

Martin Harris: The Kirtland Years, 1831-1870

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Martin Harris is known for being a Book of Mormon scribe, witness, and financier. However, little is known about his activities while living in Kirtland, Ohio, for over thirty-five years. This article will present what is known about Harris during the Kirtland years. Included will be his relationship to other Restoration churches under the leadership of James J. Strang (including Harris's mission to England), William E. McLellin, and so forth. A brief background of Harris's life in New York will also be given to help understand his place in the early life of the church.

New York Seeker

Martin Harris was born on 18 May 1783 at Easttown, New York. He was a well-established farmer of Palmyra, Ontario (later Wayne) County, New York. Harris at the age of twenty-six, Harris married his cousin Lucy; he was nine years her senior. They had a family of four known children. He became a close associate of Joseph Smith, Jr., whom he assisting financially, and he acted as a scribe to Smith.¹ He also financed the publication of the Book of Mormon by mortgaging his farm. As an early convert of Mormonism, he was received into fellowship by baptism on the day the church was organized. Due to the time and resources spent on his new religion, Harris became partially separated from his wife, Lucy.

Orsamus Turner, a printer in New York, described Harris thusly:

Martin Harris, was a farmer of Palmyra, the owner of a good farm, and an honest worthy citizen; but especially given to religious enthusiasm, new creeds, the more extravagant the better; a monomaniac, in fact.²

Harris resided on Palmyra Road, District 9, from 1808-1822. He was the overseer of his district for the years 1811, 1813-15, and 1820. From 1826 to 1829, he is listed in district 13 as the overseer for 1825, 1827, and 1829.³

In 1870, Martin recounted his early ideas about religion, dating back to about 1818:

I was Inspired of the Lord & Thought [taught] of the Spirit that I Should not Join Eny [any] Church although I Was anxiously [anxiously] Sought for by meny [many] of the Sectarians . . . all of the Sects cal[l]ed me Bro[ther] because the

¹ See Ronald W. Walker, "Martin Harris: Mormonism's Early Convert," *Dialogue* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1986):29-43.

² O[rsamus]. Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham's Purchase* (Rochester, N. Y.: William Alling, 1851), 215.

³ Palmyra Town Records, microfilm #812,869, Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Lord had Enli[gh]tened me[.] the Spirit told me to join None of the churches for none had Authority from the Lord.⁴

Although Harris joined no church at that time, he was friendly to many. G. W. Stodard, who had been acquainted with Harris for about 30 years, said: "Yet he was a public professor of some religion. He was first an [orthodox] Quaker, then a Universalist, next a Restorationer, then a Baptist, next a Presbyterian, and then a Mormon."⁵

A statement by 51 citizens of Palmyra said:

Martin Harris was a man who had acquired a handsome property, and in matters of business his word was considered good; but on moral and religious subjects, he was perfectly visionary—sometimes advocating one sentiment, and sometimes another.⁶

Harris became the last of the three witnesses to the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon emerged, thereby adding his name to the religious testimony of its authenticity. Lucy Mack Smith recalled Harris's behavior after seeing the plates of gold:

Martin Harris particularly seemed [altogether] unable to give vent to his feelings in words[. H]e said I have now seen an angel from Heaven who has of a surety testified of the truth of all that I have heard concerning the record and my eyes have beheld him[.] I have also looked upon the plates and handled them with my hands and can testify of the same to the world.⁷

At the time of the Book of Mormon's publication in 1830, Harris requested a commandment from Joseph Smith, who then commanded Martin repeatedly in his various duties.⁸ On 6 April 1830, Martin was baptized by Oliver Cowdery at Manchester, New York.⁹

⁴ "Testimony of Martin Harris Written by my hand from the Mouth of Martin Harris," 4 Sept. 1870, Edward Stevenson Collection, Archives of the Family and Church History Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter LDS archives).

⁵ Statement of G. W. Stodard, 28 Nov. 1833, in E.D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville [Ohio]: Author, 1834), 261. Methodism could be added to Stodard's list. Stephen Harding wrote concerning Martin Harris, "In early life he had been brought up a Quaker, then took to Methodism as more congenial to his nature" (Stephen S. Harding to Thomas Gregg, Feb. 1882, in Thomas Gregg, *The Prophet of Palmyra* [New York: John B. Alden, 1890], 37). Harding was born in 1808.

⁶ Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 261, 4 Dec. 1833.

⁷ Lucy Mack Smith, preliminary manuscript, "History of Lucy Smith," LDS archives. Not included in *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool: Published for Orson Pratt by S.W. Richards, 1853), 140. See Lavina Fielding Anderson, ed., *Lucy's Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith's Family Memoir* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 455.

⁸ See D&C (LDS version) m19:13, 15, 20, 21, 25-26, 28; D&C (RLDS version) 18:2f-g, k-l, 3a-b, 4a, [26-31] March 1830.

⁹ H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters, *Inventing Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), 157-58.

Trips to Kirtland, Ohio

On 22 February 1831, Joseph Smith wrote a letter to Harris, requesting him to "bring or cause to be brought all the books [of Mormon]" to Kirtland, Ohio.¹⁰ About 9 March 1831, Harris left Palmyra for Kirtland.¹¹ Martin Harris was forty-seven when he arrived at Painesville, Ohio, on Saturday, 12 March 1831, bringing with him a large number of Books of Mormon.¹² Harris's eccentric personality was immediately noted in the local paper:

He immediately planted himself in the bar-room of the hotel . . . He told all about the gold plates, Angels, Spirits, and Jo Smith.—He had seen and handled them all, by the power of God! . . . He was very flippant, talking fast and loud, in order that others could not interpose an opinion counter to him. Every idea that he advanced, he knew to be absolutely true, as he said, by the spirit and power of God. . . . declaring, that all who believed the new Bible would see Christ within fifteen years, and all who did not would absolutely be destroyed and dam'd [damned].¹³

A short time later, Harris traveled back to Palmyra, and sold his farm of 151 acres to Thomas Lakey for \$3,000.¹⁴ On 3 May 1831, Harris signed over certain personal items into the hands of Thomas Lakey, including "300 Books of Mormon to be sold for \$1.25 & account to the said Harris \$1.00 for each copy."¹⁵ The Wayne (Palmyra) Sentinel newspaper mentions Harris leaving Palmyra for the promised land of Ohio:

¹⁰ Smith to Harris, 22 Feb. 1831, handwriting of Sidney Rigdon, signature of Joseph Smith, Jr., LDS archives; see *The Essential Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 11. A letter by citizens of Canandaigua, New York, written in Jan. 1832, reported that "Martin Harris lately testified on a trial which related to the work of printing and publishing the Book that he had sent 2300 copies of it to the west" (copy of letter to Rev. Ancil Beach, Jan. 1832, in the Walter Hubbell Papers, Manuscript Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries, Princeton, New Jersey).

¹¹ According to a local letter: "Martin Harris, the head man here as it respects property, left here [Palmyra] a few days ago on a sojourn to your country" (letter from Palmyra, 12 March 1831, published 22 March 1831 in the *Telegraph*, Painesville, Ohio).

¹² *Geauga Gazette* 3 (15 March 1831), Painesville, Ohio. The *Gazette* reported that Harris "publicly declared that the 'Golden Bible' is the Anti-masonic Bible, and that all who do not believe in it will be damned. He says he has seen Jesus Christ." See Dan Vogel, "Mormonism's 'Anti-Masonic Bible,'" *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 9 (1989):17-30.

¹³ *Telegraph* 2 (15 March 1831):3, emphasis omitted. The *Telegraph* had earlier published that Oliver Cowdery proclaimed "destruction upon the world within a few years" ([16 Nov. 1830]:3). The *Ohio Star* reported that the missionaries "predict the end of the world in 15 years." (*Ohio Star* 1 [9 Dec. 1830], Ravenna, Ohio). The article also mentioned that David Whitmer and Martin Harris were with Oliver Cowdery. This is incorrect, since Parley P. Pratt, Ziba Peterson, and Peter Whitmer, Jr., were the other missionaries who accompanied Cowdery to Ohio.

¹⁴ Deed recorded in Deed Liber 10:515-16, Wayne County, Lyons, New York.

¹⁵ Palmyra Library vertical files, Thomas Lakey's "Record of Court Proceedings 1827-1830," in King's Daughters Library, Palmyra, New York. The list of articles "left in the hands of Thomas Lakey" was signed by Martin Harris.

Several families, numbering about fifty souls, took up their line of march from this town [Palmyra] last week for the “promised land,” among who was Martin Harris, one of the original believers in the “Book of Mormon.” Mr. Harris was among the early settlers of this town, and has ever borne the character of an honorable and upright man, and an obliging and benevolent neighbor. He had secured to himself by honest industry a respectable fortune—and has left a large circle of acquaintances and friends to pity his delusion.¹⁶

Harris arrived in Kirtland in time to attend the 3 June 1831 conference, when the “High Priesthood” was introduced to the church. Martin was ordained to this order by Lyman Wight.¹⁷ About two weeks later, Harris traveled with Joseph Smith and others to Missouri. Ezra Booth, who also went to Missouri, wrote: “Martin Harris is what may be called a great talker, an extravagant boaster; so much so, that he renders himself disagreeable to many of this society.”¹⁸ Harris returned to Kirtland by 10 October 1831, where he attended a church conference with Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and W.W. Phelps.¹⁹

Nancy Towle, an evangelist, visited Kirtland in October and talked with William W. Phelps, Martin Harris, Sidney Rigdon, and Joseph Smith. Harris told her: “I, have authority to say to you—You shall not enjoy, the comforts of God’s grace, until you believe that book [the Book of Mormon]...I should be willing to bear, all the sins of the human family, beyond the grave—if these things, are not so!”²⁰

At another conference in Orange Township, Ohio, on 25 October, “Br. Martin Harris said that he was anxious that all should be saved &c. also read two verses in the book of Revelations, also covenanted to give all for Christ’s sake.”²¹ On 12 November 1831 at Hiram, Ohio, a revelation was given through Joseph Smith regarding the establishment of the “Literary Firm,” an organization that would oversee the publication of Mormon books, newspapers, etc. Harris along with other brethren were appointed and ordained “to be stewards over the revelations and commandments . . . [T]his is their business in the church of God, to manage them and the concerns thereof, yea, the benefits thereof.”²²

During the years 1831-1837, Harris did not reside in Kirtland most of the time. Of the seven times he is known to be absent, he visited Palmyra five times.

Traveler and Missionary

In the spring of 1832, Martin Harris traveled to see Newel K. Whitney, who had broken his leg and was staying in Greenville, Indiana. In a letter to his wife, Emma, Joseph Smith wrote: “I would inform you that Brother Martin has arrived here. . . .Martin arrived on [Saturday] the

¹⁶ *Wayne Sentinel* 8 (27 May 1831):3, emphasis omitted.

¹⁷ Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983), 6-7.

¹⁸ Booth to Rev. Ira Eddy, 2 Oct. 1831 in *Ohio Star* 2 (20 Oct. 1831):3.

¹⁹ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 15.

²⁰ Nancy Towle, *Vicissitudes Illustrated, in the Experience of Nancy Towle, in Europe and America* (Charleston: Printed for the authoress by James L. Burges, 1832), 144.

²¹ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 21.

²² D&C (LDS version) 70:3, 5; D&C (RLDS Version) 70:1b-c. See also Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 31-32.

Same week he left Chagrin. . . .(martin will come with us)."²³

In September 1832, Harris, who was known for his making prophetic predictions, wrote the following two statements for a friend, "who placed them upon the wall of his office":

Within four years from September 1832, there will not be one wicked person left in the United States; that the righteous will be gathered to Zion, and that there will be no President over these United States after that time. MARTIN HARRIS.

I do hereby assert and declare that in four years from the date hereof, every sectarian and religious denomination in the United States, shall be broken down, and every Christian shall be gathered unto the Mormonites, and the rest of the human race shall perish. If these things do not take place, I will hereby consent to have my hand separated from my body. MARTIN HARRIS.²⁴

A little later, Martin Harris and his brother Emer left Kirtland to do missionary work in Pennsylvania and New York.²⁵ Together they baptized eighty-two new members as of 7 May 1833.²⁶ Harris then took a short trip to Palmyra where he sold some property there.

Church Experience

Harris became a member of the "United Firm" (a business partnership of church leaders organized to obtain personal revenue and to assist the Mormon church in financial matters) by 25 June 1833. On this day, he signed a letter with the church presidency addressed to Edward Partridge regarding the city center of Zion and the temples that were to be built there.²⁷

Later that year, in December, while Martin Harris was at Ira Ames's home, "we were impressed to get up and go to Joseph's house. On reaching his house we found Joseph and Oliver Cowdery at breakfast. Oliver said to us 'Good morning Brethren, we have just received news from heaven,' and pointed to some sheets of paper lying on the table. They had been up all night receiving and writing the revelation. And Emma had just got breakfast for them. It was the revelation given in December 1833 on the 255 [235] Page of the 1st Edition of Doctrine and Covenants[.] Martin Harris took it up and read it to us."²⁸

²³ Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, 6 June 1832, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois, in Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, revised edition (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co.; Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 264-65.

²⁴ Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 14.

²⁵ *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (Feb. 1833):70, Independence, Mo.

²⁶ Emer Harris to Brethren in Brownhelm, Ohio, 7 May 1833, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, as cited in Madge Harris Tuckett and Belle Harris Wilson, *The Martin Harris Story: with biographies of Emer Harris and Dennison Lott Harris* (Provo, Utah: Vintage Books, 1983), 55.

²⁷ Joseph Smith, Jr., Sidney Rigdon, F.G. Williams, and Martin Harris to Edward Partridge, 25 June 1833, LDS archives.

²⁸ "Journal and Record of the Life & Family of Ira Ames," microfilm #A-311, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah. Period covered: 22 Sept. 1804 - 15 Jan. 1869; commenced writing circa 1858. Original in LDS archives. See D&C (LDS version) 101; D&C (RLDS version) 98, 16 Dec. 1833.

Around this same time, Philastus Hurlbut, a former church member, wrote to Isaac Hale of Harmony, Pennsylvania. Hale, who was the father-in-law of Joseph Smith, replied to Hurlbut. William Hine recalled that he "heard Hurlbut lecture in the Presbyterian Church in Kirtland. . . . Hurlbut read Hale's letter in the lecture. Martin Harris said Hale was old and blind and not capable of writing it."²⁹ Later, on 4 February 1834, E. D. Howe wrote to Isaac Hale and mentioned a letter written by Hale to Hurlbut, postmarked 22 December 1833. Howe said, "Your letter has already been pronounced a forgery by the Mormons, who say you are blind and cannot write, even your name." Hale replied to Howe's request with an affidavit that was published in the *Susquehanna Register* previous to Howe's publication in *Mormonism Unveiled*. Nathaniel Lewis stated that Isaac Hale was still capable of writing, and Isaac's son Alva said that "the letter sent by his father, Issac Hale, to Dr. P. Hurlbut was written by Jesse Hale."³⁰ On 12 February 1834, charges were presented by Sidney Rigdon against Harris before a council of high priests and elders relating Harris's claim that Joseph Smith drank liquor prior to translating the Book of Mormon. Harris "confessed that his mind was darkened and that he had said many things inadvertently" and "promised to do better." The minutes of this meeting state:

After the council had received much good instruction from Bro. Joseph, the case of Bro. Martin Harris against whom certain charges were preferred by Bro. Sidney Rigdon. One was that he told [Esquire] A.C. Russell that Joseph drank too much liquor when he was translating the Book of Mormon and that he wrestled with many men and threw them &c. Another charge was, that he exalted himself above bro. Joseph, in that he said bro. Joseph knew not the contents of the book of Mormon until it was translated. Bro. Martin said he did not tell [Esquire] Russell that bro. Joseph drank too much liquor while translating the book of Mormon, but this thing took place before the book of Mormon was translated. He confessed that his mind was darkened and that he had said many things inadvertently calculating to would the feelings of his brother and promised to do better. The council forgave him and gave him much good advice.³¹

Member of Kirtland High Council

Five days later, on 17 February 1834, Joseph Smith organized the church's Kirtland High Council. Harris was chosen a member. He attended some meetings but was often out of town, as

²⁹ William R. Hine Affidavit, circa March 1885, *Naked Truths About Mormonism* 1 (Jan. 1888):2, Oakland, California, original publication in Yale University Library. The first letter written by Isaac Hale has not been located.

³⁰ "Mormonism," *Susquehanna Register, and Northern Pennsylvanian* 9 (1 May 1834):1, Montrose, Pennsylvania. Isaac Hale's affidavit was also printed in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 262-66.

³¹ Kirtland Council Minute Book, 28-29, LDS archives, typed copy. For Joseph Smith's indulgence in intoxicating liquor, see statements by three Manchester, New York, neighbors: David Stafford (Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 249), Barton Stafford (ibid., 250), and Joshua Stafford (ibid., 258). Pennsylvania resident Levi Lewis, who lived at Harmony when Martin Harris was a scribe for Smith in 1828, said he saw young Joseph "intoxicated at three different times while he was composing the Book of Mormon" (*Susquehanna Register* 9 [1 May 1834]:1; Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 268).

he made frequent trips to Palmyra. In May 1834, Martin donated \$47 for the benefit of Zion.³² Joseph Smith organized a group known as Zion's Camp to march to Missouri and help the saints who had been forced out of Jackson County. Harris was the only one of the three witnesses to go with this group. He left Kirtland with Zion's Camp, traveling through the states of Indiana and Illinois to Clay County, Missouri. Although the group's objective was not accomplished, a presidency and high council was organized in Zion (Missouri).

The Far West Record contains brief minutes for a 7 July 1834 meeting held at the house of Lyman Wight in Clay County, Missouri: "Br. Joseph Smith, jr. then proceeded and ordained the three Presidents, David Whitmer as President and William W. Phelps & John Whitmer assistants"³³ It was at this meeting that David Whitmer was ordained successor to Joseph Smith. The minutes do not state that Smith ordained David Whitmer as a prophet, seer, revelator, and translator to the church.³⁴

Beside Martin Harris, other converts such as John Tanner were wealthy and contributed to church projects. Tanner, who arrived at Kirtland on 17 January 1835, loaned Joseph Smith \$2,000, and the Temple Committee was given \$13,000 in merchandise.³⁵

On 14-15 February 1835, nine apostles were ordained by the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon (Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris).³⁶ Harris then left Kirtland, as he was not at the meeting of 21 February when Parley P. Pratt was ordained an apostle. Pratt received his ordination from Joseph Smith, Jr., Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer.

A few months later, Jonathan Hale, Thomas B. Marsh, and David W. Patten went "to Palmyra in the night went Elde[r] Ma[r]tin Harris to [breakfast] thence to the hill Cumorah all went on to the hill and offered up our thanks to the most high God for the record of the Nephites and other blessings we went about in the Neighborhood from house to house to inquire the Character of Joseph Smith jr. previous to his receiving the Book of Mormon. The amount was that his Character was as good as young men in General. this was on the 30 day of May 1835."³⁷ Harris was still in Palmyra in July when Edward Partridge "lodged with br[other] Martin Harris."³⁸

Soon after Harris returned to Kirtland, he received a patriarchal blessing from the hands of Joseph Smith, Sr., church patriarch on 27 August 1835. The blessing stated: "Thou hast left thy family and house for the gospel's sake, and given all for the purpose of spreading the work of thy God: for this thou shalt be blessed and rewarded an hundred fold; yea, thou hast left thy

³² Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Journal, 1832-1842* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992), 2:33.

³³ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 72.

³⁴ Reed C. Durham, Jr., and Steven H. Health jointly wrote, "It should be perfectly clear that in July 1834, to both the Lord and Joseph Smith, David Whitmer was to succeed Joseph as the President of the Church" (*Succession in the Church* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970], 10). Oliver Cowdery was later ordained Assistant President in the presidency of the church, next to Joseph Smith (Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:24; 2:36).

³⁵ Kirtland Council Minute Book, 83, LDS archives; "Sketch of An Elder's Life," *Scraps of Biography* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1883), 12.

³⁶ James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed., revised and enlarged (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992), 90.

³⁷ Jonathan Harriman Hale Journal, LDS Archives.

³⁸ Edward Partridge Journal, entry of 7 July 1835, typed copy, LDS archives.

family and consecrated them unto the Lord." He was also told "if thou desirest it with all thy heart and art faithful, thou shalt yet teach them, even thy wife that she may be saved in the day of eternity; but if not they shall be removed from the earth, and their place be supplied with another, and thy heart shall be satisfied, for thou shalt raise up seed unto the Lord to praise him in his kingdom."³⁹

Harris returned to Palmyra and sold property on 13 October 1835; the document was co-signed by Lucy Harris.⁴⁰ Although still separated in their marriage, they nevertheless managed to sell property for revenue. It was recorded in Joseph Smith's journal that "Elder [Martin] Harris also returned this morning [14 Dec. 1835] from Palmyra N[ew] York."⁴¹

In January 1836 Martin arrived at Joseph Smith's house, where Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and John Corrill were nearly finished purifying their bodies with pure water and whiskey, perfumed with cinnamon, that they might be clean before the Lord. Cowdery wrote: "bro. Martin Harris came in and was also washed."⁴² Apparently Harris also attended the dedication of Kirtland Temple on 27 March 1836, where he sat with the Kirtland High Council.

Family tradition has it that Martin's wife, Lucy, died in Palmyra in the summer of 1836 at the age of 44.⁴³ There is no known record that they divorced. That same fall, on 1 November 1836, Harris married Caroline Young (born 17 May 1816). She was a daughter of John Young (brother of Brigham Young), and was twenty years old when she married Harris, who was fifty-three at the time.⁴⁴

Brigham Young's history states that in March 1837, he "travelled as far as Canandaigua [New York], where we stopped two nights and one day. While here I visited Martin Harris."⁴⁵ Harris at Palmyra, sold property on 6 May 1837 with his wife Caroline.⁴⁶

³⁹ Patriarchal Blessing Book, 2:33, LDS archives. This is a duplicate copy made by Thomas Bullock from volume 1.

⁴⁰ Deed Liber 18:437-39, Wayne County, Lyons, New York. See also Deed Liber 22:351 (9 April 1833) and 13:2-3 (19 April 1833), land transactions of Martin and Lucy Harris, April 1833.

⁴¹ Joseph Smith Journal, 14 Dec. 1835, in Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:104. A third-person account reports: "Eld[e]r. [Martin] Harris also returned this morning from visiting his family who live in Palmyra N.Y." (ibid., 1:160-61). William W. Phelps wrote, "Martin Harris has just arrived from Palmyra, New York; he states that the winter in that State is severe and has been for about four weeks" (W. W. Phelps to Sally Phelps, 18 Dec. 1835 in Bruce A. Van Orden, ed., "Writing to Zion: The William W. Phelps Kirtland Letters (1835-1836)," *BYU Studies* 33 [1993]:571).

⁴² Oliver Cowdery's Sketch Book, postscript to entry of 16 Jan. 1836, LDS archives, as cited in Leonard J. Arrington, "Oliver Cowdery's Kirtland, Ohio, 'Sketch Book'," *BYU Studies* 12 (Summer 1972):416. It is probable that Martin Harris also received his anointing in 1836.

⁴³ *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 26 (July 1935):108.

⁴⁴ Application for Marriage License, 1 Nov. 1836, Geauga County, Ohio, microfilm #873,464, Family History Library, Salt Lake City. The application was signed by John Young, Caroline's father. Except for the birth of the Harris children, nothing is known of Caroline Young Harris's life in Kirtland.

⁴⁵ Elden J. Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801-1844* (Salt Lake City: Elden J. Watson, 1968), 18, entry of 13 March 1837.

⁴⁶ Deed Liber 22:218-19, Wayne County, Lyons, New York.

Dissent in Kirtland

Internal strife arose in the church early in 1837, stemming from problems with the Mormons' financial institution, the "Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company." On 9 April 1837, in the Kirtland Temple, Joseph Smith "proclaimed that Severe Judgment awaited those Characters that professed to be his friends & friends to humanity & the Kirtland Safety Society But had turned tr[a]itors & opposed the Currency & its friends which has given power in to the hands of the enemy & oppressed the poor Saints."⁴⁷ Harris had no stock in the Kirtland Anti-Banking institution, but he may have been influenced by its failure.⁴⁸ John A. Clark wrote concerning the Kirtland banking enterprise: "Ultimately this speculation contributed to sever Harris from [Joseph] Smith and [Sidney] Rigdon. . . . Harris, in one of his late visits to Palmyra, remarked to a friend of mine, that Jo Smith had now become a complete wretch, and that he had no confidence either in him or Rigdon."⁴⁹

On 29 May 1837, Harris was back in Kirtland, where the High Council met in the Kirtland Temple. Charges had been filed by five church members against Presidents David Whitmer and Frederick G. Williams, Elders Lyman E. Johnson and Parley P. Pratt (of the Council of the Twelve Apostles), and Elder Warren Parrish, a seventy. The council decided it could not try Presidents Whitmer and Williams, and they were discharged. In the afternoon, Presidents Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery presided. High counselor "Martin Harris then motioned that Prest. F G Williams take a seat with the Presidents." So Williams now presided with Rigdon and Cowdery. Apostle Parley Pratt objected to being tried by either Sidney Rigdon or Joseph Smith. Rigdon then said he could not proceed to try the case and left the stand. After some remarks, Oliver Cowdery also left the stand. Frederick Williams, the remaining president, said he "should be unwilling to preside in the case and left the stand." The minutes kept by Warren Cowdery read, "The council and assembly then dispersed in confusion."⁵⁰

On 23 July 1837, Joseph Smith received a revelation for Thomas B. Marsh, president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

Exalt not yourselves; rebel not against my servant Joseph [Smith, Jr.]. . . . Behold vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth . . . And upon my house [Kirtland Temple] shall it begin and from my house shall it go forth saith

⁴⁷ Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983-85), 1:138.

⁴⁸ On the Kirtland Bank, see D. Paul Sampson and Larry T. Wimmer, "The Kirtland Safety Society: The Stock Ledger Book and the Bank Failure," *BYU Studies* 12 (Summer 1972):427-36, and Milton V. Backman, Jr., comp., *A Profile of Latter-day Saints of Kirtland, Ohio and Members of Zion's Camp 1830-1839* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1982), 121.

⁴⁹ John A. Clark, *Gleanings By the Way* (Philadelphia: W.J. & J.K. Simon, 1842), 349.

⁵⁰ High Council Minutes of 29 May 1837 in Kirtland Council Minute Book, 226-30. Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal: "The Presidents withdrew. The council closed without transacting business" (*Wilford Woodruff's Journal* 1:148). On this date, three statements were made regarding charges by Warren Parrish (against Sidney Rigdon), by Apostles Lyman E. Johnson and Orson Pratt (against Joseph Smith, Jr.) and by Apostle Luke Johnson (against Joseph Smith, Sr.). (Copy in Newel K. Whitney Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.) These charges are in the same handwriting and are evidently copies made from the originals.

the Lord. First among those among you saith the Lord; who have professed to know my name and have not known me and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house saith the Lord.⁵¹

A conference met on 3 September 1837 in the Kirtland Temple, where objections were made to the high council positions of John Johnson, Joseph Coe, Martin Harris, and Joseph Kingsbury.⁵² John Corrill wrote about these events:

During their mercantile and banking operations they not only indulged in pride, but also suffered jealousies to arise among them, and several persons dissented from the church, and accused the leaders of the church with bad management, selfishness, seeking for riches, honor, and dominion, tyrannising [tyrannizing] over the people, and striving constantly after power and property. On the other hand, the leaders of the church accused the dissenters with dishonesty, want of faith, and righteousness, wicked in their intentions, guilty of crimes, such as stealing, lying, encouraging the making of counterfeit money, &c.; and this strife or opposition arose to a great height, so that, instead of pulling together as brethren, they tried every way in their power, seemingly, to destroy each other; their enemies from without rejoiced at this, and assisted the dissenters what they could, until [Joseph] Smith and Rigden [Sidney Rigdon] finally were obliged to leave Kirtland, and, with their families, came to Far West, in March or April 1838.⁵³

Thomas B. Marsh wrote to fellow apostle Wilford Woodruff:

[I]t seems that [Warren] Parrish, J[ohn]. F. Boynton, Luke Johnson, Joseph Coe, and some others, united together for the overthrow of the church. President [Joseph] Smith, and his company, returned [to Kirtland], on, or about the 10th of December [1837]; soon after which this dissenting band, openly, and publicly, renounced the church of Christ, of Latter Day Saints, and claimed themselves to be the old standard; called themselves the church of Christ, excluded that of Saints, and set at naught Br[other]. Joseph [Smith], and the whole church, denounced them as heretics.⁵⁴

During the week of 24-30 December 1837, twenty-eight members, including Martin Harris, were cut off from the church or excluded (excommunicated) by the High Council of Kirtland. It is not known if any of these church members were present at this meeting. According

⁵¹ Scriptorium Book of Joseph Smith, see Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 2:276-78; D&C (LDS version) 112:15, 24-26; D&C (RLDS version) 105:6b, 9b-10.

⁵² Kirtland Council Minute Book, 234-38. A record of this event also appears in a letter copied into the Scriptorium Book of Joseph Smith (Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 2:217-19. Apparently, Joseph C. Kingsbury reconciled with the church at this time.

⁵³ John Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints* (St. Louis: Printed for the Author, 1839), 27. Smith arrived in Far West, Missouri on 14 March 1838 (Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 2:213).

⁵⁴ Marsh to Woodruff, no date, in *Elders' Journal of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* 1 (July 1838):36-37, Far West, Missouri.

to John Smith, in a letter to his son, George A. Smith:

The spiritual condition at this time is gloomy also. I called the High Council together last week and laid before them the case of dissenters; 28 persons were, upon mature discussion, cut off from the Church; the leaders were Cyrus Smalling, Joseph Coe, Martin Harris, Luke S. Johnson[,] John F. Boynton and W[arren]. W. Parrish. We have cut off between 40 and 50 from the Church since you left.⁵⁵

On 7 January 1838, Joseph Smith received a revelation for Edward Partridge instructing: "[L]et my people be aware of dissentors [dissenters] among them, lest the enemy have power over them; Awake my shepherds and warn my people! for behold the wolf⁵⁶ cometh to destroy them,—receive him not."⁵⁷ Five days later (12 January 1838), a revelation to the church presidency said: "Thus Saith the Lord Let the presidency of my Church take their families as soon as it is practicable and a door is open for them and [move] unto the west [Far West] as fast as the way is made pla[in] before their faces and let their hearts be comforted for I will be with them."⁵⁸ Joseph Smith left Kirtland at 10 o'clock that night.⁵⁹

A Trustee in the Church of Christ

Shortly afterward, a notice was posted on the Kirtland Temple by these dissenters, calling for a meeting of the "Church of Christ." In accordance with Ohio law, trustees were chosen and the original church name was incorporated, with Joseph Coe, Martin Harris, and Cyrus Smalling named as trustees. The records of Geauga County reported:

State of Ohio } Be it known that before me Warren Geauga County ss. } A.
Cowdery a Justice of the Peace in and for Kirtland Township in said County
personally appeared Joseph Coe, Martin Harris & Cyrus Smalling and took the
following oath to wit; You and each of you do swear in the presence of Almighty
God, that you will support the Constitution of the United States and the
constitution of the state of Ohio, and will faithfully discharge your duties as
Trustees of the Church of Christ in Kirtland township in said County to the best of
your abilities Kirtland Jany 18th. 1838. W.A. Cowdery J.P.

State of Ohio } ss. To the Clerk of the Court of Common Geauga County } Pleas
in said County. We the undersigned Trustees of the Church of Christ do certify
under our hands & seals that we do recognize the name of the Church of Christ

⁵⁵ Letter by John Smith, Kirtland, Ohio, to George A. Smith, 1 Jan. 1838 in *Journal History of the Church*, LDS archives.

⁵⁶ David W. Patten stated on 5 February 1838 that the wolf was "the dissenters in Kirtland" (Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 138).

⁵⁷ Manuscript in LDS archives. See H. Michael Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text and Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 284.

⁵⁸ Manuscript in LDS archives. See Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 286.

⁵⁹ B.H. Roberts, ed., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1959), 3:1.

and that the above proceedings, have been had, and said Church is situated in Kirtland Township in said County.

Joseph Coe [Seal]
 Martin Harris [Seal]
 Cyrus Smalling [Seal]
 Kirtland Jany 18. 1838.⁶⁰

Hepzibah (Hepsy) Richards wrote her brother, Willard Richards, concerning the events occurring in Kirtland:

A large number have dissented from the body of the church and are very violent in their opposition to the President [presidency, viz., Joseph Smith, Jr., Sidney Rigdon and Hyrum Smith] and all who uphold them. They have organized a church and appointed a meeting in the house [Kirtland Temple] next sabbath. Say they will have it, if it is by the shedding of blood. They have the keys already.

The printing-office has been attached on a judgment that [Grandison] Newel held against the Presidents of K[irtland] money. Last monday it was sold at auction into the hands of Mr. Millican [Nathaniel Milliken], one of the dissenters. At one o[']clock the night following cousin Mary waked me, and said that Kirtland was all in flames. It proved to be the Printing-office—the fire was then in its height and in one hour it was consumed with all its contents. The Temple and other buildings badly scorched. Tuesday eve a meeting was held and a patrol consisting of 21 men[,] 3 for each night in the week[,] chosen to guard the city to prevent further destruction by fire. A part of these men are members of the church—a part dissenters.⁶¹

Benjamin F. Johnson wrote: "The printing office and material which our enemies thought to use to bolster up a church organization opposed to the Prophet was set on fire by Brother Lyman R. Sherman and destroyed."⁶²

Caroline and Martin's first child was born at Kirtland that same January. Their family eventually included seven children, two of whom died in their infancy. Their children were: Martin, Jr. (28 Jan. 1838), Caroline (circa 1839, died by 1850 census), Julia (29 April 1842), John (11 July 1845), Sarah (circa 1849, died by 1860 census), Solomon (1 Dec. 1854) and Ida May (27 May 1856). All of the children were born in Kirtland, except Ida May, who was born in Pottawattamie County, Iowa.⁶³

⁶⁰ Geauga County, Ohio, Execution Docket 1831-1835, microfilm # 1,289,257, item 1, Family History Library. This entry was located by Lachlan Mackay, director of the Kirtland Temple Historic Center, Kirtland, Ohio, in 1996.

⁶¹ Hepzibah Richards to Willard Richards, 18-19 Jan. 1838, original LDS archives as quoted in Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr, eds., *Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982), 71.

⁶² Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Independence, Missouri: Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1947), 29-30.

⁶³ Family Group Record, LDS Family History Library; 1840, 1850, 1860, U.S. Census Records,

Stephen Burnett, an elder who had done missionary work for the church, wrote to Lyman E. Johnson that after some consideration he was about to leave the church, "when I came to hear Martin Harris state in public that he never saw the plates with his natural eyes only in vision or imagination, neither Oliver [Cowdery] nor David [Whitmer] & also that the eight witnesses never saw them & hesitated to sign that instrument [their testimony] for that reason, but were persuaded to do it, the last pedestal gave way, in my view our foundations was sapped & the entire superstructure fell a heap of ruins."⁶⁴

Break with Warren Parrish

On 25 March 1838, in the Kirtland Temple, Stephen Burnett "renounced the Book of Mormon." He was "followed by W[arren]. Par[r]ish[,] Luke Johnson & John Boynton all of who concurred with me, after we were done speaking M[artin] Harris arose & said he was sorry for any man who rejected the Book of Mormon for he knew it was true, he said he had hefted the plates repeatedly in a box with only a tablecloth or a handkerchief over them, but he never saw them only as he saw a city through a mountain. And said that he never should have told that the testimony of the eight [witnesses] was false, if it had not been picked out of [h]im but should have let it passed as it was."⁶⁵

George A. Smith wrote:

Last Sabbath [Sunday, 25 March] a division arose among the Parrish party about the Book of Mormon, John F. Boyington, W[arren]. Parrish, Luke Johnson and others said it was nonsense. Martin Harris then bore testimony of its truth and said all would be damned, if they rejected it. Cyrus Smalling, Joseph Coe and others declared his testimony was true.⁶⁶

Nothing is known of Harris's activities from April 1838 to October 1839, but he was clearly involved with the dissenters who accused Smith and Rigdon of failing to lead the saints as men of God. Heber C. Kimball wrote to his wife, Vilate, about Kirtland: "I anticipated meeting the Brethren united and enjoying the blessings of the people of God, but to my sorrow, I found them all broken up and divided into several different parties."⁶⁷ On 10 November 1839, Apostle Kimball compared the dissenters of Kirtland "to a parcel of old earthen pots that were cracked in burning, for they were mostly apostates that were living there. Immediately after I returned to the house of Ira Bond; Martin Harris, Cyrus Smalling and others came in and

Kirtland, Lake County, Ohio.

⁶⁴ Stephen Burnett to Lyman E. Johnson, 15 April 1838, Orange Township, Geauga County, Ohio. See note 65.

⁶⁵ Ibid. On 24 May 1838, a copy of the original letter was made. This copy was then recopied in 1839 into a letterbook. The above is from the 1839 copy, located in Joseph Smith Letterbook 2: 64-66, LDS Archives. This document contains copies of letters from 20 April 1837 to 8 Feb. 1843, with a few letters from other years. See also Warren Parrish to E. Holmes, 11 Aug. 1838 in *The Evangelist* 6 (1 Oct. 1838):226, Carthage, Ohio.

⁶⁶ George A. Smith to Josiah Flemming, 30 March 1838, Kirtland, Journal History of the Church. Luke S. Johnson subsequently rejoined the church in 1846.

⁶⁷ Kimball to Vilate Kimball, 16 Nov. 1839 as cited in Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 68.

attacked me on what I had been saying, asking me who I referred to in my comparisons; said I, 'to no one in particular, but to anyone that the coat fits.'"⁶⁸

Harris's Fellowship and Rebaptism

However, by 18 July 1840, Martin Harris had returned to the church. Laura Pitkin wrote to Heber C. Kimball:

Brother Joseph [Smith] received a letter from Kirtland last week. Martin Harris has come into the church. Oliver Cowdery is very friendly and have pro[s]perous times in that place. W.W. Phelps has also written to Brother Joseph, makes a humble confession and wishes to be received into the church.⁶⁹

Harris was evidently received back into the church, because the next year, on 22 May 1841, a conference in Kirtland was held, and the minutes recorded that Martin Harris was again a member of High Priests Quorum, with only one vote against him.⁷⁰ William W. Phelps had also been received back into fellowship by the church in Nauvoo, Illinois, on 19 July 1840.⁷¹

In June 1841, rumors abounded that a Martin Harris had been murdered near Nauvoo, and many newspapers reported that it was the very same Book of Mormon witness. Assuming that Harris had died, the *Rochester Daily Democrat*, edited by Alvah Strong, published an article about him:

We have ever regarded Mr. Harris as an honest man. We first became acquainted with him at Palmyra, in the spring of 1828, shortly after the plates from which the Book of Mormon is said to have been translated, were found. . . . Though illiterate and naturally of a superstitious turn of mind, he had long sustained an irreproachable character for probity.⁷²

However, the *Paineville Telegraph* reported that Harris "is now, or was two days since, alive and well, at his residence in Kirtland. . . .As to his present relation to the Mormons—Martin

⁶⁸ From the History of Heber C. Kimball in Helen Mar [Kimball] Whitney, "Life Incidents," *Woman's Exponent* 9 (15 July 1880):26, as cited in Jeni Broberg Holzapfel and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, eds., *A Woman's View: Helen Mar Whitney's Reminiscences of Early Church History* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1997), 25-26.

⁶⁹ Pitkin to Kimball, 18 July [1840], International Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Salt Lake City; published in Kate B. Carter, comp., *Heart Throbs of the West* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1944), 5:382.

⁷⁰ "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons* 2 (1 July 1841):458.

⁷¹ Joseph Smith wrote to W.W. Phelps, "Your letter was read to the Saints last Sunday [19 July] and an expression of their feeling was taken, when it was unanimously resolved that W.W. Phelps should be received into fellowship" (Smith to Phelps, 22 July 1840 in Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 509-510). The Kirtland conference of 24 May 1841 resolved "that, as W.W. Phelps had been received into standing and fellowship, by the church at Nauvoo, Ill., he be also received into the same standing and fellowship, according to his 'anointing' by the church at Kirtland" (*Times and Seasons* 2 [1 July 1841]:459, Nauvoo, Illinois).

⁷² "Martin Harris, The Mormon," *Daily Democrat* 9 (23 June 1841):2, Rochester, New York.

Harris believes that the work in its commencement was a genuine work of the Lord, but that Smith, having become worldly and proud, has been forsaken of the Lord, and has become a knave and imposter. He expects that the work will be yet revived, through other instrumentalities. This we had sometime since from Harris himself, and it has been reported to us within the last week by a brother of his."⁷³

On 31 October and 1 November 1842, a conference was held at Kirtland, where Elder Lyman Wight of the Council of Twelve was called to the chair. Shortly thereafter, during a spiritual reformation in Kirtland, 203 persons were baptized during a four-day period. On 7 November, Martin Harris was one of those re-baptized: "Twelve persons were baptized yesterday and information has just reached me that Brother Martin Harris has been baptized, and is now on his way home from the water."⁷⁴ Jacob Scott wrote three months later, "Martin Harris, one of the 3 Special witnesses, has been baptized and admitted again into the Church; and scores of other Dissenters."⁷⁵

Believer in Shaker Book

Four separate sources state that Harris soon afterwards became a follower of Mother Ann Lee, founder of the Shaker movement (United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming).⁷⁶ Harris appears to have been associated with a divine roll or book published in New Hampshire in 1843, titled *A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book; from the Lord God of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of Earth: Revealed in the United Society at New Lebanon, County of Columbia, State of New-York, United States of America*.⁷⁷ Five hundred copies of the book were printed and bound in September 1843.

At that time, most Shakers believed in receiving messages from the spirit world as well as obtaining instructions from Mother Ann Lee.⁷⁸ Communications in this sacred book included a

⁷³ *Painesville Telegraph* 7 (30 June 1841):3.

⁷⁴ Justin Brooks to Joseph Smith, 7 Nov. 1842 in *Journal History of the Church*; see *Times and Seasons* 4 (2 Jan. 1843):63. The conference minutes recorded, "Lester Brooks was chosen president, Elders John Young and Hiram Kellogg counsellors" (Copy of minutes in *Journal History of the Church*, 31 Oct. 1842, LDS archives).

⁷⁵ Scott to Mary Warnock, 28 Feb. 1843, Nauvoo, Illinois, Library-Archives, Community of Christ, (formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), Independence, Missouri (hereafter RLDS archives).

⁷⁶ Phineas Young et al. to Brigham Young, 31 Dec. 1844, copied into the *Journal History of the Church*, LDS archives; *Millennial Star* 9 (15 Nov. 1846):124; Thomas Colburn to Elder Snow, 2 May 1855, in *St. Louis Luminary* 1 (5 May 1855):94; and *Public Discussion of the Issues Between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Church of Christ (Disciples) Held in Kirtland, Ohio, Beginning February 12, and Closing March 8, 1884 Between E.L. Kelley, of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Clark Braden, of the Church of Christ* (St Louis: Clark Braden, 1884), 173.

⁷⁷ Philemon Stewart, *A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book; from the Lord God of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of Earth: Revealed in the United Society at New Lebanon, County of Columbia, State of New-York, United States of America* (Canterbury, N. H.: United Society, 1843). See Robert F. W. Meader, "The Vision of Brother Philemon [Stewart]," *Shaker Quarterly* 10 (Spring 1970):8-17.

⁷⁸ See Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the*

holy roll written by John the Revelator and revelations from biblical personages such as Elisha, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Malachi, Micah, Noah, and Peter. The publication also contained many testimonies about visitations of angels, who showed the faithful the roll and book. Myra A. Bean stated: "Thus having received much previous knowledge at different times, I have not the least reason to doubt the divine origin of this Sacred Roll and Book; but affirm it to be the true and unalterable word of our Heavenly Father, sent forth upon the earth, by no other means than that of divine inspiration."⁷⁹

Other experiences, such as those at North Union, Ohio, including "communications from the Spirit World, were taken from the mouths of inspired instruments, copied verbatim, who went in vision, and read as they were inspired to read,—from a Roll, Manuscript, or Letter, which to us, were invisible, until revealed." One such revelation came as "A letter from Father Abraham written by his own hand, in union with Holy Mother Wisdom [Mother Ann Lee]."⁸⁰

Spiritual manifestations such as those recorded in the Shaker book moved Harris in a special way. In a debate held in 1844 in Kirtland, Clark Braden mentioned, "Harris declared repeatedly that he had as much evidence for a Shaker book he had as for the Book of Mormon."⁸¹ By the end 1844, Martin Harris believed in and had a strong testimony of the sacred roll of the Shakers.

Phineas Young and others wrote to Brigham Young and the Twelve Apostles in Nauvoo: "The work (says Bro. Joseph [Smith]) rests upon your shoulders. Consequently we appeal to you. There are in this place all kinds of teaching, Martin Harris is a firm believer in Shakerism, says his testimony is greater than it was of the Book of Mormon. . .for here we are called Josephites, and at Nauvoo apostates. . .There are at this time some 40 or 50 good brethren in this place, which constitutes a majority of the Church here. . .having every kind of spirit to deal with; but we are favored with the house [Kirtland Temple] and the control of it."⁸²

No record has been located to indicate Martin Harris ever repudiated his greater appreciation for the Shaker book, and it is not known how long Harris attached himself to Shakerism. Jeremiah Cooper visited Martin in July 1845, "[W]e saw Mr. Martin Harris, he bore testimony to the Book of Mormon, said he wrote part of it while Mr. Joseph Smith translated it from the plate of Gold."⁸³

Nineteenth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 62-71. See also Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., "The American Theosophical Synthesis," in Howard Kerr and Charles L. Crow, eds., *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 111-134 and Henry C. Blinn, *The Manifestation of Spiritualism among the Shakers 1837-1847* (East Canterbury, N. H.: author, 1899).

⁷⁹ *Sacred and Divine Roll and Book*, 347.

⁸⁰ See United Society of Believers (Shakers) Papers, MSS 119, Boxes 1-2, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.

⁸¹ Braden and Kelley Debate, 173.

⁸² Letter of Phineas H. Young, Jeremiah Knight, Hiram Winters, and Ira Tuft to Brigham Young, 31 Dec. 1844, Kirtland, Ohio, copied into the Journal History of the Church, 31 Dec. 1844, LDS archives.

⁸³ Letter by J. Cooper, dated 3 Sept. 1845, in *The Latter Day Saint's Messenger and Advocate* 1 (1 Sept. 1845):319, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This was a publication of the organization lead by Sidney Rigdon.

Association with James J. Strang's Church

By this time, the church was in turmoil over the death of Joseph Smith in June 1844. In the succeeding months and years, several people proposed themselves as Smith's successor, including James J. Strang, David Whitmer, Brigham Young, Sidney Rigdon, etc. Martin Harris, like many church members, did not know whom to follow, and he changed his loyalty several times, choosing first one supposed successor, then another.

In the January 1846 issue of the *Voree Herald*, James J. Strang published an 1844 letter supposedly written by Joseph Smith regarding the establishment of a stake of Zion in Voree, Wisconsin Territory. On 13 September 1845, four of Strang's followers had unburied "three plates of brass,"⁸⁴ which Strang proceeded to translate five days later.⁸⁵ Earlier, Strang had professed to being appointed the successor of Joseph Smith by an angel on the day of Smith's death.⁸⁶ Many members of the Smith family in Nauvoo accepted Strang's claims, as did "all the living witnesses of the Book of Mormon save one."⁸⁷

Martin Harris was not the exception. By August 1846, he had accepted James J. Strang as church president, prophet, seer, revelator, translator, and successor to Joseph Smith. In August 1846, "William Smith, Patriarch of the church, went to Kirtland. . .and assisted President Strang efficiently in the re-organization of the church there."⁸⁸ A church conference was held in the Kirtland Temple.

A conference was held at Kirtland on the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th, of August and the Stake at that place reorganized according to the Law of the Lord and the word of his prophets.

The attendance was very general, nearly all the branches on No[r]thern Ohio being represented. President Strang presided—L[e]ster Brooks, was ordained an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, Lester Brooks and Moses Smith of the Twelve, and Martin Harris, and Hazen Aldrich, Highpriests with several Elders were appointed to go to England. A full set of officers of the Stake were appointed.

Six resolutions were passed by the conference. The fourth resolution was as follows:

RESOLVED, (one vote in the negative), That we sustain and uphold with our faith and prayers, and acknowledge in his administration James J. Strang, as First President of this Church, and as the duly appointed successor of Joseph Smith, as Prophet, Seer, [Revelator], and [Translator] unto this Church, according to the

⁸⁴ Statement of Aaron Smith, Jira[h] B. Wheelan, J[ames]. M. Van Nostrand and Edward Whitcomb in *Voree Herald* 1 (Jan. 1846):4, Voree, Wisc. See Roger Van Noord, *King of Beaver Island: The Life and Assassination of James Jesse Strang* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 34-35.

⁸⁵ *Voree Herald* 1 (Jan. 1846):1, 3-4, Voree [near Burlington], Wisconsin Territory.

⁸⁶ "Extracts from the Records of the Church," *Voree Herald* 1 (Aug. 1846):1.

⁸⁷ "Progress of the Work," *Voree Herald* 1 (Sept. 1846):4. The one witness who did not support Strang was Oliver Cowdery.

⁸⁸ "William Smith," *Zion's Reveille* 1 (Dec. 1846):3, Voree, Wisc.

Law of the Church, and the word of God.

The published minutes included the following members of the Kirtland High Council:

Hiram L. Rounds,	William Cowdery,
Amos Ranney,	Daniel Bliss,
Roger Plaisted,	James Stray[,]
Preserved Harris,	James Crompton,
Martin Harris[,]	William Fuller,
Luman Carter,	John Andrews,

The Presidency consists of Leonard Rich, Amos Babcock, and Sylvester B. Stoddard, and Jacob Bump is Bishop.⁸⁹

Mission to England as a Strangite

In August 1846, William E. McLellin wrote to John C. Bennett: "Harris says he is going to England."⁹⁰ Within a month of the Strangite conference, Martin Harris signed over his power of attorney to his brother, Preserved, and to Bishop Jacob Bump. Harris wrote:

Kirtland Sept the 4th 1846

Know all men by these presents that I Martin Harris am about to leav[e] this Continut [Continent] and expect to go to Europe and remain there one year or more I therefore constitute Jacob Bump and Preserved Harris my lawful agents to transact all my business in my name and I do further mor[e] giv[e] the said Bump and Harris the full care and controll of my farm and all my personal property in the township of Kirtland and for the benefit of my family and the Church of Christ of which I am a member It is further understood that the said Jacob Bump and Preserved Harris "is hold there agency for at least one year and if I do not return within one year their agency to continue until my return And I hereby this day, by these presents deliver to the said Bump & Harris all the cattle—sheep—grain—hogs—family utensils for this use abov[e] mentioned with the right to work or lease my farm as my agents shall think proper—

Signed sealed day and year abov[e]
mentioned In presence of—Nathaniel Milliken Martin Harris Wm H Fuller⁹¹

⁸⁹ "Kirtland," *Voree Herald* 1 (Sept. 1846):2.

⁹⁰ McLellin to Bennett, 14 Aug. 1846, in *Gospel Herald* 2 (2 Dec. 1847):164, Voree, Wisc. At a 20 July 1846 business meeting, "Pres[ident] Strang said that it was contemplated to put Lester Brooks in the quorum of the Twelve and send him on a mission to England" (reproduced in John J. Hajicek, comp., *The Chronicles of Voree* (1844-1849) [Burlington, Wisc.: JJRR Publishing Co., 1991], 96).

⁹¹ Copy of Power of Attorney, 4 Sept. 1846, Martin Harris Legal Documents, L Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; photo in *BYU Studies* 24 (Fall 1984):426. Another copy is located in the Sterling Law Firm Papers 1836-

James Strang claimed a large following of saints, who acknowledged him as the true leader of the church.⁹² Harris left on a mission to preach for Strang shortly after executing his power of attorney, arriving in England in October 1846 with Apostle Lester Brooks. The *Millennial Star*—the church publication in the hands of the twelve apostles in England—republished a circular containing a letter of 4 August 1846 from Crandell Dunn to William A. Appleby regarding James J. Strang. (Dunn had presided over the western part of Michigan when Strang presented his claim as a prophet in August 1844.) This letter was published in the 15 October 1846 issue and had some negative effect upon Harris's mission.⁹³

Likewise, in the 15 November 1846 issue of *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, under "Sketches of Notorious Characters," were comments on James J. Strang, Leicester [Lester] Brooks, and Martin Harris. Concerning Harris, it was written that he "yielded to the spirit and temptation of the Devil a number of years ago—turned against Joseph Smith and became his bitter enemy....In one of his fits of monomania, he went and joined the 'Shakers' or followers of Anne Lee. He tarried with them a year or two or more, or perhaps longer, having had some flare ups while among them....Martin leaves the 'Shakers,' whom he knows to be right, and has known it for many years, as he said, and joins Strang in gathering out the tares of the field. We understand that he is appointed a mission to this country, but we do not feel to warn the Saints against him, for his own unbridled tongue will soon show out specimens of folly enough to give any person a true index to the character of the man."⁹⁴

A notice in the same issue of the *Millennial Star* stated:

We also learn, from Elder Wheelock's letter of Birmingham, that Martin Harris and his escort have paid them a visit. He [Harris] introduced himself to their conference meeting and wished to speak....On being rejected by the united voice of the conference, he went out into the street, and began to proclaim the corruption of the Twelve; but here the officers of government honoured him with their presence—two policemen came and very gently took hold of each arm and led Martin away to the Lock-up.⁹⁵

George Mantle wrote in 1888 about his experience at the conference held in Birmingham: At the afternoon session "an elderly man asked permission to speak a few words to us....He

1846, Box Mo-Po, 4 of 8, Lake County Historical Society, Kirtland Hills, Ohio.

⁹² "Progress of the Work," *Voree Herald* 1 (Sept. 1846):3.

⁹³ "Letter from Elder Dunn to Elder Appleby, of Philadelphia," *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star* 8 (15 Oct. 1846):93, Liverpool, England. Orson Hyde and John Taylor arrived in England on 3 October 1846, when Hyde became the editor of the *Star*.

⁹⁴ "Martin Harris," *Millennial Star* 8 (15 Nov. 1846):124. The *Star* warned: "Give no place to the Devil, nor to those who have gone out from us, that it might be made manifest that they are not of us. Receive them not into your houses, neither bid them God speed, lest you be partakers of their evil deeds" (*ibid.*, 8:125).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8 (15 Nov. 1846):128. Cyrus Wheelock recorded his journal: "however he [Martin Harris] was not to be put of[f] so he must and would preach and Accordingly [Decamped] to the Street and Commenced holding forth to the annoyance of the people while thus engaged to [two] policemen [Very] politely [waited upon] him Each affectionately taking an arm and thus the Curtain fell and the Drama Closed to the great amusement of the Spectators" (Cyrus Hubbard Wheelock Journal, entry for 25 Oct. 1846, LDS archives).

[Cyrus H. Wheelock] told us that it was Martin Harris, an apostate from the faith: that he [Harris] had abused him and his brethren coming across the sea, and he would not allow him to speak, there being many people there who were opposed to the truth. When we came out of the meeting Martin Harris was beset with a crowd in the street, expecting that he would furnish them with material to war against Mormonism: but when he was asked if Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, he answered yes: and when asked if the Book of Mormon was true, this was his answer: 'Do you know that is the sun shinning on us? Because as sure as you know that, I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, and that he translated that book by the power of God.'"⁹⁶

Orson Hyde after learning that Harris and Brooks were in Liverpool, but evidently not having met them, editorialized:

Just as our paper was going to press, we learned that Martin Harris, about whom we had written in another article, had landed in Liverpool, and being afraid or ashamed of his profession as a Strangite, and we presume both, for we are confident we should be, he tells some of our brethren on whom he called, that he was of the same profession with themselves -- that he had just come from America and wished to get acquainted with the Saints. But there was a strangeness about him, and about one or two who came with him, that gave them plainly to see that the frankness and honest simplicity of true hearted brethren were not with them. A lying deceptive spirit attends them, and has from the beginning. They said they were of the same profession with our brethren, when they knew they lied. If they were of our profession, why not call at our office and get their papers endorsed? Because they know that they are of their father, the Devil, who was a liar from the beginning, and abode not in the truth. The very countenance of Harris will show to every spiritual-minded person who sees him, that the wrath of God is upon him.⁹⁷

Orson Hyde also inferred that these other missionaries to England were of the devil. The 20 November 1846 issue of the *Millennial Star* mentioned Harris specifically, and included an invitation to meet with him and his companions:

The Strangite delegation, namely, Harris, Brooks, and their companion, on arriving in Liverpool, complained very much that they could not get an opportunity to do the work which the Lord sent them to perform. Elder Marsden, of this town, handled them so effectually in Birkenhead, and made Strangism look so contemptibly mean, that Martin publicly denied being sent by Strang, or being in any way, connected with him. This he did in [the] presence of many witnesses.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ "Martin Harris in England," *Autumn Leaves* 2 (March 1889):141, Lamoni, Iowa. John Freeman, who attended the conference at Birmingham, wrote in his journal: "Martin Harris there come[s] as advocate for Strang" (John Freeman Journal, entry for 25 Oct. 1846, LDS archives).

⁹⁷ *Millennial Star* 8 (15 Nov. 1846):128.

⁹⁸ "Strangism.—Invitation to Imposters," *Millennial Star* 8 (20 Nov. 1846):137. Zion's Reveille reported: "Martin Harris and William Capner, from Ohio, are the travelling companions of Brother Brooks" (*Zion's Reveille* 1 [Dec. 1846]:3).

Martin Harris's expectations of being in Europe for a year were not realized, as he was in England for about six weeks, one of the shortest missionary trips to that country. The missionaries left Liverpool, England, in November on board the Ship Sea, and arrived in New York on 8 December 1846. Brooks, age forty-four, was listed as an "Iron Moulder" and Harris, age sixty-four, was listed as a "Farmer."⁹⁹ Lester Brooks, in a letter to James M. Adams, wrote concerning Aaron Smith, who had left the Strang movement:

He [Aaron Smith] makes me think of Martin Harris, who says that Joseph [Smith] went to the devil as soon as he would not let him rule, for the Lord showed to him [Harris] one hundred times as much as he did Joseph. That he has taught the church all they know about the things of God, and if Strang does not let him [Harris] dictate the church will go to the devil, and Strang with it. I do not want to go to the heaven that either [Aaron] Smith or Harris will lead men to with their spirit that they have at present. If Martin Harris ever knew any thing about the principles of the gospel he has lost that knowledge, or I never had any. Either Harris or myself are decidedly wrong.¹⁰⁰

A conference was held in Kirtland on 11-13 December 1846. The minutes recorded a withdrawal of fellowship from Strang as the church's prophetic leader. Among the signatures were those of the Kirtland Stake Presidency (Rich, Babcock, and Stoddard), and William E. McLellin the conference secretary.¹⁰¹ Strang, incensed, issued a revelation toward those residing at Kirtland, part of which reads:

Because Kirtland is filled with unbelief and apostacy; and those who have gathered there and taken my name upon them regard not my word, and hearken not to my law, neither observe my counsel nor hear the words of my prophets, but have altogether rejected mine anointed, done violence to the truth, refused my word, and rebel[l]ed against my law and mine authority; therefore shall Kirtland be a waste and a desolation, a den of wickedness, and a habitation of the unfaithful, the unbelieving, and the rebel[l]ious.¹⁰²

During the time that the December conference was being held in Kirtland, Harris and Brooks were traveling from New York City to Philadelphia, where they separated. Harris traveled to Pittsburgh to visit James Smith, then arrived at Kirtland by 2 January 1847. Upon his return, Harris filed suit against Jacob Bump and William Fuller. Bump, who had been given Harris's power of attorney, had leased Harris's farm to Fuller for about seventeen months. The jury found defendant "not guilty as complained against him" except for a small half acre of land.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Passenger List of Vessels Arriving at New York 1820-1897, microfilm #0002311, vessel #1043, [page 2], Family History Library.

¹⁰⁰ Brooks to Adams, 10 Feb. 1847, in *Zion's Reveille* 2 (11 March 1847):36.

¹⁰¹ Letter sent circa 20 Dec. 1846, *The New Era, and Herald of Zion's Watchmen* 1 (Jan. 1847), Voree, Wisc.

¹⁰² "Extract from a Revelation Given Dec. 21, 1846," *Zion's Reveille* 2 (21 Jan. 1847):8.

¹⁰³ Martin Harris Legal Documents, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

Around the same time, Lester Brooks wrote a letter explaining that his health was poor: "I did not come home on account of my hea[l]th I came because I though it very neces[s]ary that Martin Harris leave that country and there was no other way only for me to come with him which I am quite glad that I did I left him in Philedelpha [Philadelphia] could get him no father [further]." ¹⁰⁴

After visiting with Harris in December, James Smith of Pittsburgh wrote to Strang: "This man, although he has been buffeted and scoffed at by the world made our hearts glad in consequence of the unwavering testimony which he bore with regard to the origin of Mormonism." ¹⁰⁵

Joining William E. McLellin's Church

After his arrival at Kirtland, Harris must have learned that Leonard Rich and others had rejected James Strang's leadership. However, William E. McLellin had now moved to Kirtland and was promoting David Whitmer as the new church president because of his ordination by Joseph Smith in July 1834.

At a conference of the church held in Kirtland, Ohio, on the 23d January, 1847, after many remarks by those present, it was motioned by W. E. McLellin, and seconded by Martin Harris, that this church take upon them the name of the Church of Christ, and wear it henceforth—shorn of all appendages or alterations. The motion was put by Elder Leonard Rich, the chairman, and carried with much feeling and spirit, in the affirmative—without a dissenting voice. ¹⁰⁶

The Ensign of Liberty, the official periodical of McLellin reported on some of the problems of proclaiming David Whitmer as successor of Smith:

On the 10th of Feb.. .we felt troubled in our minds about our baptisms and confirmations....All who had been baptized and confirmed by any and all the Elders under Joseph [Smith, Jr.] after he had ordained his Successor, consequently had no more power with God in his station. ¹⁰⁷

William E. McLellin received a revelation, giving the following instructions:

Yea, let my servant William [McLellin] baptize and confirm, and then re-ordain my [servant] Martin [Harris]. And thus shall he confirm his authority upon him by the laying on of hands and saying, Brother Martin I lay my hands upon you in the name of Jesus Christ, and I re-ordain you, and confirm upon you the office of

¹⁰⁴ Brooks to James M. Adams, 12 Jan. 1847, La Porte, Ohio, James Jesse Strang Collection, WA MSS 447, Box 1, folder 20, Basic Early Documents, #54, Brinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹⁰⁵ James Smith to Strang, no date, circa Jan. 1847, Zion's Reveille 2 (11 Feb. 1847):18.

¹⁰⁶ "The Name of the Church," *The Ensign of Liberty* 1 (April 1847):20, emphasis omitted, Kirtland, Ohio.

¹⁰⁷ "Things in Kirtland," *Ibid.*, (Jan. 1848):54-56, emphasis omitted.

high priest in the church of Christ, after the holy order of the Son of God. And I pray God in the name of Jesus, his son, to give unto you in your calling, all the gifts and blessings and powers thereof, and keep you faithful unto the end, amen.

And then let my servant Martin administer unto my servant William [McLellin] in the same manner, according to the same pattern. And then let my servant Leonard [Rich] likewise receive the same ministration. Yea, let my servants William and Martin and Leonard, do as the spirit of truth now directs them.¹⁰⁸

On 13 February 1847, Harris joined McLellin's Church of Christ by baptism, confirmation, and reordination "to the same authority which we had held in the Church before Latter Day Saintism was known." This church numbered about 42 members. A committee wrote: "Martin Harris has retired to his little farm, in Kirtland, Ohio, and stands warning all, that the Church will not prosper until they throw away their fictitious name, and take again, as in the beginning, the NAME of 'the Church of Christ,' and return to their first love, and then keep the commandments of God."¹⁰⁹

Lester Brooks wrote to James J. Strang: "Martin Har[r]is I learn is at Kirtland doing all he can against you. The greatest blunder that ever I committed was in taking Harris to England"¹¹⁰

Witness to Ordination of David Whitmer as Successor

McLellin travelled to Missouri in September 1847, where he re-baptized, reconfirmed, and re-ordained David Whitmer. The third issue of McLellin's *Ensign of Liberty* (December 1847) contained a "Testimony of Three Witnesses" concerning Whitmer's 1834 ordination as successor to Joseph Smith:

We cheerfully certify, to all whom it may concern, that we attended a general conference, called at the instance of Joseph Smith, in Clay county, Mo., on the 8th of July, 1834, at the residence of Elder Lyman Wight. And while the conference was in session, Joseph Smith presiding, he arose and said that the time had come when he must appoint his Successor in office. Some have supposed that it would be Oliver Cowdery; but, said he, Oliver has lost that privilege in consequence of transgression. The Lord has made it known to me that David Whitmer is the man. David was then called forward, and Joseph and his counsellors laid hands upon him, and ordained him to his station, to succeed him. Joseph then gave David a charge, in the hearing of the whole assembly. Joseph then seemed to rejoice that that work was done, and said, now brethren, if any thing should befall me, the work of God will roll on with more power than it has hitherto done. Then, brethren, you will have a man who can lead you as well as I can. He will be

¹⁰⁸ "Our Tour West in 1847," *Ibid.* (Aug. 1849):100. This revelation was received on 10 February 1847.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 (March 1847):11.

¹¹⁰ Brooks to Strang, 14 March 1847, James Jesse Strang Collection, WA MSS 447, Box 1, folder 38, General Correspondence, #258, Brinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Yale University.

Prophet, Seer, Revelator, and Translator before God.

Martin Harris,
Leonard Rich,
Calvin Beebe.¹¹¹

In the spring of 1848, McLellin's Church of Christ was ejected from the premises of the temple.¹¹² Patience Cowdery, wife of Warren A. Cowdery, wrote in her journal in 1849 that Harris "called here this morning and warned us of our danger if we did not imbrace [embrace] the gospel and says he has now cleared his skirts whether we give heed or not."¹¹³

At a conference of the Church of Christ held on 3 June 1849, Martin Harris was appointed president of the meeting. It was resolved that fellowship be withdrawn from William E. McLellin, "both as an Elder or member of the church of Christ."¹¹⁴

A Vagabond Preacher

In the fall of 1849 Harris, was in Rochester, New York. A local newspaper reported:

He [Martin Harris] wrote the Book of Mormon from Joe Smith's dictation, the latter reading the text from the Golden Plates by putting his face in a hat. . . .But he no longer goes with the Mormons, saying that they 'have gone to the devil just like other people.' He abandoned them fifteen years ago, when they assumed the appellation of 'Latter Day Saints,' and bore his testimony against them by declaring that 'Latter Day Devils' would be a more appropriate designa[t]ion. Mr. Harris visited England some three years ago. At present he professes to have a mission from God, in fulfilment of which he wanders about preaching to 'all who will feed him.' When this essential condition is not performed by his hearers, he shakes o[f]f the dust from his feet and leaves for more hospitable quarters. Mr. H. is exceedingly familiar with the Scripture[s], and discourses theology in his peculiar way.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ "The Successor of Joseph, the Seer," *The Ensign of Liberty* 1 [Dec. 1847]:43-44, testimony not dated. On 7 July 1834 Frederick G. Williams assisted Joseph Smith in ordaining David Whitmer. Max H. Parkin wrote: "This appointment appeared to be a temporary one" as almost five months later on 5 December 1834, Smith ordained Oliver Cowdery to rank next to him. ("Kirtland, A Stronghold For The Kingdom," in F. Mark McKiernan, Alma R. Blair and Paul M. Edwards, eds., *The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History* [Lawrence, Kansas, 1973], 70). Wilford Woodruff added to his journal at an unknown date: "I attended the Meeting at Lyman Wight[']s at which time Joseph Smith the Prophet Organized the High Council. Joseph was Clothed with the power of God. He Chastised David [Whitmer] & others for unfaithfulness. Said their hearts were not set upon the building up the Kingdom of God as they should be. After He was chastised He was set apart under the hand of Joseph to Preside over the Land of Zion." (*Wilford Woodruff's Journal* 1:14) Woodruff's journal—like the minutes in the Far West Record—does not mention that Smith chose David Whitmer as his prophetic successor.

¹¹² Common Pleas Record, Vol. F:273-75, microfilm #877,776, Family History Library.

¹¹³ Patience Simmonds Cowdery Journal, entry for 13 Feb. 1849, LDS archives.

¹¹⁴ *Gospel Herald* 4 (5 July 1849):74, emphasis omitted.

¹¹⁵ *Rochester (New York) Daily American*, 16 Nov. 1849. "Fifteen years ago" would have been

James Bay visited Harris, who said he knew the Book of Mormon was true, "for he saw the plates and knew for himself[.] I heard his little girl - she was 7 years old[.] I read some in what they Called the Holy roll but no God. . . . I staid at Martins all night had quite a talk with him he thought that the 12 was [w]rong but I told him that he was [w]rong and he had better come up to the valley and see for himself."¹¹⁶

Reuben P. Harmon, who questioned Martin about his beliefs stated:

I was well acquainted with Martin Harris, who was often at my house for days at a time. I have questioned him much about the plates from which the 'Book of Mormon' purports to have been translated. He never claimed to have seen them with his natural eyes, only spiritual vision. He said it was impossible for the prophet Joseph to get up the 'Book of Mormon,' for he could not spell the word Sarah. He had him repeat the letters of the word. He was a very illiterate man. He claimed he would be one of the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation and would not die but would be translated."¹¹⁷

Witness to Gladden Bishop as Prophet

On Sunday, 16 March 1851, a religious prophet by the name of Francis Gladden Bishop gave in the Kirtland Temple a description of the golden plates, the Book of Ether, the Book of Life [the Sealed Record], the Interpreters, the Breast-plate of Moroni, and the Sword of Laban.¹¹⁸ Bishop's description of the gold plates was published in the broadside titled, *A Proclamation From the Lord to His people, scattered throughout all the Earth*:

The plates are pure gold; about eight inches in length, and about six inches in width, and in a compact form are about four inches in thickness, each plate being about the twelfth of an inch thick.¹¹⁹ There are in all forty-eight plates, divided as

1834, when the church's name was changed in May. Of course, Harris remained actively affiliated with the church at least through the spring of 1837.

¹¹⁶ James Willard Bay Journal, 23 Nov. 1850, written after July 1895, LDS archives. Harris's little girl would have been Julia Harris.

¹¹⁷ Statement of Reuben P. Harmon, 16 Dec. 1884, *Naked Truths About Mormonism* 1 (April 1888):1. Emma Smith told Edmund Briggs that she wrote for Joseph Smith as he dictated to her: "Even the word *Sarah* he could not pronounce at first, but had to spell it, and I would pronounce it for him" (Edmund C. Briggs, "A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856," *Journal of History* 9 [Oct. 1916]:454, emphasis in original). The dictated Book of Mormon manuscript has the name as "Sariah (manuscript in LDS archives).

¹¹⁸ Bishop wrote, "I stood in the Lord's House at Kirtland, to read a description of the Sacred Things, which the Lord had entrusted to me" (An Address to the Sons and Daughters of Zion, Scattered Abroad, Through All the Earth [1851], 24). On Bishop, see Richard L. Saunders, "The Fruit of the Branch: Francis Gladden Bishop and His Culture of Dissent," in Roger D. Launius and Linda Thatcher, eds., *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 102-19.

¹¹⁹ In 1859, Martin Harris said concerning the plates: "These plates were seven inches wide by eight inches in length, and were of the thickness of plates of tin; and when piled one above the other, they were altogether about four inches thick" (*Tiffany's Monthly* 5 [Aug. 1859]:165). In

follows:—The first part, or division, consists of twenty-four plates—from these was the Book of Mormon translated; and on the first plate of this division is inscribed in large Reformed Egyptian characters the title of this division, which in the English language is rendered thus—The Book of Mormon. There are also a variety of other characters upon the same page, among which are the characters which stand as the Alphabet of the reformed Egyptian language, in which this whole division is written. The characters are rubbed over with a black substance¹²⁰ so as to fill them up, in order that the dazzling of the gold between the characters would not prevent their being readily seen.¹²¹

According to Bishop, the Proclamation was the "Flying Roll" sent forth by the Lord "as the testimony and power of my three witnesses, whom I have now called." In the proclamation, Gladden Bishop claimed to have in his possession the gold plates and other relics of early Mormonism. The revelation also indicated the following concerning "the greater things to those who received the Book of Mormon":

And therefore have I again sent mine Holy Angels, even as to Joseph [Smith] at the first and put into the hands of my servant Gladden [Bishop] the same sacred things which I put into the hands of my servant Joseph; and also other sacred things which have been hid up, to come forth when I should set up my Kingdom on the earth.

And therefore that my word might be fulfilled, and also that my people might believe, have I caused that my servant Gladden should call Witnesses of these things; even he, who was one of the three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, (viz: my servant Martin [Harris], and also my daughter Phebe [Bishop's wife], whom I have called these many years that she might be a witness in this, my great and glorious work, which I have now begun, and which shall never be overthrown;) and behold! my Witnesses have borne their testimony before my people in this place, yea, and in my house, even that which my people have built and dedicated unto me in Kirtland.

Harris appears to have followed Bishop, believing him to be a prophet, seer, revelator, and translator.¹²² Gladden Bishop also wrote: "[T]he place for the bringing forth of the greater Temporal work. . . is in the Valley of the Saints—even at the great city [Great Salt Lake City],"¹²³

1870 the *Daily Iowa State Register* reported: "Mr. Harris describes the plates as being of thin leaves of gold, measuring 7 by 8 inches, and weighing altogether, from 40 to 60 lbs" ("A Witness to the Book of Mormon," *Daily Iowa State Register*, 28 Aug. 1870, 4). Bishop said the plates were fastened by "three gold rings," while Harris said "three silver rings."

¹²⁰ Orson Pratt said that on the plates "were fine engravings, which were stained with a black, hard stain, so as to make the letters more legible and easier to be read" (*Journal of Discourses* 7:31 [2 Jan. 1859]).

¹²¹ Gladden Bishop, Kirtland, Ohio, 6 April 1851. Proclamation in LDS archives.

¹²² Brigham Young said "There is a man named Martin Harris, and he is the one who gave the holy roll to Gladden" *Journal of Discourses* 2:127 (17 April 1853).

¹²³ *A Proclamation From the Lord to His people, scattered throughout all the Earth* (1851). See

where the Saints had already begun to gather.

Feeling the Old Spirit of Mormonism

David Dille visited with Martin Harris about two miles east of Kirtland in the spring of 1853. He talked to Harris, who said, "I feel that a spirit has come across me—the old spirit of Mormonism; and I begin to feel as I used to feel; and I will not say I won't go to the Valley." Martin related to Dille that he handled the Book of Mormon plates; he also asked and answered his question: "[D]id I not at one time hold the plates on my knee an hour-and-a-half, whilst in conversation with Joseph, when we went to bury them in the woods, that the enemy might not obtain them? Yes, I did. And as many of the plates as Joseph Smith translated I handled with my hands, plate after plate."¹²⁴

Stephen H. Hart wrote that Martin Harris "worked off and on for fifteen or twenty years for me. His judgment about farming was good. When we had finished hoeing the corn he would raise his hands toward the field and pronounce a blessing and say he was sure of a good crop with his blessing. . . .Martin, when closely questioned about the plates from which the 'Book of Mormon' purports to have been taken, would say he saw the plates by the eye of faith."¹²⁵

Harris also seems to have been feeling the urge to join the Saints in Utah. On 2 May 1855, Thomas Colburn wrote to Erastus Snow, editor of the *St. Louis Luminary*:

We called at Kirtland, found a few that called themselves Saints, but very weak, many apostates, who have mostly joined the rappers. We had a lengthy interview with Martin Harris. At first he was down on polygamy, but before we left he informed me that he never should say a word against it. He confessed that he had lost confidence in Joseph Smith, consequently his mind became darkened, and he was left to himself; he tried the Shakers, but that would not do, then tried Gladden Bishop, but no satisfaction; had concluded he would wait until the Saints returned to Jackson Co., and then he would repair there. . . .concluded before we left that "Brigham [Young] was Governor," and that the authorities were there, and that he should go there as soon as he could get away.¹²⁶

Martin Harris's Religious Proclamation

Also in May 1855, Martin Harris published a proclamation purporting to have been given by Moses, Elias, Elijah, and John "through a Miss Sexton a Spirit medium of Cleveland" the

also Richard Saunders, "'More a Movement Than an Organization': Utah's First Encounter with Heresy, The Gladdenites, 1851-1854," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 16 (1996):91-106.

¹²⁴ David B. Dille Statement, 15 Sept. 1853, "Additional Testimony of Martin Harris (One of the Three Witnesses) to the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon," *Millennial Star* 21 (20 Aug. 1859):545.

¹²⁵ Statement of Stephen H. Hart, Nov. 1884, in *Naked Truths About Mormonism* 1 (April 1888):3.

¹²⁶ Colburn to Elder Snow, 2 May 1855 in *St. Louis Luminary* 1 (5 May 1855):94, St. Louis, Mo. The visit took place after October 1854.

same medium through whom William Smith received revelation.¹²⁷ The following extracts are from that eight-page pamphlet, titled *A Proclamation And a warning voice unto all people, first to all Kings, Governors and Rulers in Authority, and unto every kindred tongue and people under the whole heavens, to whom this word shall come*:

A Proclamation And a warning voice unto all people, first to all Kings, Governors and Rulers in Authority, and unto every kindred tongue and people under the whole heavens, to whom this word shall come, greeting:

Moses, Elias, Elijah and John set forth and declare the word of the Lord unto you. . .for behold this is the word of the proclamation that we, Moses, Elias, Elijah, and John have appeared unto many to declare unto them and now command it to be written and sent out unto all people. . . .

And to my servant and friend whose name is held in sacred remembrance in the councils of the just, and who is called the messenger of the covenant, and who was first called among the sons of Ephraim to set forth in order the dispensation of the fulness of times—he it is to whom the key of knowledge has been given to go forth in the power of Elijah, and to bear off the ark of the Lord in wisdom and in power; for he shall be filled with light and his bowles shall be as a fountain of knowledge; and none shall gainsay or resist his words; nor shall he be confounded, and he shall divide the inheritance to the saints by lot, when Zion shall be established in the glory and power of her king.

And all who know the power and glory of this work of the gathering up of the sons of Israel for Zion and for the organization of the Church and house of the Lord, shall know this servant and messenger when they hear his voice, for he speaketh the words of Elijah, and is sent to do the work of Elijah, and feareth not to sacrifice, that the kingdom and the glory thereof might be one.

And this my servant is now standing in your midst, and ye know him not. . . .We come to administer to you in spirit, for our bodies are not yet risen from the dead; yet still we are bodies of spirit, or have spiritual bodies.¹²⁸

Christopher G. Crary recalled the following about Harris:

One day, when working for me, he handed me a leaflet that he had got printed, taken from some of the prophets, telling of a wonderful person that should appear and draw all men after him. I looked it over and returned it to him. He [Martin] said, 'Who do you think it refers to?' I said, 'Why, of course, it refers to you.' He looked very much pleased, and said, 'I see you understand the scriptures.'¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Stephen Post Journal, entry for 5 Oct. 1855, LDS archives.

¹²⁸ [Martin Harris], *A Proclamation And a warning voice unto all people, first to all Kings, Governors and Rulers in Authority, and unto every kindred tongue and people under the whole heavens, to whom this word shall come* (Cleveland, 1855). Proclamation in LDS archives.

¹²⁹ Christopher G. Crary, *Pioneer and Personal Reminiscences* (Marshalltown, Iowa: Marshall

Reverend Samuel F. Whitney, brother of Newel K. Whitney, mentioned that Martin Harris at one time claimed to be Elijah:

All the time Martin was in Kirtland boys eight years and older would gather about him and dispute with, and annoy him in various ways. Martin claimed to be Elijah and when annoyed would curse them.¹³⁰

Stephen H. Hart stated the following about Harris:

Martin, when closely questioned about the plates from which the "Book of Mormon" purports to have been taken, would say he saw the plates by the eye of faith. He often compared himself to Enoch, Elijah, Paul and other Bible persons. I never doubted that he was insane on Mormonism.¹³¹

A copy of the Proclamation was sent to Brigham Young by Harris. In his letter to Young, Harris wrote:

[E]nclosed I Send you A Proclamation as you will discover by reading it given by Moses, Elias, Elijah, and John—you no doubt will recollect of a favor asked of me—of the lone of Some money upon the ground of relationship and in the name of god. I now make an appeal to you in the name of god and Command you in the name of god to Publish the Revelation I send you in your deseret news or in some of your public Journals Published in the vall[e]y that the word and Commandment of the Proclamation may go to all the world¹³²

Brigham Young did not have the proclamation printed.

Reorganizing the Church with William Smith

In October 1855, Stephen Post arrived in Kirtland to attend a conference with Martin Harris. Post recorded in his journal:

Br Martin Harris had published a proclamation purporting to be given By Moses, Elias, Elijah & John through a Miss Sexton a Spirit medium of Cleveland[.] Wm Smith got a revelation given through the same medium [he?] read to me the purport of which was that We Moses Elias Elijah & John again come unto you &c

Printing Company, 1893), 44.

¹³⁰ Statement of S. F. Whitney, 6 March 1885, in *Naked Truths About Mormonism* 1 (Jan. 1888):3.

¹³¹ Statement of Stephen H. Hart, Nov. 1884, *Naked Truths About Mormonism* 1 (April 1888):3. In December 1856 Emma Smith Bidamon told Edmund Briggs that she considered Martin Harris "an honest man, but not naturally as noble and firm in his mind as some" (Edmund C. Briggs, "A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856," *Journal of History* 9 [Jan. 1916]:455).

¹³² Harris to Young, 13 Aug. 1855, written for Harris, emphasis and equal signs (=) omitted, Brigham Young Collection, LDS Archives; photo in *BYU Studies* 24 (Fall 1984):427. The letter and proclamation were received on 26 November 1855.

& go on to give directions to different elders about reorganizing the church and appointing them to select a place for the gathering of the saints fictitious names were used for those who were to be the actors in this thing.¹³³

At this time William Smith gave fictitious names to different elders who were to assist him in this work. Two days later, on 7 October, a conference met in the Kirtland Temple. Harris was chosen president, and Stephen Post secretary of the conference. "It was not deemed expedient to organize," but twelve resolutions were accepted¹³⁴ and plans for another conference to meet in April 1856. That evening "Br Harris read his proclamation."¹³⁵

Harris's involvement with communication with the spirit world is not surprising, considering his earlier testimony regarding the Shaker book or roll, but it is of interest that the message he received from Miss Sexton was published as A Proclamation And a warning voice unto all people. It was what could be expected at a time when many Americans embraced Spiritualism.¹³⁶

In August 1855, Martin's wife, Caroline Young Harris, was pregnant with their seventh child. Martin was seventy-two years old and Caroline's was thirty-nine. She and their family are listed in the 1856 Iowa Census for Rockford Township, Pottawattamie County. Martin is listed apparently as "Martance."¹³⁷ It is not known when Caroline left Kirtland, nor is it certain if Martin was in Iowa.¹³⁸ Their daughter, Ida May, was born on 27 May 1856 in Pottawattamie County, Iowa. The Harris entry is found near the entry for the Littlefield family, which included Lyman and his wife, Louisa. Louisa was Caroline's sister and may have been influential in the decision to leave Kirtland. Harris's family was headed for Utah Territory.

However, Harris apparently remained in Kirtland. In his role as a minister, he performed a baptism on 24 April 1857. The *Painesville Telegraph*, a newspaper printed about eleven miles from Kirtland, reported: "Elder Martin Harris, of the Latter Day Saints, on Friday last, baptized a happy convert in the river, near the Geauga Mills."¹³⁹ At this time, travelers to Kirtland also reported the activity of Martin Harris and William Smith. For example, John Clinton said they had "organized a Church of their own."¹⁴⁰ Enoch Beese reported: "Martin Harris had reorganized the Church in this place with 6 members. Appointed Wm. Smith their Leader Prophet Seer &

¹³³ Stephen Post Journal, 5 Oct. 1855, LDS archives.

¹³⁴ See resolutions passed at a conference of elders, 6-7 Oct. 1855, Kirtland, Ohio, Stephen Post Collection, LDS archives.

¹³⁵ Stephen Post Journal, 7 Oct. 1855, LDS archives.

¹³⁶ See Davis Bitton, "Mormonism's Encounter with Spiritualism," *Journal of Mormon History* 1 (1974):39-50 and Michael W. Homer, "Spiritualism and Mormonism: Some Thoughts on Similarities and Differences," *Dialogue* 27 (Spring 1994):171-91.

¹³⁷ 1856 Census Schedule of Rockford Township, Pottawattamie County, State of Iowa, 868, #110, film #1,021,311, p. 868, Family History Library. Five living children, including Ida May, are listed in the census.

¹³⁸ Martin Harris was at Kirtland in April 1856 (Stephen Post Journal, 6-7 April 1856, LDS archives). Apparently Martin did not accompany Caroline to Iowa.

¹³⁹ *Painesville Telegraph* 35 (30 April 1857):3.

¹⁴⁰ Journal History of the Church, 18 May 1858, LDS archives. Stephen Post wrote in his journal that William Smith "is now trying to organize as president in Kirtland" (Stephen Post Journal, entry for 25 Oct. 1857).

Revelator. In [a] few days Harris drove Wm. Smith out of the place & damned him to Hell."¹⁴¹

Interview of Martin Harris

In January 1859, editor Joel Tiffany of *Tiffany's Monthly*, a Spiritualist publication of New York City, visited Martin Harris. Tiffany's account is important because of his recollection of events in the Palmyra/Manchester, New York, area prior to 1828:

Mr. Harris had conversed with us many times upon the subject [origin of Mormonism], giving us the history of its earthly development, and desiring us to write it from his lips. It is but simple justice to Mr. Harris, that we should state that he is still an earnest and sincere advocate of the spiritual and divine authority of the Book of Mormon. He does not sympathize with Brigham Young and the Salt Lake Church. He considers them apostates from the true faith; and as being under the influence of the devil. Mr. Harris says, that the pretended church of "Latter Day Saints," are in reality "latter day devils," and that himself and a very few others are the only genuine Mormons left.¹⁴²

Martin told Tiffany about his early association with the Joseph Smith family and the coming forth of the gold plates. Harris said that he asked family members how the plates were found and was told that it was through the medium of a stone.¹⁴³

In Movement to Secure the Kirtland Temple

In 1860 Martin is named in the census record as living with his and Lucy's son George Harris, being listed as a "Mormon Preacher." According to recollections of Francis M. Lyman, Harris was showing visitors through the Kirtland Temple at this time.¹⁴⁴ William W. Blair, an Apostle in the Reorganization, proceeded to Kirtland, arriving there on 9 August. He recalled:

Here I met brethren James Twist and family, Martin Harris, Leonard Rich and others, all professing deep interest in the latter day work. The town had a sorry look, and the condition of the temple was pitiful. Its walls inside and out, also its trimmings and decorations, were badly defaced. It appeared that Z[adock]. Brooks, Russel[?] Huntley and others, had effected a small organization and proposed to refit and refurnish the temple. These parties offered us some opposition and we found it best to preach a series of sermons in the Academy Hall instead of in the temple.

¹⁴¹ *Wilford Woodruff's Journal* 5:198-99, entry for 22 June 1858.

¹⁴² "Mormonism," *Tiffany's Monthly* 5 (May 1859):50, New York City, New York. Joel Tiffany (1811-1893) discussed spiritualism at meetings held in Cleveland in 1855 (*Painesville Telegraph* 33 [28 Feb. 1855]:2).

¹⁴³ "Mormonism—II.," *Tiffany's Monthly* 5 (Aug. 1859):163-70. An original copy is located at the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

¹⁴⁴ Francis M. Lyman, "My Mission," *The Contributor* 17 (April 1896):352. This visit to Kirtland occurred in June 1860.

On Sunday the 19th of August, after our service in the afternoon in the hall, Bro. [James] Blakeslee and I attended a meeting in the temple where Simeon Atwood, of Erie, Pennsylvania, and Leonard Rich, of Kirtland, were the speakers. By their request Elder Blakeslee and myself took seats in the stand with them and Martin Harris.

Simeon Atwood was an elder in the LDS church. Blair remembered that at the meeting a "long-haired stranger sprang to his feet, uttered an unearthly yell, hissed, stamped his feet, shook his head and looked like the embodiment of evil. Mr. Rich at once dropped into his seat, and the stranger sprang upon the partition between the seats, came to the front, facing the stand, stamping, hissing and making other violent demonstrations. Martin Harris, who sat on my left, whispered to me, saying, 'I guess he has got the devil in him'." Blair continued:

[T]he stranger sprang squarely upon the speaker's desk, Harris, Rich and Atwood leaving it with haste; and with another spring he reached the second stand, with another the third stand, and with still another the fourth and highest stand, this being on the Melchisedec priesthood side of the temple. On reaching this high point, he turned and faced the frightened, fleeing congregation, and stripping off his broadcloth coat, tearing it in strigs [strips] and shreds, he again stamped and hissed and shook his head, swinging his torn coat and shouting to the people repeatedly, "Now is come the time of your trial!"

The man then sprang upon the four stands on the Aaronic priesthood side of the temple. Those in attendance were exiting the temple. William Blair went outside the temple and "saw the before mentioned stranger, his ragged coat rolled up and tucked under his arm, striding down the steps and then down the street in an excited way, after which we saw him no more. Upon inquiry we learned that he was a prominent spiritual medium, resided in New York, and that his name was—Van Deusen [Increase Van Dusen]."¹⁴⁵

William W. Blair interviewed Martin Harris while in Kirtland:

[H]e [Martin] in reply to direct inquiries, told me that he obtained the one hundred and sixteen pages manuscript of the Book of Mormon from Joseph [Smith], and took them to his home, where he read them in the evenings to his family and some friends, and that he put them in his bureau in the parlor, locking both bureau and parlor, putting the keys of each in his pocket, and so retired for the night, after which he never saw them. He seemed to be still conscience-smitten for permitting them to be stolen.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ "Memoirs.-No. III," *The Saints' Herald* 37 (12 July 1890):460-61, reprinted in Frederick B. Blair, comp., *The Memoirs of President W. W. Blair* (Lamoni, Iowa, 1908), 35-38. See also "Simeon Atwood," *The Saints' Herald* 36 (9 March 1889):145. Increase Van Dusen was fifty-one years old. In 1847 he published an account of the endowment ceremony performed in the Nauvoo Temple. At one time he followed James Strang and received revelations. He recently moved with his wife Maria to Kirtland. See Craig L. Foster, "From Temple Mormon to Anti-Mormon: The Ambivalent Odyssey of Increase Van Dusen," *Dialogue* 27 (Fall 1994):275-86. Increase died in 1882 and is buried with his wife in the Kirtland North Cemetery.

¹⁴⁶ Lucy [Mack] Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors*

William Blair also noted the sad condition the Kirtland Temple. He recorded in his journal: "I learn that Russell Huntley designs fitting it up. If well done it will cost about \$2000. Elder Z[adock]. Brooks. L[eonard] Rich & Martin Harris have formed an organization of 7 Souls[,] 4 of them are women[.]"¹⁴⁷ (The Brooks group of which Harris was a member was called the Church of Christ, and they worshiped in the Kirtland Temple.) The *Painesville Telegraph* published the following:

Some changes are being made in the Temple, and one is, the old and original inscription high up on its front, to wit—"House of the Lord built by the latter day Saints A.D. 1834," has been removed and the simple one "Church of Christ" put on.¹⁴⁸

In February 1862, James McKnight was at Kirtland, and Martin Harris visited him. McKnight wrote of his brief visit with Harris:

Of his property there is little or none left. He has now no home; his son [George], a worthless scape-grace, with whom he lived, being in prison, and the house deserted. Yet, as you have doubtless often heard, he has never failed to confirm his testimony of the truth of that Book. He says he is going to Utah *as soon as the Lord will release him!*¹⁴⁹

On 18 April 1862, Russell Huntley purchased by quit claim deed the land on which the Kirtland Temple stands.¹⁵⁰

Kirtland's Destitute Man

George Morse recalled: "When I was a small boy Martin Harris, one of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, was quite a frequent visitor to our house. . . .He was in destitute circumstances and used to visit around among the people, stopping several days at a time among different families."¹⁵¹

Christopher G. Crary, a resident of Kirtland, wrote concerning Harris's circumstances:

for Many Generations (Plano, Illinois: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1880), 131, footnote by W.W. Blair; reprinted in *Saints' Herald* 35 (12 May 1888):297.

¹⁴⁷ William W. Blair Journal, entry for 9 Aug. 1860, RLDS archives.

¹⁴⁸ *Painesville Telegraph* 38 (14 June 1860):3. Stephen Post visited Kirtland in March 1864 and wrote in his journal, "The Brooks party I learned have possession of the temple" (Stephen Post Journal, LDS archives, entry for 18 March 1864).

¹⁴⁹ James McKnight to George Q. Cannon, 27 Feb. 1862 in *Millennial Star* 24 (19 April 1862):251, emphasis in *Star*. For an 1860 domestic problem of George Harris see *Painesville Telegraph* 38 (13 Sept. 1860):3.

¹⁵⁰ Roger D. Launius, *The Kirtland Temple: A Historical Narrative* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1986), 103-104. For various events associated with the Kirtland Temple see Christin Craft Mackay and Lachlan Mackay, "A Time of Transition: The Kirtland Temple, 1838-1880," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 18 (1998):133-48.

¹⁵¹ *Willoughby Republican*, 29 June 1921. Morse was born about 1848.

In 1867 or 1868, while acting as township trustee, complaint was made to me that Martin Harris was destitute of a home, poorly clothed, feeble, burdensome to friends, and that he ought to be taken to the poor-house. I went down to the flats to investigate, and found him at a house near the Temple, with a family lately moved in, strangers to me. He seemed to dread the poor-house very much. The lady of the house said she would take care of him while their means lasted, and I was quite willing to postpone the unpleasant task of taking him to the poor-house. Everybody felt sympathy for him. He was willing to work and made himself useful as far as his age and debility would admit of.¹⁵²

George Levi Booth remembered that Martin Harris "was very staunch in his belief in Mormonism and I am certain he made no denial. I remember him personally and he was well thought of. He was a small man of stature. He often came and read from the scripture with my parents who were Presbyterians. Their conversation was friendly but Harris was always firm for the Mormons and their belief." When Booth was asked if Harris was ever a public charge in his old age he responded, "No he was not. There were people who would not have allowed that to take place."¹⁵³

Edward Stevenson's Influence on Harris

In February 1870, Edward Stevenson, on a mission for the LDS church, visited Kirtland to see the temple. He wrote:

While there [Kirtland], I again met Martin Harris, soon after coming out of the Temple. He took from under his arm a copy of the Book of Mormon, the first edition, I believe, and bore a faithful testimony. . . .He said that it was his duty to continue to lift up his voice as he had been commanded to do in defence [defense] of the Book that he held in his hand, and offered to prove from the Bible that just such a book was to come forth out of the ground, and that, too, in a day when there were no prophets on the earth, and that he was daily bearing testimony to many who visited the Temple.

Stevenson then bore his testimony to Harris: "[T]he work was still onward, and the words of Isaiah, second chapter, were being fulfilled, that 'the house of the Lord was in the tops of the mountains,' and that under the leadership of President Brigham Young all nations were gathering to Zion to learn of God's ways and to walk in His paths, and that the worst wish that we had, was for him to also prepare himself and go up and be a partaker of the blessings of the House of the Lord."¹⁵⁴ Stevenson then continued on to Utah. He recalled: "After my arrival in Utah in 1870, I

¹⁵² Christopher G. Crary, *Pioneer and Personal Reminiscences*, 44-45.

¹⁵³ "Interview with George Levi Booth About Kirtland Temple and other matters Conducted by Prof. M. Wilford Poulson," 20 Aug. 1932, M. Wilford Poulson Collection, MSS 823, Box 9, folder 32,L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. Booth was born in Kirtland on 19 July 1853.

¹⁵⁴ Stevenson to Editor, *Deseret News*, 30 Nov. 1881, *Deseret Evening News* 15 (13 Dec. 1881), Salt Lake City, Utah Territory; reprinted in "One of the Three Witnesses. Incidents in the Life of Martin Harris," *Millennial Star* 44 (30 Jan. 1882):78. Stevenson recorded in his journal:

was inspired to write to Martin Harris, and soon received a reply that the Spirit of God, for the first time prompted him to go to Utah. Several letters were afterwards exchanged. President Brigham Young. . . requested me to get up a subscription and emigrate Martin to Utah, he subscribing twenty-five dollars for that purpose. Having raised the subscription to about \$200, on the 19th of July, 1870, I took the railroad cars for Ohio."¹⁵⁵

Stevenson also wrote concerning Harris's last known experience in Kirtland:

A very singular incident occurred at this time. While Martin was visiting his friends, bidding them farewell, his pathway crossed a large pasture, in which he became bewildered, dizzy, faint and staggering through the blackberry vines that are so abundant in that vicinity, his clothes torn, bloody and faint, he lay down under a tree to die. After a time he revived, called on the Lord, and finally at 12 midnight, found his friend, and in his fearful condition was cared for and soon regained his strength. He related this incident as a snare of the adversary to hinder him from going to Salt Lake City. Although in his 88th year he possessed remarkable vigor and health, having recently worked in the garden, and dug potatoes by the day for some of his neighbors.¹⁵⁶

Stevenson mentioned that Martin had "a great desire to see Utah, and his children that live there. . . .He says he saw the plates, handled them and saw the angel that visited Joseph Smith, more than 40 years ago."¹⁵⁷ "He is coming to the conclusion, after trying everything else. . .that the work of the Lord is progressing in the top of the mountains and that the people are gathering in fulfillment of prophecy."¹⁵⁸

Harris and Stevenson left Kirtland on 19 August 1870. They arrived ten days later in Ogden, Utah Territory. Martin Harris spent the remaining four-and-a-half years of his life in Cache Valley. He died in Clarkston on 10 July 1875 at the age of 92.¹⁵⁹

Martin Harris was associated with a number of churches throughout his Kirtland years. He always maintained a belief in the organizations he joined, but he was apparently unstable in his religious ideals. He was influenced by James J. Strang, William E. McLellin, and others. He accepted a number of prophetic leaders after the death of Joseph Smith, and like many spiritual gypsies, he wanted a place where he would be important. Martin followed or believed in James J. Strang, David Whitmer, Gladden Bishop, and William Smith as prophets, seers and revelators, but in all these religious movements, he never denied any of his experiences. Hopefully additional research will broaden our understanding of Martin Harris's Kirtland years.

"[F]ou[n]d Bond Temple & Keeper Mertin harris Who Bore testamoney of the angle [angel] Reccords & the T[—] &c took through Temple" (Edward Stevenson's Journal, typed copy, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, original in LDS archives, entry for 9 Feb. 1870).

¹⁵⁵ Stevenson to Editor, *Deseret News*, 30 Nov. 1881, *Deseret Evening News* 15 (13 Dec. 1881); reprinted in "One of the Three Witnesses. Incidents in the Life of Martin Harris," *Millennial Star* 44 (30 Jan. 1882):79.

¹⁵⁶ *Deseret Evening News* 15 (13 Dec. 1881).

¹⁵⁷ Letter of Stevenson, 10 Aug. 1870 in *Ibid.*, 3 (19 Aug. 1870):3.

¹⁵⁸ Stevenson to George A. Smith, 21 Aug. 1870 in *Ibid.* (27 Aug. 1870):3.

¹⁵⁹ See Scott R. Shelton, "Martin Harris in Cache Valley—Events and Influences," (master's thesis, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, 1986).