

## The Prophecy of Enoch as Restoration Blueprint<sup>1</sup>

Joseph Smith was steeped in the experience of scriptural insufficiency. As a youthful seeker, he quickly lost any illusions about sola scriptura, “for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible.”<sup>2</sup> Significantly, Smith never dated his prophetic call from 1820, but from 1827, which he associated with his grand project of scriptural complementarity. Describing the first visitation of the angel Moroni, he reflected upon two momentous developments that turned contemporary definitions of restoration inside out. (The definition of restoration going back centuries was about removing, stripping away, and distilling down.)<sup>3</sup> First, Smith was informed by Moroni that “God had a work for [him] to do.” “He said there was a book . . . written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent.” Here is no paring away, no stripping back to essentials, but the hint of a vast expansion. This was no return to fundamentals or NT forms, but an introduction of the first of many new scriptures into Mormonism’s version of Christianity, in a process that would rupture the concept of sola scriptura, enlarge the scope of Christ’s Palestinian ministry and words from one hemisphere to two, and signify boundless expansion rather than studied contraction of sacraments, ordinances, and scripturally authorized practices.

Next, Moroni quoted from Malachi, but significantly, “with a little variation from the way it reads in our Bibles.” The Bible, in other words, was neither complete nor accurate. Neither was it sufficient. As Mormonism’s first theologian Parley Pratt would later develop the concept with vibrant but controversial imagery, scripture was demoted to the status of stream rather than fountain. God’s utterance preceded, and superseded its incarnation as holy writ, tainted through the flawed vessel of human understanding and fractured language. Even as the Lord’s own oracle, Smith would simultaneously deliver revelations in the voice of God, and lament, “Oh Lord God, deliver us from this prison, . . . of a crooked, broken, scattered

and imperfect language."<sup>4</sup> And he would spend his entire life revising and recasting the words he gave his people as scripture, struggling to claw his way through irredeemably fallen human language to its perfect divine source.

Translating the Book of Mormon was not just itself a challenge to biblical sufficiency; it rubbed salt in the wounds of a biblical culture by describing, as well as enacting, a biblical catastrophe: time after time the record referred to “plain and precious truths” excised from the scriptures, vanished from scriptural history. Clearly the Book of Mormon did little or nothing in Joseph’s mind to redress this defect. First, because as Rodney Stark has observed, “The Book of Mormon . . . may not have added enough doctrinal novelty to the Christian tradition to have made Mormonism more than a Protestant sect.”<sup>5</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, the content of the Book of Mormon had negligible impact—and continues to have relatively negligible impact—on the doctrinal foundations of Mormonism. It both *enacts* and *facilitates* in particularly powerful form the main engine of Mormonism’s lifeblood—continuing and personal revelation. But few of what Mormons call the restored truths of the gospel are present in that volume.

And second, because Smith showed himself, in the immediate *aftermath* of the Book of Mormon’s publication, to be intensely interested in ferreting out those missing scriptural texts. One of the books apparently owned by Joseph Smith was an Apocryphal New Testament.<sup>6</sup> I imagine, though we can’t know, that this book precipitated the discussions mentioned in his history. “Much conjecture and conversation frequently occurred among the saints,” The Times and Seasons reported, describing the last months of 1830, “concerning the books mentioned, and referred to in various places in the Old and New Testaments, which were now no where to be found.” One missing scripture in particular seems to have caught his interest: “The apostolic church had some of these writings,” he continued, “as Jude mentions or quotes the prophecy of Enoch, the seventh from Adam.”<sup>7</sup>

Those words were recorded years after the fact, so it is difficult to know the precise timing, but it seems likely that these conversations followed upon a revelation which Smith had just received in June 1830. On that occasion, Smith had produced a remarkable account of a vision of Moses, perhaps in his mind the one foretold in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Numbers. There, the Lord promises that he will speak face to face with his prophet, “not in dark speeches,” but openly so that Moses will actually see “the similitude of the Lord” (12:8). The Bible, however, contains no account of this promised visitation. Then, in 1830, Smith produces, though he does not at first publish, a version of this encounter, which Latter-day Saints know as Moses 1, which turns out to be most significant for its portent of things to come. In it, Smith understands the Lord to tell Moses that many of his words will be removed from his record, but God promises him a prophet will be raised up, and Moses’ words will again be had “among the children of men” (Moses 1:41).

This seems to be all the encouragement Joseph Smith needed to launch himself into a bold new work of scriptural production. Sporadically over the ensuing months, amidst arrests, editorial endeavors, conferencing and traveling, he made a number of emendations to the text of Genesis.<sup>8</sup> Then, sometime in December 1830, the bonanza came. “To the joy of the little flock . . . which numbered about seventy members” ( he could not yet have known of the Lamanite mission’s success), did the Lord reveal . . . the prophecy of Enoch.”<sup>9</sup>

My task today is to argue for the centrality of this vision to all that Joseph would hereafter accomplish. Smith was excited enough by this prophecy that he rushed it into publication almost as soon as the church had a newspaper to serve as a vehicle. He skipped right over the other 6 chapters of Genesis he had revised, and published Enoch’s prophecy without introduction or explanation. In these passages, we find an impact far out of proportion to its modest textual length. The Enoch text sowed the seeds of Mormonism’s most distinctive and vibrant doctrines: It produced the most emphatic version of a passible deity the Christian world then knew (a God of passions and emotions); it catalyzed Latter-day Saint understanding of and enthusiasm for the doctrine of premortal existence; it foreshadowed, and might

more vitally inform, the church's distinctive doctrine of theosis or divinization; and perhaps most importantly, it provided Joseph with the distinctive contours of his own prophetic vocation as a builder of Zion. If the Book of Mormon lent Joseph his indispensable aura of prophetic authority, the prophecy of Enoch provided a personal role model to inspire him, and a blueprint to direct him.

**I will first discuss the doctrinal impact of the Enoch text, before concluding with its personal impact on Smith's self-conception and vocation.**

## **1. Passible God**

*“the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept” (Moses 7:28)*

“We are never so defenceless against suffering as when we love,” Freud writes.<sup>10</sup> In his Great Divorce, C. S. Lewis imagines a time when love will never exact such a desperate price as now it does. In heaven, the Bright Lady queries her former lover, “Can you really have thought that love and joy would always be at the mercy of frowns and sighs?”<sup>11</sup> What is true of lovers, Lewis intimates, is also true of God. To imagine a God literally troubled or grieving for his wayward creatures would be monstrous, because it would make God hostage to the whims of those creatures. This is one reason why “the idea that God cannot suffer, [was] accepted virtually as axiomatic in Christian theology from the early Greek Fathers until the nineteenth century.”<sup>12</sup> This dominant historical position was for centuries so uncontroversial, writes one theologian, that no challenge to the doctrine emerged between its defense in the third century by Gregorius Thaumaturgus (Ad Theopompum), and assorted critiques of the position in the late nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> As late as 1831, the Presbyterian M'Calla spoke for most Christians when he held in public debate “We never believed that God could suffer.”<sup>14</sup> The Methodists had for a brief time altered the language of the Church of England's 39 Articles with Wesley's 1784 Articles of Religion, affirming belief in the “one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts”—omitting the word “passions.” But within a very few years, “passions” they added the term back to the triad of qualities God

did *not* have. So by Joseph Smith's day, the passionless God was virtually universal in Christian thought. Only with the passage of a few more generations would a suffering God become the norm in Christian theology.<sup>15</sup>

All of which goes to show why, in 1830, it was this apocryphal Enoch text erupting out of the blue, rather than any contemporary influence, that would effect one of Mormonism's more radical innovations. The Enochian account Smith produces is an ascension narrative in which the prophet Enoch is taken into heaven, and records his ensuing vision. He sees Satan's dominion over the earth, but is most struck by God's unanticipated response to a world veiled in darkness: "the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and He wept; and Enoch bore record of it, saying: How is it that the heavens weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains? And Enoch said unto the Lord: How is it that thou canst weep?"

The question here is not about the reasons behind God's tears. Enoch does not ask, why do you weep, but rather, how are your tears even possible, "seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?" Clearly Enoch, who believed God to be "merciful and kind forever," did not expect such a being could be moved to the point of distress by the sins of his children. And so a third time he asks, "how is it thou canst weep?" The answer, it turns out, is that God is not exempt from emotional pain. Exempt? On the contrary, God's pain is as infinite as His love. He weeps not out of betrayal or rejection, but because He anticipates feelingly the consequences of human sin. As the Lord explains to Enoch, "unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood. . . and *misery* shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall weep over them, even all the workmanship of mine hands; wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall *suffer*?"

Mormonism is more famous for a God of body and parts, than for its God of passions. That is a striking disservice to its theology and its history alike. Before Smith publicly articulated any conception

of an embodied God, he had clearly differentiated Mormon theism from its contemporaries, by depicting not just a personal, but a vulnerable God. Furthermore, God's distress at the predicament humans have brought upon themselves clearly evidences a disappointment, a regret, at the course of events—which can only mean they are not consistent with his will. We are here at almost the farthest remove imaginable from the God of Augustine and Calvin, whose God predestines even those who inherit eternal damnation. Mormonism's God, by contrast, does not orchestrate human behavior, choice, and events, to comport perfectly with his will. He participates in rather than transcends the ebb and flow of human history, human tragedy, and human grief. This contribution alone would make of the Prophecy of Enoch a pivotal theological document in the Mormon faith tradition

## **2. Premortal Existence**

*“I made men . . . before they were in the flesh” (Moses 6:51)*

With the work of the Joseph Smith Papers have we come to understand more fully the pivotal role that the prophecy of Enoch played in establishing the doctrine of premortal existence in the early Mormon church. Early 1830 revelations give hints and intimations: the spiritual creation of Moses 3, the fallen hosts of heaven in D&C 29. A definitive revelation cited by modern Mormons would be Abraham's vision of intelligences produced in 1835. But it was a passage in the 1830 Enoch text that first seems to have fired the interest and imagination of early Saints, leading to both poetry and theological development on the subject of preexistence. In Joseph Smith's account, Enoch learns in a vision about “the spirits that God had created,” is told clearly and unambiguously, “I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh” (6:51). We didn't need the Smith papers to be reminded of this passage. But we did to learn of its impact, which two documents illuminate. The first, dated to March 1832, was “A Sample of pure language,” in which the name of God is given as Awman, or “the being which made all things in its parts.” And the “children of men,” it went on to say, are “the greatest parts of Awman.” The phrasing

might not of itself have suggested a premortal genealogy; together with a second revelation, however, the text points quite clearly to a conception of human spirits as emanating from God. Little is known of the context in which the related revelation, dated 27 February 1833, was pronounced. An undated broadside of a poetic rendering of the revelation indicates the original revelation was “sung in tongues by Elder D. W. Patton . . . and interpreted by Elder S[idney] Rigdon.”<sup>16</sup> Recorded in the hand of Frederick G. Williams, this translation of an instance of “tongue-singing,” is clearly based on the 1830 prophecy of Enoch. In this song, Enoch “saw the begining the ending of man he saw the time when Adam his father was made and he saw that he was in eternity before a grain of dust in the ballance was weighed he saw that he emenated and came down from God.”<sup>17</sup>

The likelihood that the Awman revelation and the Enoch hymn were together pivotal in concretizing the idea of pre-existence is supported by the fact that when an anonymous writer, perhaps W. W. Phelps, published in the church paper a poetic celebration of pre-existence in May 1833, it bore the marks of these two sources. Tellingly, Smith unambiguously affirmed the eternal pre-existence of human spirits early this same month, declaring that “Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:38). Yet Phelps published his poetic declaration based not on the definitive revelation of Smith, but on the hymn of Enoch: “Before the mountains rais'd their heads/ Or the small dust of balance weigh'd. With God he[Enoch] saw his race began/And from him *emanated* man,/ And with him did in glory dwell/ Before there was an earth or hell....”<sup>18</sup> The importance of the Awman and Enoch texts in founding the first clear understanding of preexistence is further evident in the fact that Parley Pratt also relied upon these two texts, invoking both the language of the Enoch hymn and the imagery of the Awman revelation in his 1838 linkage of theosis and premortality, wherein he argued that “the redeemed . . .return to the fountain, and become part of the great all, from which they emanated.”<sup>19</sup> So we see in Pratt yet another link in the chain of influence that began with the Enoch text, showing it to be the version of preexistence that resonated widely in the early church, both doctrinally and artistically.

### 3. Theosis

*“thou hast made me, and given me a right to thy throne” (Moses 7:59)*

As writers from the Babylonians through the Greeks to the early Christians recognized, and as affirmed again by the seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonists, belief in premortal existence seems to lead inexorably to a belief in divinization. In striking consonance with this pattern, the prophecy of Enoch does not merely anticipate or suggest, but actually models a version of theosis after introducing the fact of human preexistence. The linkage of theosis with premortality, historically, is rooted in the diminished distance between Creator and creature which humankind’s heavenly origin implies. (The Babylonian creation narrative Atra-hasis and the Church father Tertullian make this connection explicitly, for example). In our Enoch text, this chain of association is clearly evident in the notion of human spirits as emanating from God. What emanates from is part and parcel *of*, and is easily interpreted as destined to return *to*. Emanation is the concept that Pratt, Patton, and Phelps all derive from Enoch, even if the word itself does not appear in the text. What does appear is Enoch’s rather surprising assertion that he makes to God, *“thou hast made me, and given me a right to thy throne”* (7:59).

Mormons often consider theosis a late development in Smith’s thought associated with King Follett theology, but here it is in the Enoch text, years earlier. And once again, we have evidence of both Smith and Pratt reading Enoch in precisely this way. Just days after the Enoch revelation, Smith had pronounced in God’s voice that “I [will] give unto as many as will receive me, power to become my sons” (39:4). If that sounds too vague to be definitive, Smith repeated the language more emphatically, with a specific link to Enoch, in 1832. In his vision of the degrees of glory, he refers to the inheritors of the Celestial Kingdom as “priests after the order of Enoch, . . . Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even

the sons of God” (76:58 {91:5, 1835}). And the heaven these gods inhabit, he calls “the church of Enoch” (76:67).

It is this exact language that Pratt defended in 1838 as a literal claim to theosis, which reading unfolded in this way: Months after the degrees of glory vision, the church paper published a subsequent revelation that declared “the saints shall be filled with his glory, and receive their inheritance and be made *equal with him*” (88:107 {7:33, 1835}). This claim of eventual equality was too much for the Methodist journalist La Roy Sunderland. In 1838 he published a multi-part attack on the Mormon faith in his Zion’s Watchman, singling out those words in particular as blasphemous. To this point in Latter-day Saint history, a Mormon like Pratt might have responded that such language is no more audacious than what is found in the New Testament. Or Pratt could have found respectable refuge by invoking the Methodist doctrine of perfectibility. But Pratt shunned any Methodist connection in this regard. “We have often heard individuals, who advocate the Arminian doctrine, talking about perfection,” wrote an ungenerous LDS editorialist in a twice published essay, “when indeed, they are not only ignorant of the principle, but destitute of the necessary qualifications.”<sup>20</sup> Instead, Pratt ignored the innocuous readings of precedent and pushed possible metaphor into a literal reference to theosis. The importance of the Awman and Enoch texts in founding the first clear understanding of preexistence is evident in the fact that Parley Pratt relied upon these two texts, invoking both the language of the Enoch hymn and the imagery of the Awman revelation in linking the two ideas of theosis and premortality in his response to Sunderland. He argues that “the redeemed . . . return to the fountain, and become part of the great all, from which they emanated.” Indeed, he proclaimed, the saved will “have the same knowledge that God has, [and] they will have the same power. . . . Hence the propriety of calling them ‘Gods, even the sons of God’” Other Christians may call this blasphemy, Pratt suggested, yet he would not retreat from “this doctrine of equality.”<sup>21</sup>

These affirmations of a robust Mormon version of theosis were the first to appear in print, a full six years before the doctrine’s full elaboration in Smith’s King Follett Discourse. While the language resonates with Neoplatonism, it is most notable for its intimations of a divine origin that betokens a divine future. As Pratt memorably captures the essential feature of this anthropology, “God, angels and men are

all of one species,”<sup>22</sup> thus diminishing the ontological distinction between the human and the divine.

Whereas Augustine recorded that he was ashamed of once having believed he was of the same nature as God,<sup>23</sup> Latter-day Saints were by 1838 coming to embrace an essential, primordial connection to God.

But there is a different, and more vital, way in which Mormon theosis is rooted in the Enoch text. In early Christian thought, two statements established the historical parameters for theosis. The Second Epistle of Peter suggested that humans might become “participants of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4 NRSV). Then in the sixth century, Dionysius clarified this to mean, “Deification (theosis) is the attaining of likeness to God and union with him *so far as is possible*.”<sup>24</sup>

As we saw in Enoch’s encounter with God, the most conspicuous attribute of the Divine turns out to be love—costly love, a love that manifests itself as full participation in and vulnerability to the epic of human suffering. Witnessing God’s weeping over his children is only half the journey Enoch makes. What transpires next to the prophet may be the only—it is surely the most vivid—example given in scripture of what the actual process of acquiring the divine nature might look like. It is certainly a lesson far more sobering than exhilarating, a greater call to meekness than to grandiosity of spirit. As Enoch plumbs the mystery of the weeping God, he learns just what it means to be like Him. Seeking insight and understanding into eternal things, Enoch is raised to a perspective from which he sees the world through God’s eyes. The experience is more shattering than reassuring: “And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Enoch, and told Enoch all the doings of the children of men; wherefore Enoch knew, and looked upon their wickedness, and their misery, and wept and stretched forth his arms, and his heart swelled wide as eternity; and his bowels yearned; and all eternity shook.” His experience of the love that is indiscriminate in its reach and vulnerable in its consequences takes him to the heart of the divine nature. This is the mystery of godliness that Enoch not only sees, but briefly lives for himself. The text of Enoch, then, does not just introduce a brazen version of theosis: (*thou hast ... given me a right to thy throne*). The text enacts just what such a process of divinization looks like. (Enoch’s heart *swelled wide as eternity*). In this magnificent, if harrowing, *imitatio dei*—Enoch experiences his own moment of infinite,

godly compassion and suffering. Taught of highest things by the weeping God, Enoch becomes the weeping prophet.

Under the influence of the Pratts especially, theosis acquired highly speculative and extravagant dimensions. But in Smith's thought, the most important element in the understanding of the divine pertained to his character and attributes.<sup>25</sup> The Enoch text clearly teaches of a God whose power and dominion flow from his love and vulnerability, whose infinite sovereignty is grounded in his infinite empathy.

#### **4. Zion**

##### ***“his weeping for Zion I have seen” (D&C 21:8)***

It is no coincidence that Enoch, as I have suggested, becomes in the course of this vision, the weeping prophet. On the day of the church's organization, Joseph dictated a revelation that set the stage for his own identification with the prophet Enoch. This identification would be pronounced, powerful, and hugely influential in Joseph's conception of himself and mission. On this occasion, he reported the Lord's voice as saying, “Him have I inspired to move the cause of *Zion* in mighty power for good, and his diligence I know, and his prayers I have heard. Yea, *his weeping for Zion* I have seen (D&C 21:7-8; 1833 22:8-9; 1835 46:2).

Now in April 1830, Zion was an abstraction, and Enoch probably not anywhere in Smith's mind. Zion was a term frequently used in this era to poetically evoke the idea of a godly people or project; the cause of Zion was simply the work or kingdom of God (as when the Methodists named a new paper, “Zion's Herald,” in 1823 or “Zion's Watchman” in 1835). At times, however, visionaries and eccentrics alike turned their efforts to the task of literally constructing a New Jerusalem in the shape of a religious

Utopia in the American wilderness. This was the case with several efforts in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—three of which centered in New York state.<sup>26</sup>

The impractical quest for a literal Zion by these dreamers and eccentrics on the one hand, and the persistent invocation of the word in church hymns, religious newspapers, and Sunday sermons on the other, reveal something of the idea's powerful and enduring appeal in America's religious history. For most Christians, the New Jerusalem, Zion, the Heavenly City, all reflect men's and women's deepest spiritual yearning. This longing takes many forms: the repair of a damaged relationship with God, the healing of a sick and sinful society, the dramatic triumph of Good over Evil or the transition into the eternal of all that is mortal, transient, and temporary. By the early nineteenth century, a number of loosely defined groups had emerged, that reflected the various ways in which Christians expected to find their spiritual yearnings fulfilled.

Initially in Smith's language, Zion is an unexceptional abstraction, as in the 1830 mention of the "cause of Zion." We find more formulaic invocations of Zion in other early revelations besides section 21. An April 1829 pronouncement had urged Smith and Cowdery to "establish the cause of Zion" (D&C 6:6) and that phrasing was repeated in May and June 1829 (11:6, 12:6, 14:6). But I want to point out how dramatically the usage shifts immediately after Smith's vision of Enoch, and how clearly he begins to self-identify with that prophet and his city-building. As Steve Olsen has written, strains of the Zion ideal had always been present in early Mormonism, but Smith's vision of Enoch "integrated and energized them in a powerful and unmistakable manner."<sup>27</sup>

As one simple evidence of this fact, we could note that in September 1830, Smith records his first revelation pertaining to a city that is to be built. In the current edition of the D&C section 28 reads, "no man knoweth where the city Zion shall be built." But that wording is misleading. For the original revelation says rather, "no man knoweth where *the city* shall be built, but it shall be given hereafter" (9). (1833 sec 30.8, 1835 sec 51.3 both say "no man knoweth where *the city* shall be built"). The city becomes

“the city of Enoch” only *after* his vision of Enoch. For it is on that occasion that he learns that “Enoch built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion” (7:19). He learns that this people were “of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them” (7:18); He learns that the people of Enoch were so righteous, the entire city “was taken up into heaven” (7:27). And he learns that at the last day, the ultimate consolation, and the shape of heaven, are revealed. God’s righteousness will “sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out” those that will have Him to be their God. Then, the Lord says to Enoch, “thou and all thy city [shall] meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion” (7:64). God and his people, the living and the departed, heaven and earth, embrace. The immense distance between the spiritual and the mundane collapses, and we find holiness in the ordinary. I think it profoundly important that the metaphysical monism by which Joseph collapses the physical and the spiritual into one continuum, a crucial underpinning of Mormon theology, is here anticipated and even enacted in a concrete image that conflates the temporal and the eternal, the this worldly and other worldly, into an ongoing historical project in which we all participate.

The subsequent transformation in Smith’s designs is dramatic and immediate. The person and precedent of Enoch fill his mind. Days later, he receives a revelation in which God says, “I am the same which have taken the Zion of Enoch into my own bosom” (38:4). He immediately lays out a plan for a literal Zion. In February, he encourages the Isaac Morley family to abandon their communal experiment for a more perfect version, captured in the Law of Consecration. (Brigham Young informs us, tellingly, that the original name for this was the Law of Enoch.)<sup>28</sup> Weeks later, he confirms Enoch is his inspiration for this new direction:

Wherefore, hearken ye together and let me show unto you even my wisdom—the wisdom of him whom ye say is the God of **Enoch**, and his brethren, Who were separated from the earth, and were received unto myself—a city reserved until a day of righteousness shall come—a day which was

sought for by all holy men, and they found it not because of wickedness and abominations; (DC 45:10-12). Wherefore I, the Lord, have said, gather ye out from the eastern lands, assemble ye yourselves together . . . And with one heart and with one mind, gather up your riches that ye may purchase an inheritance which shall hereafter be appointed unto you. And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God; And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion. (March 7, 1831 D&C 45:64-67)

That summer of 1831, Joseph personally journeyed to Missouri to locate the site for the city of Zion. While there, he re-enacted a portion of the vision of Enoch, uttering a prayer in which he clearly saw himself as a nineteenth-century incarnation of the weeping prophet. Consider this passage from Moses 7:

And “Enoch looked; and from Noah, he beheld all the families of the earth; and he cried unto the Lord, saying: When shall the day of the Lord come? When shall the blood of the Righteous be shed, that all they that mourn may be sanctified and have eternal life?” (Moses 7:45)

Joseph, rather self-consciously the parallels would indicate, expressed similar horror at a comparable scene of wickedness and depravity on the site of the New Jerusalem, substituting the inhabitants of Missouri for Noah’s contemporaries, and expresses the same mournful longing for respite. “Looking into the vast wilderness of those that sat in darkness, . . . observ[ing] the degradation, leanness of intellect, ferocity and jealousy” of the people,” he felt to exclaim, in language he explicitly likened to “the language of the Prophets: When will the wilderness blossom as the rose? When will Zion be built up in her glory, and where will thy Temple stand, unto which all nations shall come in the last days?”<sup>29</sup> By June 1833, a few months after publishing Enoch’s prophecy, Smith sends the actual blueprint, the plat for the city of Zion, to his brethren in Missouri.

It is easy to see Joseph Smith as a Moses figure, giving a new law, producing scripture, leading his people out of spiritual bondage and into a promised land, speaking with God and angels face to face. But I want to close with a striking corrective to this parallel that Joseph Smith himself offered. “Moses sought to bring the children of Israel into the presence of God, through the power of the Priesthood, *but he could not*. In the first ages of the world they tried to establish the same thing—& there were Elias's raised up who tried to restore these very glories but did not . . . ***But Enoch did*** for himself & those that were with Him.”<sup>30</sup>

Joseph was deeply attuned to this record of lamentable failure before and since Enoch. Apostasy and restoration were a ceaseless cycle in the world's history, but I think he believed Enoch offered the model and blueprint for getting all the way to Zion. In 1795, the Scottish minister Alexander Fraser published his popular work, Key to the Prophecies, which included a gloss of a passage from the Book of Revelation of special interest to Protestants of the era. “And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, . . . where she is nourished for a time” (12:6, KJV). In Fraser's interpretation, this prophecy of the woman in the wilderness refers to the time when, “as the visible church declined from the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, the true Church of Christ gradually retired from the view of men, till at length, . . . the true church of Christ, considered as a community, wholly disappeared.” Sometime between 1829 and 1835, Joseph enthusiastically embraced this version of restoration, as a reassemblage of a scattered—rather than abandoned—church in the wilderness. (He even changed the wording of BC section 4 to reflect this reading of Revelation 12.) If he was in fact influenced in this regard by Fraser, as is possible, he may have read Fraser's further comments on the allegory. When any church becomes “visible as a society, she shall not be safe, but be corrupted more or less by the same artifices which overwhelmed the [first] great body of professed Christians.” New reformations can occur, but inevitably the process of corruption will continue “ad infinitum” he writes. At least, until the time of the prophesied years of exile come to an end. Then, and only then, will the church become “visible as a

community, extended over the whole earth, ‘clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners.’”<sup>31</sup>

Why did Joseph think he could escape this endless cycle of restoration and apostasy? The hope Enoch offered Joseph was three-fold. First, the panoply of latter-day events seemed to Joseph to herald the imminent end of exile—and an end to the cyclical pitfalls of human history. Secondly, the prophecy of Enoch demonstrated a particular order of preparation. *The city of Zion preceded Enoch’s imitatio dei*, thus demonstrating that heaven does not come after there is a sufficient critical mass of righteous *individuals*. There is, as my son Nathaniel has said, no such thing as a Zion individual. The preparation has to be communal. Third and related to that last point, Enoch represented the possibility of something more durable than a loose agglomeration of the righteous *or* of a more inspired ecclesiastical institution. Enoch embodied the idea of a covenant *people*. “It is the testimony that I want,” Joseph said, “that I am God’s servant, and this people his people.”<sup>32</sup> Or as he told a group in March 1842, he would succeed where Moses and a number of Eliases had failed. “He was going to make of this society a kingdom of priests—as in Enoch’s day.”<sup>33</sup> The forging of this community was his true prophetic task. All of which helps us understand why, when Mormon leaders chose code names to disguise their identities in certain revelation texts, Joseph’s choice was virtually inevitable. Enoch, he was called.<sup>34</sup> The gesture was more than historical nostalgia.

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<sup>1</sup> I make special acknowledgement to Fiona Givens, whose original insights into the weeping God of Enoch and the significance of the woman in the wilderness allegory as a model of restoration both inform this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Dean C. Jessee, ed., Papers of Joseph Smith. Volume 1: Autobiographical and Historical Writings (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1989), 271.

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- <sup>3</sup> John Calvin considered he was engaged in a Restoration movement (See Donald K. McKim, ed., Calvin's Institutes, abridged edition, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 44, 115, 143, etc.) and his archrival Michael Servetus titled his major theological work The Restoration of Christianity (*Christianismi Restitutio*).
- <sup>4</sup> Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, 27 Nov. 1832, in The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1984), 187.
- <sup>5</sup> Rodney Stark, "The Rise of a New World Faith," *Review of Religious Research* 26.1 (September 1984): 19.
- <sup>6</sup> Kenneth W. Godfrey, "A Note on the Nauvoo Library and Literary Institute," Brigham Young University Studies 14 (Spring 1974): 386-89.
- <sup>7</sup> Times and Seasons 4.22 (1 Oct. 1843): 336.
- <sup>8</sup> In June 1830, Joseph Smith, Jr. began a new Bible translation that was intended to restore "many important points touching the salvation of men, [that] had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled." Times and Seasons 5.14 (1 August 1844): 592.
- <sup>9</sup> Times and Seasons 4.22 (1 Oct. 1843): 336.
- <sup>10</sup> Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents (New York: Norton, 1989), 33.
- <sup>11</sup> C. S. Lewis, The Great Divorce: A Dream (New York: Harper Collins, 1946), 132.
- <sup>12</sup> Richard Bauckham, "'Only the Suffering God Can Help': Divine Passibility in Modern Theology," *Themelios* 9.3 (April 1984): 6.
- <sup>13</sup> Marcel Sarot, God, Passibility, and Corporeality (Kampen, Netherlands: Pharos, 1992), 1-2. Sarot gives more than a half dozen examples of defenses of impassibilism by contemporary theologians, suggesting the doctrine may be experiencing a revival.
- <sup>14</sup> M'Calla in Isaac C. Goff, A Faithful Report of the Theological Debate Held at Milford, New Jersey, December, 1830, by Rev. W. L. M'Calla of the Presbyterian, and Elder W. Lane, of the Christian Connexion (New York: Mitchell, 1831), 39.
- <sup>15</sup> Marcel Sarot, God, Passibility, and Corporeality (Kampen, Netherlands: Pharos, 1992), 1-2. Sarot gives more than a half dozen examples of defenses of impassibilism by contemporary theologians.
- <sup>16</sup> Special Collections, HBLL.
- <sup>17</sup> "Sang by the gift of Tongues and Translated," *Kirtland Revelation Book 2*, 27 February 1833), 48.
- <sup>18</sup> Evening and Morning Star 1.12 (May 1833).
- <sup>19</sup> Parley P. Pratt, Mormonism Unveiled (New York: 1838), 27.
- <sup>20</sup> "On Perfection," Times and Seasons 3.6 (15 January 1842): 655. The essay was reprinted from an earlier version in the Gospel Reflector.
- <sup>21</sup> Parley P. Pratt, Mormonism Unveiled (New York: 1838), 27.
- <sup>22</sup> Parley P. Pratt, Key to the Science of Theology (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855), 33.
- <sup>23</sup> Augustine, Confessions IV.15, trans. F. J. Sheed (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 63
- <sup>24</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, EH 1.3, in Norman Russell, Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1.
- <sup>25</sup> "Three things are necessary, in order . . . [to] exercise faith in God unto life and salvation. . . . Secondly, a *correct* idea of his character, perfections, and attributes." *Lectures on Faith*, 3.2. *Doctrine and Covenants* (Kirtland, Ohio: F. G. Williams, 1835), 36.
- <sup>26</sup> John Christopher Hartwick, an eccentric Lutheran clergyman, obtained over twenty thousand acres along the Susquehanna in New York to establish a town to be called New Jerusalem, but his dreams never got off the ground. He had no disciples, was dropped as minister by several congregations, and found no one willing to accept his spiritual oversight (he disliked women and bathing alike, tempering his appeal significantly). More successful was Jemima Wilkinson, known as "the Publick Universal Friend." Her radical reputation as a female prophet ignited controversy and attracted several dozen families to her 23,000 acre community near Seneca lake, which she called a New Jerusalem. But within two decades it had peaked and evaporated. A third New York New Jerusalem was proposed by Robert Matthews, better known by the name he gave himself, Matthias. His claim to be inhabited by a divine spirit, his communalistic proposals, and his rigidly patriarchal system—together with scandal and allegations of murder—won him more notoriety than disciples, and his order dissolved by 1834 after a few brief years of experimentation. Alan Taylor overviews these and other examples in "The New Jerusalem of the Early American Frontier," Visions of the Future: Collective and Individual; Secular and Sacred, 117-126. *Quaderno V*, *Quaderni Online* <http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/Quaderno/Quaderno5/quaderno5.html>
- <sup>27</sup> Steven Olsen, "The Mormon Ideology of Place: Cosmic Symbolism of the City of Zion, 1830-1846," dissertation, reprinted by BYU Studies (2002), 26.

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<sup>28</sup> Journal of Discourses, 26 vols., reported by G. D. Watt et al. (Liverpool: F.D. and S. W. Richards, et al., 1851-1886; reprint, Salt Lake City: n.p., 1974), 16:188.

<sup>29</sup> Time and Seasons 5.4 (15 February 1844): 434.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith (Orem, Utah: Grandin, 1994), 9-10.

<sup>31</sup> A few decades later, in 1825, an article appearing in an independent religious journal The Telescope picked up Fraser's argument, giving its interpretation of the woman's flight into the wilderness. "Whenever a people become organized into a visible body," it agreed, "they are no longer the true church of Christ but fall in with the grand apostasy."

<sup>32</sup> Words of Joseph Smith, 367.

<sup>33</sup> Words of Joseph Smith, 110.

<sup>34</sup> In the 1921 edition, sections 78, 82, 92, 96, 104.