith" (2 Ne. 27:23), requiring far greater moral and intellectual qualifications than the manipulation of grammars and dictionaries. They work by "the same power . . . and the same gift" as those by which men wrote the words in the beginning. (D&C 17:7, 9:2, 8:11, Moses 6:5.)

It all begins on earth with the "*book of the generations of Adam*," a complete record of names and events and of God's dealing with his children on earth. (Moses 6:8.) He requires the saints in every age to keep such a book, or rather to continue the original, adding their own names and histories to it, as they "arrange by lot the inheritances of the saints whose names are found, and the names of their fathers, and of their children, enrolled in the book of the law of God" (D&C 85:7), which is the same as the "book of remembrance" (D&C 85:9), which goes back to Adam (Moses 6:45-46) and is also "the genealogy of the sons of Adam" (Moses 6:22). Enoch reads from the books to remind his people of "the commandments, which I [God] gave unto their father, Adam" (Moses 6:28) when he "called upon our father Adam by his own voice"

(Moses 6:51), and orders them to pass it on: "teach these things freely unto your children" (Moses 6:58), and in time they are to reach us! (D&C 107:56.) The rule is that "many books . . . of every kind" are "handed down from one generation to another . . . even until they [the people] have fallen into transgression" (Hel. 3:15-16), at which time they disappear until another prophet brings them forth.

Next to Enoch himself, the greatest transmitter of records would seem to be Moses, by whose hand we receive the records that came through Enoch and his successors. And it is Moses who gives us the key to the whole thing:

"And now, Moses, my son . . . thou shalt write the things which I shall speak.

"And in a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and take many of them from the book which thou shalt write, behold, I will raise up another like unto thee; and they shall be had again among the children of men—among as many as shall believe. (Moses 1:40-41.)

Each time the records come forth they are brought together in one with such scriptures as have survived among men, making possible the correction and the understanding of the latter. Being the source and author of all, Jesus Christ among the Nephites "expounded all the scriptures in one, which they had written," and "he commanded them that they should teach the things which he had expounded unto them." (3 Ne. 23:14.) This was after he had personally examined all the records, corrected defects, and brought them up to date. The same thing happened in the Old World, where, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself," that being what all the writings were about. (Luke 24:27.) The fact that the Lord himself reads to men out of the ancient books, "for . . . they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39), even though he is personally present among them as the risen Savior addressing them with his own lips, gives awesome testimony to the authority of the written word.

What the books testify of, after all, is the reality of the Lord and his mission: "We labor diligently to engraven these words upon plates, hoping that our beloved brethren and our children will receive them. . . .

"For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming." (Jac. 4:3-4.) "And a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

"And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels" (3 Ne. 24:16-17), i.e., when I gather them all together and put them in proper order. So whoever are in this book are "numbered among the people of the first covenant," no matter when they live (Morm.

7:10), for the writings themselves are "proving to the world . . . that he is the same God yesterday, today, and forever." (D&C 20:11-12.)

To the saints, the sacred record is a source of joy and delight as well as of instruction and guidance; it is a joy to read, a treat to the mind and the spirit, "for my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and profit of my children" (2 Ne. 4:15); "and if my people are pleased with the things of God they will be pleased with mine engravings" (2 Ne. 5:32). Their discovery is always exciting news to those who know how to value them, like the king who said, as he "rejoiced exceedingly, . . . Doubtless a great mystery is contained within these plates. . . . O how marvelous are the works of the Lord!" (Mosiah 8:19-20), and was "filled with joy" when he learned that somebody could read them. (Mosiah 21:28.) Intellectual curiosity and esthetic feeling are nothing to be ashamed of. (*To be continued.*)

179. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

180. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

181. J.Z. Werblowsky, in *Encyclopedia of Jewish Religion*, p. 129.

182. M. Stuart, *Biblical Repository* 3:105. He finds "by far the most interesting and important parts of the book" are those which develop its Christology, p. 99.

183. *Ibid.*, pp. 105f.

184. *Ibid.*

185. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

186. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

187. *Ibid.*

188. *Ibid.*, p. 105f.

189. *Bibl. Repos.* 4:10.

190. *Ibid.*, 4:11; 3:133.

191. *Ibid.*, 3:123.

192. *Ibid.*, 4:5.

193. G. Volkmar, "Beiträge zur Erklärung des Buches *Henoch*," in *ZDMG* 14 (1860): 87.

194. N. Schmidt, in *JAOS* 42:45.

195. Vaillant, *Intro. J.P. Frey, another Catholic, avers that "the finest and most important part" of the Enoch literature is possibly a Christian interpolation.* *Pirot, Dict. Ik* 358f.

196. Charles, *1 Enoch*, p. xxxviii.

197. See *M. Allegro*.

198. G.W. Anderson, *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1973 edition), 10:604.

199. Van Andel, p. 113.

200. M. Black, in *Journ. of Theol. Stud.* 3 (1952): 1; quoting T.W. Manson.

201. P. Butiffo, in F. Vigouroux, *Dictionnaire*, 1:757. *Enoch reflects the Judaism of Palestine during the transition to Christianity and to Rabbinism according to another Catholic writer.* *Enciclopedia Cattolica* 6:1406.

202. Quoted by G. Santillana, *Hamlet's Mill* (Boston: Gambit, 1969), p. 10.

203. See discussion in the *NEW ERA*, Sept. 1973, pp. 38-50.