

Life in Harmony, Pennsylvania

In December 1827 Emma and Joseph left Manchester for the 150-mile trip to the township of Harmony, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania.¹ Emma's brother Alva helped move them. There Joseph became more acquainted with Emma's family and relatives. Smith discussed with the close-knit Hale family about finding the plates. The book was said to contain the word of the Lord that had been delivered to the ancient inhabitants of the American continent.

Isaac Hale, known as a great hunter in Susquehanna County, was born in 1763 and was 64 years old when Joseph Smith returned with his daughter Emma. Isaac's wife was 60 year old Elizabeth. They were members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The family included five sons (Jesse, David, Alva, Isaac Ward, and Reuben) and four daughters (Phebe, Elizabeth, Emma, and Trial).

The elder Isaac indicated that Joseph and Emma lived in his house and brought a box with them that was said to contain the gold plates. Hale informed Joseph if there was anything in his house like that and he was not allowed to see it "he must take it away; if he did not, I was determined to see it. After that, the Plates were said to be hid in the woods."² The couple moved to a nearby house that Jesse Hale had lived in not far from Isaac and Elizabeth's residence.

Prior to Joseph and Emma's leaving Manchester in December, "it was agreed that Martin Har[r]is should follow him as soon as Joseph should have sufficient time to transcribe the Egyptian alphabet which Mr. Harris was to take to the east and through the country in every direction to all who were professed linguists to give them an opportunity [opportunity] of showing their talents."³

It was not until about February 1828 that Martin Harris came to take a sample of the reported ancient characters to find out if any learned person could confirm their authenticity or translate them. Of those languages, Egyptian was considered mysterious and untranslatable.

For all practical purposes if you do not know a foreign language you would start with learning the alphabet and rules of grammar. It appears that Joseph Smith copied and worked on writing an Egyptian alphabet. The alphabet was said to have come from the gold plates. The work probably included Smith's understanding of the characters. When Martin Harris arrived at Harmony, the copied page or pages of characters were given to him. This was an alphabet to the Book of Mormon as described by Lucy Smith.

Joseph Smith's father understood that the last plate of the Book of Mormon contained characters of the alphabet. He explained this to Fayette Lapham, a visitor at his home: "The remaining pages [of the gold plates] were closely written over in characters of some unknown tongue, the last containing the alphabet of this unknown language."⁴

¹ Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 402.

² "Mormonism," *Susquehanna Register, and Northern Pennsylvanian* 9 (May 1, 1834):1, Montrose, Pennsylvania. See Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:286.

³ Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 402.

⁴ "The Mormons," *Historical Magazine* 7 (May 1870):307; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 1:462-63.

Martin Harris visited men in Utica and Albany before he arrived in New York City.⁵ He first visited Dr. Samuel L. Mitchill (also spelled Mitchell), age fifty-one and vice president of Rutgers Medical College that was located in lower Manhattan. Mitchill, who resided in New York City, was a well known scholar. His name is often found in newspaper articles of the period. Mitchill referred Harris to Professor Charles Anthon of the same city.

Anthon was known for his scholarship as he had published in 1825 a revision of John Lempriere's *A Classical Dictionary*.⁶ In 1828 Charles Anthon was a classical scholar at Columbia College (now Columbia University) who knew French, German, Greek, and Latin. Martin Harris was forty-four, while Professor Anthon was near the age of forty.

Martin Harris told a wide variety of persons about his trip to New York City and his visit to Charles Anthon in his office-residence at Columbia College. In the history of Joseph Smith, Professor Anthon's last name was misspelled as "Anthony." The history includes what is reported to be a statement made when Harris returned to Joseph Smith. It is not clear whether Harris made a written statement or if this was Joseph Smith's recollection of Harris' oral report. The history reads:

I [Harris] went to the City of New York and presented the Characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Professor <Charles> Anthony [Anthon] a gentleman celebrated for his literary attainments. Professor Anthony [Anthon] stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian.

I then shewed him those which were not yet translated, and he said that they were Egyptian, Chaldeak, Assyriac, and Arabac, and he said that they were true characters. He gave me a certificate certifying to the people of Palmyra that they were true characters and that the translation of such of them as had been translated was also correct.

I took the Certificate and put it into my pocket, and was just leaving the house, when Mr Anthony called me back and asked me how the young man found out that there were gold plates where he found them. I answered that an Angel of God had revealed it unto him. He then said to me, let me see that certificate, I accordingly took it out of my pocket and gave it [to] him when he took it and tore it to pieces, saying that there was no such thing now as ministering of angels, and that if I would bring the plates to him, he would translate them.⁷

When Harris replied that he could not bring the plates Anthon, the scholar said "I cannot read a sealed book." There is a question of whether the word "translation" is the proper word to use or if "transcription" would more accurately described the handwritten characters shown by

⁵ William W. Phelps to E. D. Howe, January 15, 1831 in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 273.

⁶ J[ohn]. Lempriere, D.D., *A Classical Dictionary; Containing a Copious Account of all the Proper Names Mentioned in Ancient Authors*, 5th American ed. Corrected and Improved by Charles Anthon, Adjunct Professor of Languages and Ancient Geography in Columbia College (New York: E. Duychinck, G. Long [etc.], 1825). The book by Lempriere was originally published in 1788.

⁷ Manuscript History A-1:9, CHL, written 1838 and recopied in 1839. See Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:285; Joseph Smith-History 1:64-65, Pearl of Great Price.

Harris to Anthon. Either way the above account is a religious statement of support for Joseph Smith. The purpose of showing the learned man what was copied was to produce evidence that the characters on the gold plates were authentic ancient characters from gold plates in the possession of Smith.

There is no indication that Charles Anthon tried to work on making a translation, but certain questions linger: Did or did not Anthon decipher some characters? If he did not decipher anything, why did he write out a statement? Why tear up a useless statement? And finally did Anthon say "I cannot read a sealed book"? Anthon would most likely not have destroyed a statement if, as he said, his statement was that there was no meaning to the characters. There was probably something more to it. Anthon owned a copy of Jean Francois Champollion's *Précis du Système Hiéroglyphique des Anciens Égyptiens* (Paris, 1824) in his library.⁸

It is possible that Harris may have visited Samuel Mitchill again after visiting Anthon, but we do not know this for sure. Mitchill died in 1831 and did not record his encounter with Harris. Charles Anthon is known to have responded to three inquiries about the visit. The first letter was written to Eber D. Howe, publisher of the Painesville, Ohio *Telegraph* in 1834, the second letter to Rev. Thomas W. Coit, Rector of Trinity Church in New Rochelle, New York, in 1841, and the third letter to another minister in 1844.

Anthon's letters appear to answer the particular inquiry of each individual. For example, in his 1834 letter he wrote that no letter or note was made for Harris, while in the 1841 letter he said he did write one. His letters described from memory what he saw years earlier when Martin Harris brought to him a sheet of paper. Anthon did not know the name of the man who visited him.

Harris had the impression that Professor Anthon thought some of the writing may have the appearance or resemblance of Arabic, Assyrian, Chaldean, Egyptian, Greek, Hebrew, or Syriac characters. Whether he said this is not known. But from what Anthon wrote, there were not enough characters in any one language to interpret them. He concluded that none were Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Charles Anthon gave a description of the sheet of paper shown to him by Martin Harris. It confirms that the placement of the various characters appeared to be from a variety of different ancient languages, in vertical columns, and drawn on the paper like some type of alphabet. In 1834 Anthon described the writing:

It consisted of all kinds of crooked characters disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets. Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes, Roman letters inverted or placed sideways, were arranged in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle divided into various compartments, decked with various marks, and evidently copied after the Mexican Calender [Calendar] given by Humboldt, but copied in such a way as not to betray the source whence it was derived.⁹

⁸ Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Carl A. Kroch Library and Olin Library, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

⁹ Anthon to Eber D. Howe, February 17, 1834, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 271-72; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:380.

Seven years later Professor Anthon still maintained the basic way the paper appeared to him:

A very brief examination of the paper convinced me that it was a mere *hoax*, and a very clumsy one too. The characters were arranged in columns, like the [C]hinese mode of writing, and presented the most singular medley that I had ever beheld. Greek, Hebrew, and all sorts of letters, more or less distorted, either through unskilfulness or from actual design, were intermingled with sundry delineations of half moons, stars, and other natural objects, and the whole ended in a rude representation of the Mexican zodiac.¹⁰

Martin Harris told Joel Tiffany in 1859 that Joseph Smith found the plates of gold upon which was "recorded in Arabic, Chaldaic, Syriac, and Egyptian, the Book of Life, or the Book of Mormon."¹¹ The transcript in the possession of the Community of Christ Library-Archives (from David Whitmer heirs) with seven horizontal lines is apparently not the same sheet of paper that Anthon saw in vertical columns. It may represent the type of characters presented by Harris to Anthon.¹² To have Arabic, Assyrian, Chaldaic, and Egyptian together on a sheet of paper as described by Martin Harris indicates that the characters may have been copied as mentioned by Professor Anthon. The sample of the characters was reported to include Egyptian.¹³

Neither Mitchill, Anthon, nor any other American scholar could work with Egyptian writing, much less translate Egyptian with confidence. Then why the trip to New York City? To convince Harris that Joseph Smith had in his possession ancient writing and thus to insure that the characters Joseph Smith interpreted were real. To Harris only Smith had the divine gift to render the copied characters with the message of the gold plates into English. It does not seem likely that Anthon would say the "translation was correct." This appears to be a misunderstanding by Harris.

Professor Anthon wrote about six years later in February 1834 that a farmer called on him "with a note from Dr. [Samuel L.] Mitchell, of our city, now dead, requesting me to decipher, if possible, the paper which the farmer would hand me. Upon examining the paper in question, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick – perhaps a *hoax*." Then he explained, "He requested an opinion from me in writing, which of course I declined giving."¹⁴

When writing another letter in 1841 concerning this visit, Anthon wrote: "He requested me to give him my opinion in writing about the paper which he had shown to me. I did so

¹⁰ Anthon to Rev. Thomas W. Coit, April 3, 1841, in *Church Record* 1 (April 17, 1841):231, Flushing, New York, emphasis retained; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:383.

¹¹ "Mormonism-No. II," *Tiffany Monthly* 5 (August 1859):163; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 2:302.

¹² Paul M. Hanson, "The Transcript from the Plates of The Book of Mormon," *Saints Herald* 103 (November 12, 1956):5-7.

¹³ The text of the Book of Mormon mentioned the Egyptian language: "And now behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge in the characters, which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech." 1830 BOM, 538; LDS Mormon 9:32; RLDS 4:98. See also LDS 1 Nephi 1:2; RLDS 1:1.

¹⁴ Anthon to Eber D. Howe, February 17, 1834, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 270-71, emphasis retained; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:378-79.

without any hesitation. . . . The import of what I wrote was, as far as I can now recollect, simply this, that the marks in the paper appeared to be merely an imitation of various alphabetic characters, and had in my opinion no meaning at all connected with them. The countryman [Harris] then took his leave, with many thanks, and with the express declaration that he would in no shape part with his farm or embark in the speculation of printing the golden book"¹⁵

It may be that Anthon declined giving an opinion relating to one aspect of the paper while making another statement without hesitation. According to the foregoing account Martin Harris said that Anthon destroyed a certificate after he was told that the plates were found by the assistance of an angel.

Harris confirmed that he was warned by Anthon. According to Martin "Professor Anthon then gave me a certificate certifying that the characters were Arabic, Chaldaic, and Egyptian. I then left Dr. Anthon, and was near the door, when he said, 'How did the young man know the plates were there?' I said an angel had shown them to him. Professor Anthon then said, 'Let me see the certificate!' – upon which, I took it from my waistcoat pocket and unsuspectingly gave it to him. He then tore it up in anger, saying there was no such thing as angels now – it was all a hoax."¹⁶

In a third letter written by Professor Charles Anthon in 1844 to an unnamed minister, he again repeated what he told Harris:

I told him very frankly that the whole matter was a hoax and cautioned him against being cheated out of his property. You will perceive from this what a monstrous lie, the Mormons are uttering when they say that I promised to decipher the piece of writing in question—if the original records were brought to me. I told the man at once that he was imposed upon and that the writing was mere trash. What Dr. Mitchell may have said I know not.¹⁷

The trip of Martin Harris appeared in newspapers in 1829. It was also used by early church missionaries telling the story about the Book of Mormon to prospective converts. The following is a sample of what newspapers reported:

So blindly enthusiastic was Harris, that he took some of the characters interpreted by Smith, and went in search of some one, besides the interpreter, who was learned enough to *English* them; but all to whom he applied (among the number was Professor Mitchell, of New York,) happened not to be possessed of sufficient

¹⁵ Anthon to Rev. Thomas W. Coit, April 3, 1841, in *Church Record* 1 (April 17, 1841):231; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:384-85.

¹⁶ David B. Dille, "Additional Testimony of Martin Harris (One of the Three Witnesses) to the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon," *Millennial Star* 21 (August 20, 1859):545, statement of September 15, 1853, shortly after Dille talked to Harris. See Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 2:298-99.

¹⁷ Anthon to "Rev. and Dear Sir," August 12, 1844, in *New-York Observer* 23 (May 3, 1845):69, New York. Brought to my attention by Erin Jennings. See Erin B. Jennings, "Charles Anthon—The Man Behind the Letters," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 32, no 2 (Fall/Winter 2012):171-87.

knowledge to give satisfaction! Harris returned, and set Smith to work at interpreting the [gold] Bible.¹⁸

Newspaperman William W. Phelps, editor of the *Ontario Phoenix*, published in Canandaigua, New York, wrote in January 1831 that he understood that some characters "were shown to Dr. Mitchell, and he referred to professor Anthon who translated and declared them to be the ancient shorthand Egyptian."¹⁹ Whether Phelps obtained this information from Harris is not known but it is possible. As stated above it is doubtful if Anthon could have translated ancient Egyptian. Repeating such claim was common. If there were Egyptian characters (hieroglyphic, hieratic, or demotic) on the paper, Anthon told Harris that it "contained any thing else but '*Egyptian Hieroglyphics*.'"²⁰

William E. McLellin, an early church missionary, was reported to have preached the following about the gold plates:

At the place appointed he [Joseph Smith] found in the earth a box which contained a set of thin plates resembling gold, with Arabic characters inscribed on them. The plates were minutely described as being connected with rings in the shape of the letter D, which facilitated the opening and shutting of the book. The preacher [McLellin] said he [Smith] found in the same place two stones with which he was enabled by placing them over his eyes and putting his head in a dark corner to decypher the hieroglyphics on the plates!²¹

Again if Anthon made the statement, as reported by Harris, that the characters were true characters this does not mean that they had any coherent meaning. Who destroyed the statement? In Anthon's letters he wrote nothing about the destruction of a statement. Harris said it was the professor who did it after hearing the plates were revealed by an angel. But the main conclusion in this case is that no translation or reading was made.

An important aspect of the visit is the account of what Harris told Anthon on how the Book of Mormon was being produced. Martin described this as happening before he became a scribe to Joseph Smith. This explains the way the work was being done when Reuben Hale and his sister Emma worked as Smith's scribes. Smith already had his alphabet and Martin wanted to see learned men to ascertain if the characters were genuine.

Anthon wrote in 1834 what he remembered from Harris about a gold book. The book consisted "of a number of plates of gold," dug up in New York state and with the book a pair of spectacles:

¹⁸ *Niagara Courier* 2 (August 27, 1829), Lockport, New York, emphasis retained. Also published in the *Rochester Daily Advertiser and Telegraph* 3 (August 31, 1829). This was a reprint from an article titled "Golden Bible" in the *Palmyra Freeman* 1 (August 11, 1829):2.

¹⁹ Phelps to Howe, January 15, 1831 in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 273; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 3:6-7.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 4:380, emphasis retained.

²¹ *New-Hampshire Gazette* 76 (October 25, 1831):4, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The article was a reprint from the *Illinois Patriot* of Jacksonville, Illinois, no copy extant. McLellin preached in Jacksonville on September 10, 1831.

These spectacles were so large, that, if a person attempted to look through them, his two eyes would have to be turned towards *one* of the glasses merely, the spectacles in question being altogether too large for the breadth of the human face. Whoever examined the plates through the spectacles, was enabled not only to *read* them, but fully *understand* their meaning. All this knowledge, however, was confined at that time to a young man, who had the trunk containing the book and spectacles in his sole possession. This young man was placed behind a curtain, in the garret of a farm house, and, being thus concealed from view, put on the spectacles occasionally, or rather, looked through one of the glasses, decyphered the characters in the book, and, having committed some of them to paper, handed copies from behind the curtain, to those who stood outside.²²

Martin Harris traveled to Harmony and reported to Joseph Smith his experience with Mitchell and Anthon. Smith and Harris now understood the trip to New York City as fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 29:11-12:

And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.²³

Harris then returned to his home in Palmyra. Shortly afterwards Martin took a trip to Harmony with Lucy, his wife. After they arrived Lucy Harris searched for the plates in and around the Smith home but found nothing. Harris then took Lucy back to Palmyra.

Joseph Smith dictated the text while a scribe wrote the words on manuscript pages. Emma and her brother Reuben acted as scribes for Joseph. Elizabeth Lewis McKune, daughter of Nathaniel Lewis, remembered that "Reuben Hale, younger son of Isaac Hale, acted as scribe, writing down the words from Joseph Smith's mouth, but after a short time Martin Harris did the

²² Anthon to Eber D. Howe, February 17, 1834, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 270, emphasis retained; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:378-79. Others who heard about the finding of the spectacles include: Fayette Lapham (*ibid.*, 1:462), Willard Chase (2:68), Benjamin Saunders (2:137), John H. Gilbert (2:546), and Lucy Mack Smith (*Lucy's Book*, 379, 389). The spectacles are described in the Book of Mormon as "two stones which was fastened into the two rims of a bow." 1830 BOM, 216; LDS Mosiah 28:13; RLDS 12:18. See also Joseph Smith's mention of "spectacles for to read the Book" (Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:9). Both the spectacles and seer stone were later known as the Urim and Thummim. See also *Niagara Courier* 2 (August 27, 1829), Lockport, New York.

²³ This text with a little variation was incorporated into the Book of Mormon, though some of its features are different, with the understanding of Martin's 1828 trip to New York City. See 1830 BOM, 111; LDS 2 Nephi 27:15-20; RLDS 2 Nephi 11:136-142 for a commentary on the passage.

writing."²⁴ Others such as Emma Smith, Joseph Knight Sr., Joseph Fowler McKune, and Samuel Brush also mentioned that seventeen-year-old Reuben was a scribe.²⁵

Michael Morse when interviewed by William Blair in 1879 "says Joseph told him he found the plates in a *stone* box. Says he many times called in at Jos[e]phs on business, when J[oseph]. would be engaged [in] translating the plates. J[oseph]. put the seer stone in a hat and leaning forward would place his face in the hat, and then Dictate to his scribe, Sentence by Sentence."²⁶ Smith would dictate the contents of the gold plates without the plates being in his presence.

The claim of having plates with ancient writing on them was to increase faith. It was not necessary for Joseph Smith to use plates to produce the story that was represented to be contained on them. To assist others in having religious faith in Jesus Christ was the overriding purpose in telling about plates. Some would believe by having a vision of the plates while others did not need to have such experience. For Smith the struggles and experiences he related necessitated maintaining that the writings of native peoples were from an ancient record whether or not he physically had them in his possession. The story contained on the record was presented to Joseph Smith in the form of revelation. Alva Hale, Nathaniel Lewis, Levi Lewis, and Joshua McKune claimed that Joseph Smith promised them that they would be able to see the plates, but they never saw them.²⁷

In April Martin Harris returned to Harmony to be Joseph's scribe. The writing would have been in the book of Lehi. The dictation occupied, according to Smith's history, from April 12 to June 14 just before the expected birth of Emma and Joseph's first child.²⁸ These fifty days were spent mainly with Smith continuing his dictation from when Reuben Hale and Emma were scribes. Martin Harris asked for and obtained permission to take home a large portion of the manuscript to show to family members.

On June 15 a son was born who was deformed. Sophia Lewis said that she "was present at the birth of this child, and that it was still-born and very much deformed."²⁹ Joseph attended Emma for about two weeks. The grave stone reads:³⁰

In Memory of An
Infant Son of

²⁴ Comments of Elizabeth McKune quoted in a letter of Hiel Lewis, September 29, 1879, published in *Daily Tribune* 18 (October 17, 1879):2, Salt Lake City. See Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:320.

²⁵ Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 1:537, 541 (Emma Smith); 4:18 (Joseph Knight); 4:402 (Joseph McKune); 4:359 (Samuel Brush). See also Rhamanthus M. Stocker, *Centennial History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: R. T. Peck and Co., 1887), 556.

²⁶ William W. Blair Journal, May 8, 1879, emphasis in original, CCLA. See Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:340-44.

²⁷ "Mormonism," *Susquehanna Register* 9 (May 1, 1834):1, Montrose, Pennsylvania. See Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:291, 294, 297, and 325.

²⁸ Manuscript History, A-1:9, CHL; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:286.

²⁹ "Mormonism," *Susquehanna Register* 9 (May 1, 1834):1. See Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:298; also 4:320.

³⁰ McKune Cemetery, Oakland (formerly Harmony), Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. The infant was not named at the time.

Joseph And Emma
Smith June 15th 1828

Martin Harris had made a covenant with Joseph Smith to show the handwritten manuscript only to five individuals who were family members. The persons who were to be shown the writings were his wife, Lucy, her sister, Polly Harris Cobb, his father and mother, Nathan and Rhoda; and his brother, Preserved. He was to keep the manuscript safe and not show it to anyone else.³¹ William W. Blair reported an interview with Martin Harris in 1860:

He 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 the 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.³²

Martin kept his promise until friends, other than his family, asked to see the manuscript. At the Smith home, Emma was recovering from the effects of childbirth and sadness at the loss of their firstborn son. About July 1, Joseph departed for his parents' home in Manchester.

Shortly after his arrival Joseph Smith requested Martin to come to the Smith home. Harris went to his drawer where he last kept the manuscript and it was gone, where he knew not. It is suspected that Lucy Harris removed it or had someone take it so the one hundred plus pages of the handwritten manuscript were indeed not to be found. It is not clear if Lucy destroyed the manuscript or gave it to others.

According to Lucy Smith, when called for Martin usually came in haste to the Smith home.³³ The family waited about four hours before he arrived. When he finally came into the house and sat at the table, he did not eat but cried out "Oh! I have lost my soul I have lost my soul." Joseph asked Martin if he had lost the manuscript. When Harris replied in the affirmative, Joseph in anguish walked the floor and said, according to his mother:

Oh! My God My God, said Joseph, clenching his hands together, all is lost [all] is lost what shall I do[?] I have sinned, it is me that tempted the wrath [of] God by asking him to that which I had no right to ask as I was differently instructed by the angel.³⁴

³¹ Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:286. In Smith's 1832 account he says that Harris was to show it to only four persons. *Ibid.* 1:10.

³² Lucy [Mack] Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* [Plano, Illinois: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1880], 131, footnote by W. W. Blair, interview about August 9, 1860 at Kirtland, Ohio. Reprinted in *Saints Herald* 35 (May 12, 1888):297. See Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 422n179.

³³ Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 417.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 418.

Soon Joseph left for Harmony knowing that he would tell Emma that the manuscript pages were lost. It would not be possible to produce the same words that were on the lost pages.

A class of the Methodist Episcopal Church was formed in Harmony by 1812. "All of the names of the first class cannot be given with certainty, but it is well known that John Comfort and his wife, Nathaniel Lewis and his wife, Isaac Hale and his wife, Marmaduke Salisbury and his wife, and James Newman and his wife were members of this class."³⁵ Michael Morse, husband of Emma's sister Trial Hale, was the leader of the class in Harmony. In 1879 Joseph and Hiel Lewis, cousins to Emma Hale, stated that Joseph Smith briefly joined the Methodist Episcopal Church or class in Harmony, Pennsylvania, in the summer of 1828. There was disagreement about how long Joseph's name remained on the class rolls, three days or six months.

The Lewis brothers said that Joseph Smith presented himself before the class and asked that his name be put on the class book. This was done; but a few days later, a member of the class, Joseph Lewis, objected and asked Smith to have his name taken off the class record. Smith went before the class and withdrew his name from probation.³⁶

It is possible that Joseph attended class with Emma because of the death of their first son. Emma had been a Methodist since she was a young girl. That Joseph was a member of the class was not questioned only the length of time his name remained on the class record. Smith did not want to become a full member after his encounter with Joseph Lewis. The date Joseph Smith had his name put on the class book was probably in early July shortly after he returned from Manchester. Like so many of the early Methodist records, the early class books of the Harmony (now Lanesboro) church are lost, so it will never be known for certain the length of time his name remained on the rolls. It would not have been out of the ordinary for Joseph to attend the Methodist class at this time.³⁷

Soon after, Smith said he asked God how it could be that the manuscript was lost. The response was Joseph Smith's first recorded revelation that is believed to have been given to the young prophet through his seer stone:

The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God, can not be frustrated, neither can they come to nought, for God doth not walk in crooked paths; neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left; neither doth he vary from that which he hath said: Therefore his paths are strait and his course is one eternal round.³⁸

Then Smith was given a serious rebuke,

Behold, how oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God, and have gone on in the persuasions of men: for behold you should not have feared man more than God, although men set at nought the counsels of God, and despise his words, yet you should have been faithful and he would have extended

³⁵ Stocker, *Centennial History of Susquehanna County*, 587.

³⁶ For the series of articles, see *Amboy Journal* 24 (April 23, 30; May 21; June 4, 11; July 2, 9, 30; August 6, 1879), Amboy, Illinois; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:299-321.

³⁷ "Was Joseph Smith a Methodist?" *Saints Herald* 26 (December 15, 1879):376.

³⁸ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 24; BC 2:1; LDS D&C 3:1-2; RLDS D&C 2:1 (July 1828).

his arm, and supported you against all the fiery darts of the adversary; and he would have been with you in every time of trouble.

If Joseph would repent, he would be afflicted for a season but would still be chosen and not lose his gift. The gift was the "sight and power to translate" that God had given to him. As to the contents of the lost writings, the revelation explained:

For as the knowledge of a Savior has come into the world, even so shall the knowledge of my people, the Nephites, and the Jacobites, and the Josephites, and the Zoramites, come to the knowledge of the Lamanites, and the Lemuelites and the Ishmaelites,³⁹ which dwindled in unbelief, because of the iniquity of their fathers, who have been suffered to destroy their brethren, because of their iniquities, and their abominations: and for this very purpose are these plates preserved which contain these records.⁴⁰

As mentioned it was about October 1828 when Lucy and Joseph Sr. visited their son and daughter-in-law. According to Lucy, this visit occurred after September 22. They became acquainted with Emma's parents, sisters, and brothers. In January 1829 Samuel, after recovering from his sickness, went with his father to the Joseph Knight home. Joseph Knight wrote:

In January his father [Joseph Sr.] and Samuel Came from Manchester to my house when I was Buisey [Busy] a Drawing Lumber. I told him they had traveled [traveled] far enough I would go with my Sley [Sleigh] and take them Down [to Harmony] to morrow. I went Down and found them [Joseph Jr. and Emma] well and the[y] were glad to See us we conversed about many things. [I]n the morning I gave the old man ahalf [a half] a Dollar and Joseph a little money to Buoy [Buy] paper to translate I having But little with me.⁴¹

Joseph received a revelatory message for his fifty-seven-year-old father. The revelation, like the religious text he was dictating, incorporated phrases from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible (references in brackets):

Now, behold, a marvelous work [Isaiah 29:14] is about to come forth among the children of men [Psalm 12:1], therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God [Ezra 6:18], see that ye serve him with all your heart [Deuteronomy 10:10], might, mind and strength [Luke 10:27], that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day: Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God, ye are called to the work, for behold, the field is white already to harvest [John 4:35], and lo, he that

³⁹ The names Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites are found in three places in the Book of Mormon. See 1830 BOM, 124, 517, 519; LDS and RLDS Jacob 1:13; LDS 4 Nephi 1:36-38; RLDS 4 Nephi 1:40-42; and LDS and RLDS Mormon 1:8-9.

⁴⁰ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 24; BC 2:3, 6; LDS D&C 3:6-8, 16-19; RLDS D&C 2:3, 6.

⁴¹ Joseph Knight, *Reminiscences*, CHL.

thrusteth in his sickle [Revelation 14:16] with his might, the same layeth up in store [1 Timothy 6:19] that he perish not [Jonah 1:6], but bringeth salvation to his soul, and faith, hope, charity [1 Corinthians 13:13], and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualifies him for the work.⁴²

Isaac Hale remembered a time when Martin Harris wanted to see the plates of gold. Hale recounted the following:

I went to the house where Joseph Smith Jr., lived, and where he and Harris were engaged in their translation of the Book. Each of them had a written piece of paper which they were comparing, and some of the words were "*my servant seeketh a greater witness, but no greater witness can be given him.*" There was also something said about "*three that were to see the thing*"—meaning I supposed, the Book of Plates, and that "*if the three did not go exactly according to orders, the thing would be taken from them.*"⁴³

Harris made this trip to Harmony in March because he still needed confirmation that Joseph "had in his possession the record of the Nephites" and wanted a witness that it was so. The revelation gave Harris a second chance and said that he would need to enter again into covenant. Martin was told he would be a witness to the plates if he humbled himself in prayer and faith. The revelation continued:

& if this be the case Behold I say unto you Joseph when thou hast translated a few more pages & then shalt thou stop for a season even untill I command thee again then thou mayest translate . . . for this Cause have I said stop & stand still untill I Command thee & I will provide means whereby thou mayest accomplish the thing I have commanded thee⁴⁴

Isaac Hale asked Joseph or Emma whose were the words he read. He was answered "they were the words of Jesus Christ." Hale said he considered it a delusion and asked them to abandon their efforts. Hale continued: "The manner in which he [Joseph] pretended to read and interpret, was the same as when he looked for the money-diggers, with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the Book of Plates were at the same time hid in the woods!"⁴⁵

On April 5, 1829, Samuel Harrison Smith and Oliver Cowdery arrived at Harmony from Manchester. Joseph Smith made arrangements for the purchase from Isaac Hale of some property

⁴² Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 25; BC 3; LDS and RLDS D&C 4 (February 1829). See Grant H. Palmer, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 46-47.

⁴³ "Mormonism," *Susquehanna Register* 9 (May 1, 1834):1, emphasis retained. It is possible that Hale remembered the wording of the original text which predated other copies.

⁴⁴ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 28; BC 4:10-11; LDS D&C 5:30, 34; RLDS D&C 5:6 (March 1829).

⁴⁵ "Mormonism," *Susquehanna Register* 9 (May 1, 1834):1.

and the house the couple was living in.⁴⁶ Cowdery became a new scribe for Joseph's religious history. Thereafter the writing of the manuscript of the Book of Mormon progressed more rapidly. Cowdery was reportedly shown the plates in a vision before he left Manchester. Joseph wrote concerning Cowdery's vision that the "Lord appeared unto a young man by the name of Oliver Cowd[e]ry and shewed unto him the plates in a vision and also the truth of the work . . . now my wife had writ[t]en some for me to translate and also my Brother Samuel H. Smith."⁴⁷

Joseph Smith had had a keen interest in religious teachings for the last ten years. He was a married man twenty-two years old. He had been talking to his family about obtaining a special record for the last four years. Smith could dictate about three pages a day and produce a lengthy manuscript. For the period from October 1828 to March 1829, before Cowdery became a scribe, it would be possible to have written many pages. With three scribes helping, the only drawback would be if there were not enough paper to write on (a shortage that did occur, according to Joseph Knight Sr.) or not having a scribe available, and if this was the case Smith could do his own writing.

Joseph Smith continued to dictate the text of the Book of Mormon with Oliver Cowdery as scribe. Smith, for example, worked on what is known as the Sermon on the Mount preached by Jesus and printed in the King James Bible. A comparison with the text in the Book of Mormon shows that Joseph documented the visit of Jesus to a New World people using the New Testament Gospel of Matthew.

In May 1829 Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith felt called to enter the waters of baptism. The early story is that they received a commandment to baptize each other.⁴⁸ On May 15 Oliver was baptized by Joseph and then Oliver baptized Joseph for the remission of sins in the nearby Susquehanna River. They may have received this commandment from an angel.⁴⁹ They ordained each other with authority to administer baptism and awaited further instructions. This commandment was mentioned in a June revelation that confirmed that Cowdery had been "baptized by the hand of my servant [Joseph], according to that which I have commanded him: Wherefore he hath fulfilled the thing which I commanded him."⁵⁰

During the same month, Hyrum visited Joseph at Harmony to see how the translation was coming. While there Joseph received a revelation directed to Hyrum personally:

Keep my commandments, and assist to bring forth my work according to my commandments, and you shall be blessed. Behold thou hast a gift, or thou shalt have a gift, if thou wilt desire of me in faith, with an honest heart, believing in the

⁴⁶ See agreement dated April 6, 1829, signed by Smith and Hale in the presence of Oliver H. Cowdery and Samuel H. Smith, CHL. On September 7, 1834 Oliver Cowdery wrote, "On Monday the 6th, I assisted him [Joseph] in arranging some business of a temporal nature." *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (October 1834):14, Kirtland, Ohio.

⁴⁷ Joseph Smith's 1832 account, 6, CHL; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:10.

⁴⁸ Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 439.

⁴⁹ The date of May 15, 1829, was recorded by Oliver Cowdery September 15-28, 1835 in Patriarchal Blessing Book 1:8, CHL. The angel was identified as John. Additional wording was added in 1835 to a commandment given in 1830 indicating that John was the son of Zacharias, also known as John the Baptist, who was sent to Smith and Cowdery. See Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 72-76.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 46; BC 15:6-7; LDS D&C 18:7; RLDS D&C 16:2 (June 1829).

power of Jesus Christ, or in my power which speaketh unto thee: for behold it is I that speaketh: behold I am the light which shineth in darkness, and by my power I give these words unto thee. . . . [C]leave unto me with all your heart, that you may assist in bringing to light those things of which have been spoken: Yea, the translation of my work: be patient until you shall accomplish it.⁵¹

About the beginning of June, David Whitmer came to Harmony and took Joseph and Oliver in his wagon to the Peter Whitmer Sr. home in Fayette Township, Seneca County, New York, to complete writing the Book of Mormon. Smith later returned to Harmony, arriving on October 4, while the type was being set for the forthcoming book.⁵² Oliver Cowdery stayed in Manchester at the home of Hyrum Smith and worked on making a copy of the original Book of Mormon manuscript for the printer.

⁵¹ BC 10:4-5, 9; LDS D&C 11:9-11, 19; RLDS D&C 10:4-5, 9 (May 1829).

⁵² Smith to Cowdery, October 22, 1829, Joseph Smith Letterbook 1:9, CHL. This is a copy of the original letter.