

**By the Power of the Spirit:  
Martin Harris in the Mormon Movement**

**by H. Michael Marquardt**

© 2016 by H. Michael Marquardt. All rights reserved.

This is the paper, with footnotes, that was reduced for oral presentation, presented at the Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, Utah, July 29, 2016.

This paper will explore what is known about Martin Harris and his relationship to Restoration churches under the leadership of Joseph Smith Jr., James J. Strang, William E. McLellin, David Whitmer, Gladden Bishop and William Smith. It is a brief summary of his activities in New York, Ohio and Utah Territory.

As a background, Martin Harris was born on May 18, 1783 and became a farmer who owned valuable property in Palmyra Township, New York. Harris at the age of twenty-six married his cousin Lucy and they raised a family of four known children.

Harris stated that in 1818 he was inspired of the Lord and taught of the Spirit that he should not join any church. He was trusted in ordinary day to day business dealings but was considered by his contemporaries in religious matters as a visionary man and easily influenced. One of the reasons that you do not hear more about Martin in his Kirtland years is because he was an unstable man in religious matters.

Martin Harris became the last of the three witnesses to see in vision the Book of Mormon gold plates and add his name to the religious testimony of its authenticity. He is known for financing the publication of the Book of Mormon. His marriage with his wife Lucy broke up because of the time and money he spent promoting Joseph Smith, Jr. and the Book of Mormon. He was 46 years old when he was baptized into the restored church on April 6, 1830, the day of organization, in Manchester, Ontario County, New York.<sup>1</sup>

The first contemporary reference to Martin Harris being in Ohio is when he arrived at Painesville on March 12, 1831. The local newspaper reported that "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]"<sup>2</sup>

Martin visited Kirtland for a number of days and then returned to Palmyra. On his second trip from Palmyra he led a group of saints to Kirtland. Martin was a member of the United Firm by June 25, 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

---

<sup>1</sup> Draft, Manuscript History, Book A-1:9, Church History Library, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter CHL). "I Was Bapltised By the Hands of oliver Cowdery," September 4, 1870, Edward Stevenson Collection, CHL.

<sup>2</sup> *Telegraph* 2 (March 15, 1831):3, Painesville, Ohio, emphasis omitted.

to be built there.<sup>3</sup>

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 . . . Martin Harris took it up and read it to us."<sup>4</sup> Later in February 1834 Joseph Smith organized the church's Kirtland High Council. Harris was chosen a member. Martin attended some meetings but he was often out of town as he made frequent trips to Palmyra.

In 1835 he assisted in the selection of the first Twelve Apostles, ordaining nine apostles. Harris left Kirtland as he was not at the meeting of February 21 when Parley P. Pratt was ordained an apostle. Pratt received his ordination from Joseph Smith, Jr., Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer.

Jonathan Hale, Thomas B. Marsh and David W. Patten visited "Palmyra in the night went to <Elde[r]> Ma[r]tin Harris to Brakefast thence to the hill Cumorah went on 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 Neighbourhood from house to house to inquire the Charactor [Character] of Joseph Smith jr in previous to his receiving the Book of Mormon. the amount was that his Charactor was as good as young men in General. this was on the 30 day of May 1835."<sup>5</sup> Harris was still in Palmyra in July when Edward Partridge "lodged with br[other]. Martin Harris."<sup>6</sup>

Martin returned to Kirtland and he received a patriarchal blessing from under the hands of Joseph Smith Sr., church patriarch, on August 27, 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 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 her 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."<sup>7</sup>

Harris returned to Palmyra and sold property on October 13, 1835, signing with Lucy Harris.<sup>8</sup> Though separated in their marriage they still managed to sell property for revenue. It was recorded in Joseph Smith's journal that "Elder [Martin] Harris also

---

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Smith, Jr., Sidney Rigdon, F.G. Williams and Martin Harris to Edward Partridge, June 25, 1833, Joseph Smith Collection, CHL.

<sup>4</sup> "Journal and Record of the Life & Family of Ira Ames," commenced writing circa 1858, CHL. See LDS D&C 101; Community of Christ D&C 98, December 16, 1833.

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan H. Hale Reminiscences and Journals, CHL.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Partridge Journal, entry for July 7, 1835, CHL.

<sup>7</sup> Patriarchal Blessing Book, 1:17, CHL. See H. Michael Marquardt, comp., *Early Patriarchal Blessings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007), 38.

<sup>8</sup> Deed Liber 18:437-39, Wayne County, Lyons, New York. See also Deed Liber 22:351 (April 9, 1833) and 13:2-3 (April 19, 1833), land transactions of Martin and Lucy Harris, April 1833.

returned this morning, from Palmyra N[ew] York."<sup>9</sup> Harris had no known involvement in the purchase of Egyptian mummies and papyri, the Hebrew School, or the Kirtland Safety Society Bank.

Family tradition has it that Martin's wife Lucy died in Palmyra in the summer of 1836 at the age of 44. On November 1, 1836 Martin married Caroline Young. She was a daughter of John Young (brother of Brigham Young), Caroline was 20 years old when she married Harris and Martin was 33 years older than Caroline, Harris was 53 years old.

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."<sup>10</sup> Harris was at Palmyra and sold property on May 6, 1837 with his wife Caroline.<sup>11</sup> Later in 1837 Martin along with other members had a falling out with church officials. Near the end of December he was cut off from the church by the High Council.

While Harris had no stock in the Kirtland Bank he may have been influenced by its failure. John A. Clark, a Palmyra acquaintance of Martin 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."<sup>12</sup>

Caroline and Martin's first child was born in January 1838. Their family eventually included seven children. In the same month Martin was associated with the major leader of the dissenters, Warren Parrish. Harris helped incorporate the Church of Christ and was one of its three trustees along with Joseph Coe and Cyrus Smalling.<sup>13</sup> Though many individuals had problems with Joseph Smith they still worshiped in the Kirtland Temple. It was at one of these meetings that Harris mentioned "that he never saw the plates with his natural eyes only in vision."<sup>14</sup>

Vilate Kimball wrote to her husband Heber in January 1838 that a large party

---

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Smith Journal, December 14, 1835, in Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832-1839* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 122. The third person account has: "Eld[e]r. Harris also returned this morning from visiting his family who live in Palmyra N.Y." Karen Lynn Davidson, David J. Whittaker, Mark-Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832-1844*. (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2012, 145. 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, December 18, 1835 in Bruce A. Van Orden, ed., "Writing to Zion: The William W. Phelps Kirtland Letters (1835-1836)," *BYU Studies* 33 (1993):571.

<sup>10</sup> Manuscript History of Brigham Young, CR 100 150, box 1, folder 1, CHL.

<sup>11</sup> Deed Liber 22:218-19, Wayne County, Lyons, New York.

<sup>12</sup> John A. Clark, *Gleanings By the Way* (Philadelphia: W.J. & J.K. Simon, 1842), 349.

<sup>13</sup> Geauga County, Ohio, Execution Docket 1831-1835, microfilm no. 1,289,257, item 1, LDS Family History Library, Salt Lake City. This entry was located by Lachlan Mackay.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Burnett to Lyman E. Johnson, April 15, 1838, Joseph Smith Letterbook 2:64, CHL. Warren Parrish letter, March 13, 1838, in "Mormonism," *Waldo Patriot* 1 (May 4, 1838):1, Belfast, Maine. See also Parrish, letter, August 11, 1838, *The Evangelist* 6 (October 1, 1838):226, Carthage, Ohio and revelation of June 1829 in 1835 D&C 42; LDS D&C 17:5. Community of Christ D&C 15:1-2.

dissented from the church, “The Leaders of this band is Martin Harris, Warren Parrish, Joseph Coe, Luke Johnson and John Baynton [Boynton].”<sup>15</sup> There was a division in the newly organized church with those who believed the Book of Mormon and those who did not.<sup>16</sup>

By July 1840 Martin was received back into the church.<sup>17</sup> In 1841 Harris is listed as a member of the high priests quorum.<sup>18</sup> The next year during a religious reformation in November 1842 he was rebaptized as were other Kirtland dissenters.<sup>19</sup>

Four separate sources state that soon after this Harris became a follower of Mother Ann Lee founder in the eighteenth century of the Shaker movement (United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming). Harris appears associated with a divine roll or book published in New Hampshire in 1843.<sup>20</sup> This book was 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.*<sup>21</sup> 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 besides obtaining instructions from Mother Ann Lee.<sup>22</sup> Communications in this sacred

---

<sup>15</sup> Vilate Kimball to “My Dear Husband,” [Heber C. Kimball], January 19, 1838, CHL.

<sup>16</sup> George A. Smith to Josiah and Nancy Fleming, March 29, 1838 etc., George A. Smith Papers, MS 1322, Box 10, folder 9, CHL.

<sup>17</sup> Laura Pitkin to Heber C. Kimball, July 18 [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.

<sup>18</sup> “Conference Minutes,” May 22, 1841, *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 17 (July 1, 1841):458.

<sup>19</sup> “Letter from Justin Brooks,” to Joseph Smith, November 7, 1842, “information has just reached me that Brother Martin Harris has been baptized,” in *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 4 (January 2, 1843):63.

<sup>20</sup> Phineas H. Young et al to Brigham Young, December 31, 1844, “Martin Harris is a firm believer in shakerism says his testimony is greater than it was of the book of Mormon,” Brigham Young office files, CHL.; *Millennial Star* 9 (November 15, 1846):124; Thomas Colburn to Elder Snow, May 2, 1855, in *St. Louis Luminary*, (May 5, 1855); 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.

<sup>21</sup> [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.

<sup>22</sup> See Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the 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, NH: author, 1899)

book included a 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 showing them 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."<sup>23</sup>

Other experiences, such as those at North Union, Ohio, included "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]."<sup>24</sup>

Spiritual manifestations including those in the Shaker book moved Harris in a special way. Clark Braden in a debate held in 1884 in Kirtland mentioned that "Harris declared repeatedly that he had as much evidence for a Shaker book he had as for the Book of Mormon."<sup>25</sup> By the end 1844 Martin Harris believed in and had a strong testimony of the sacred roll.

In 1846 Martin Harris accepted James J. Strang as prophet and successor to Joseph Smith. At a conference in the Kirtland Temple Harris became a member of Strang's High Council, as was his brother Preserved and William Cowdery, father of Oliver Cowdery. Leonard Rich<sup>26</sup> was chosen stake president. Lester Brooks was ordained an apostle. Harris were appointed to go on a church mission to England.

**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, Revelater [Revelator], and Translator [Translator] unto this Church, according to the Law of the Church, and the word of God.**<sup>27</sup>

Harris was planning on being away from Kirtland for at least a year. Within a month of the Strangite conference Martin Harris signed over his power of attorney to his brother, Preserved, and Bishop Jacob Bump. Martin wrote:<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> *Sacred and Divine Roll and Book*, 347.

<sup>24</sup> See United Society of Believers (Shakers) Papers, MSS 119, Boxes 1-2, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.

<sup>25</sup> *Braden and Kelley Debate*, 173.

<sup>26</sup> Janet Lisonbee, *Mormon Graves in Kirtland: A Biographical Dictionary of Early Saints Buried in the Kirtland Area* (Independence, Missouri: John Whitmer Books, 2009), 31-33.

<sup>27</sup> "Kirtland," *Voree Herald* 1 (September 1846):1-2, Voree [near Burlington], Wisconsin Territory

<sup>28</sup> Copy of Power of Attorney, 4 Sept. 1846, Martin Harris Legal Documents, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; photo in *BYU Studies* 24 (Fall 1984):426.



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.<sup>33</sup>

An Editorial proclaimed that Harris was of the devil and a wicked man. “Martin Harris. One of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, yielded to the spirit and temptation of the Devil a number of years ago—turned against Joseph Smith and became his bitter enemy.” The editorial further stated:

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 perhaps longer, having had some flare ups while among them; but since Strang has made his entry into the apostate ranks, and hoisted his standard for the rebellious to flock too, 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 . . .<sup>34</sup>

Harris and Brooks did not have any success in their missionary work during the time they were there. In fact it was one of the shortest missions to England, about two and a half months. Harris and Brooks arrived in New York on December 8.

Returning to Kirtland by January 1847 Martin joined former apostle William E. McLellin's Church of Christ which was advocating David Whitmer as prophet, seer, revelator and successor to Joseph Smith. William E. McLellin received a revelation giving the following instructions:

Yea, let my servant William [McLellin] baptize and confirm, and then re-ordain my servnat [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 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

---

<sup>33</sup> “Notices,” *Latter Day Saints’ Millennial Star* 8, no. 8 (November 15, 1846):128. Cyrus Wheelock recorded his journal, “he [Martin Harris] was not to be put of[f] so he must and would preach and Accordingly Decampt [Decamped] to the Street and Commenced holding forth to the annoyance of the people while thus engaged to [two] policemen Verry [Very] politely wa[i]ted uppon [upon] him Each affectionately taking an arm and thus the ~~Dram~~ Curtain fell and the Drama Closed to the great Amusement of the Spectators.” Cyrus H. Wheelock Journal, October 25, 1846, CHL. See also Robin Scott Jensen, “A Witness in England: Martin Harris and the Strangite Mission,” *BYU Studies* 44, no. 3 (2005):79-98.

<sup>34</sup> “Sketches of Notorious Characters,” *Latter Day Saints’ Millennial Star* 8, no. 8 (November 15, 1846):124.

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 . . .<sup>35</sup>

On February 13, 1847 Harris joins William E. 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."<sup>36</sup>

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"<sup>37</sup>

Harris was so impressed with McLellin's organization that he gave his testimony as one of the three witnesses that Joseph Smith in July 1834 ordained David Whitmer as his successor. The third issue of the *Ensign of Liberty* 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 [I] 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 Prophet, Seer, Revelator, and Translator before God.

Martin Harris,  
Leonard Rich,  
Calvin Beebe.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> "Our Tour West in 1847," *The Ensign of Liberty* 1 (August 1849):100, Kirtland, Ohio. This revelation was received on February 10, 1847.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 (March 1847):11.

<sup>37</sup> Brooks to Strang, March 14, 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.

<sup>38</sup> "The Successor of Joseph, the Seer," *The Ensign of Liberty* 1 (December 1847):43-44,



At a church conference held on June 3, 1849 Martin Harris was appointed president of the meeting. It was resolved that fellowship be withdrawn from William McLellan both as an elder or member of the church. In November 1849 Harris was in Rochester, New York. A local newspaper reported that he no longer goes with the Mormons and bore his testimony against them saying that rather than being "Latter Day Saints" they were "Latter Day Devils." Harris professed to have a mission from God.<sup>39</sup>

Another newspaper reported that Harris "even now has a confused, incoherent belief in that religion; yet he declared to me, while visiting here from the west, only a few months ago, that he had known Jo Smith to be an exceedingly immoral and dishonest man for years before he was killed, and had no confidence in him."<sup>40</sup>

In 1851 Harris became a follower of Francis Gladden Bishop. Bishop claimed to have the sacred things, that is, the golden plates of the Book of Mormon, the Book of Ether, the Book of Life (Sealed Record), the Interpreters, the Breast-plate of Moroni and the Sword of Laban. A detailed description of each was given by Bishop in the Kirtland Temple in March 1851. Bishop's description 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.<sup>41</sup> There are in all forty-eight plates, divided as follows: --

---

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 Whitmore [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." Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal* 1:14. Woodruff like the minutes in the Far West Record did not mention that Smith ordained David Whitmer as his prophetic successor.

<sup>39</sup> *Rochester Daily American*, Rochester, New York, November 16, 1849. Also in *Daily Evening Traveller*, Boston, Mass., November 21, 1849; *National Intelligencer*, November 22, 1849 and *Portland Transcript*, December 1, 1849. See also "Mormonism," *Tiffany's Monthly* 5 (May 1859):50, New York City, New York.

<sup>40</sup> "Mormon Hill," *The Religious Recorder* 7 (November 14, 1850), Syracuse, New York.

<sup>41</sup> Martin Harris in 1859 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 [August 1859]:165). In 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*, August 28, 1870, 4). Bishop said the plates fastened by "three gold rings" while Harris has "three silver

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 substance<sup>42</sup> so as to fill them up, in order that the dazzling of the gold between the characters would not prevent their being readily seen.

This proclamation was the "Flying Roll" sent forth by the Lord "as the testimony and power of my three witnesses, whom I have now called."<sup>43</sup> The three witnesses were Gladden Bishop, Bishop's wife Phebe and Martin Harris. Bishop stated "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."<sup>44</sup>

Stephen Hart said that Harris worked off and on for him for fifteen or twenty years. "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."<sup>45</sup>

In 1855 Thomas Colburn and W. W. Rust visited Martin Harris at Kirtland, Ohio who said "he had lost confidence in Joseph Smith."<sup>46</sup> William Smith had an interest in joining with Martin Harris and visitors claimed they had organized another church.<sup>47</sup>

But Harris was now involved in communication with the spirit world, that is, Spiritualism.<sup>48</sup> This is not surprising because of his earlier testimony of the Shaker book or roll. Harris visited a Miss Sexton, a spirit medium of Cleveland and received through her a proclamation. This he published in May 1855 as *A Proclamation And a warning voice unto*

---

rings."

<sup>42</sup> 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 read." *Journal of Discourses* 7:31 (January 2, 1859).

<sup>43</sup> *A Proclamation From the Lord to His people, scattered throughout all the Earth* (1851).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Statement of Stephen H. Hart, November 1884, in *Naked Truths About Mormonism* 1 (April 1888):3, Oakland, California.

<sup>46</sup> Letter, Thos. Colburn to "Dear Brother" [Erastus Snow], May 2, 1855, *St. Louis Luminary* 1 (May 5, 1855):94, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>47</sup> Stephen Post mentioned a letter telling about a forthcoming conference to be held on October 6, 1855 and signed by William Smith, Martin Harris and Chilton Daniels. Post to James J. Strang, *Northern Islander* 5, No. 15 (November 1, 1855), St. James, Beaver Island, Lake Michigan.

<sup>48</sup> See 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: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27 (Spring 1994):171-91.

*all people, first to all Kings, Governors and Rulers in Authority, and unto every kindred tongue and people under the whole heavens.* The eight page pamphlet proclaimed the word of the Lord from Moses, Elias, Elijah and John. Martin was called the messenger of the covenant; "for he speaketh the words of Elijah, and is sent to do the work of Elijah."<sup>49</sup> Christopher 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."<sup>50</sup>

Stephen Post was personally involved in a conference held in the Kirtland Temple, with Martin Harris as conference president and Post as secretary. Twelve resolutions were accepted and plans for another conference the next year.

Martin wrote a letter to Brigham Young in Utah Territory, and sent him a copy of the proclamation commanding him "in the name of [G]od to Publish the Revelation" in the Deseret News or another publication.<sup>51</sup> Brigham Young did not have the Proclamation printed.

Martin's wife Caroline was pregnant with their seventh child about August 1855. Martin was 72 years old and Caroline was 39. She and their family are listed in the 1856 Iowa Census for Rockford Township, Pottawattamie County, Iowa. Martin is listed apparently as "Martance" 73 years old in the census record. It is not known when Caroline left Kirtland. Nor is it certain Martin was in Iowa. Their daughter Ida May was born on May 27, 1856. The Harris family is listed near the Littlefield family that included Lyman and his wife Louisa. Louisa was Caroline's sister and may have influenced her to leave Kirtland and gather to Utah Territory.

Through the years Martin Harris and others in Kirtland, Ohio continued in the Church of Christ. In his role as a minister Martin performed a baptism on April 24, 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."<sup>52</sup>

Stephen Post wrote that in September 1857 "Wm Smith got up a revelation appointing me a printer to the church &c he is now trying to organize as president in Kirtland[,] Ohio."<sup>53</sup> Enoch Beese even mentioned that "Martin Harris had reorganized the Church in this place with 6 members. Appointed Wm. Smith their Leader Prophet Seer &

---

<sup>49</sup> [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), 7.

<sup>50</sup> Christopher G. Crary, *Pioneer and Personal Reminiscences* (Marshalltown, IA: Marshall Printing Company, 1893), 44.

<sup>51</sup> Harris to Young, August 13, 1855, written for Harris, Brigham Young Collection, CHL. See photo in *BYU Studies* 24 (Fall 1984):427. The letter and Proclamation was received on November 26, 1855.

<sup>52</sup> *Painesville Telegraph* 35 (April 30, 1857):3.

<sup>53</sup> Stephen Post Journal, after the date for October 25, 1857, CHL.

Revelator. In [a] few days Harris drove Wm. Smith out of the place & damned him to Hell."<sup>54</sup>

But the little Church of Christ continued and by June 1858 was taking "the Bible and Book of Mormon for their guide."<sup>55</sup> The leaders included Martin Harris, Leonard Rich, and Zadock Brooks. They claimed that "polygamy and all its kindred institutions are a base apostacy from the teachings of the Book of Mormon." A newspaper correspondent reported: "While I was in Kirtland they removed the name of Latter Day Saints from the Temple, and said that they should put the name of Christ in its stead." They wanted to raise money to repair the Temple.<sup>56</sup> The Painesville newspaper printed:

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.<sup>57</sup>

In 1858 an edition of the Book of Mormon was printed in New York by J. O. Wright & Company. Apparently Russell Huntley<sup>58</sup> purchased the plates and reprinted 4,000 copies with a new introduction written by Zadock Brooks, an elder in the Church of Christ.<sup>59</sup> The Reorganization used this printing until 1874 when they published their own edition.<sup>60</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ, headquartered in Monongahela, Pennsylvania, reprinted the introduction and it is currently retained in their printing of the Book of Mormon without Brooks's name.

In early 1859 editor Joel Tiffany of *Tiffany's Monthly*, a Spiritualist publication of New York City, visited Martin Harris and interviewed him for four days.<sup>61</sup> Martin's account is an important recollection of his association with the Joseph Smith Sr. family prior to 1828. Harris told Tiffany that he asked those in family how the plates were found and was told that they were located "by looking in the stone found in the well of Mason Chase."<sup>62</sup>

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

---

<sup>54</sup> Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, typescript, 1833-98, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983-85), 5:198-99, entry for June 22, 1858, original in CHL. See also Report of Jeter Clinton in Church Historian's Office Journal, May 18, 1858, Vol. 21:45, CHL and Kyle R. Walker, *William B. Smith: In the Shadow of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015), 424-29.

<sup>55</sup> "The Mormons," *Cleveland Daily Plain Dealer* 16 (June 13, 1860), emphasis omitted.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Painesville Telegraph* 38 (June 14, 1860):3.

<sup>58</sup> On Russell Huntley see, *Saints' Herald* 28, no. 2 (January 15, 1881):23 and "Died. Russell Huntley," *The Return* 2, no. 9 (September 1890):336, 333.

<sup>59</sup> Richard L. Saunders, ed., *Dale Morgan on the Mormons: Collected Works Part 1, 1939-1951* (Norman, Oklahoma: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2012), 387-88.

<sup>60</sup> W[alter]. W. Smith, "The Book of Mormon, Its Translation and Publication," *Journal of History* 14, No. 1 (January 1921):20-25.

<sup>61</sup> "Mormon Times in Kirtland," *Cleveland Daily Plain Dealer* 15 (May 18, 1859).

<sup>62</sup> "Mormonism—No. II," *Tiffany's Monthly* 5 (August 1859):169.

M. Lyman, Harris was showing visitors through the Kirtland Temple.<sup>63</sup> William W. Blair, an Apostle in the Reorganization, proceeded to Kirtland arriving there on August 9. 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[I] 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.

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:

the 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]."<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Francis M. Lyman, "My Mission," *The Contributor* 17 (April 1896):352. This visit to Kirtland occurred in June 1860.

<sup>64</sup> "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," *Saints' Herald* 36 (March 9, 1889):145. Increase Van Dusen was fifty-

**William W. Blair interviewed Martin Harris while in Kirtland:**

he [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.<sup>65</sup>

William Blair noted the sad condition the Kirtland Temple was in. 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[.]"<sup>66</sup> The Brooks group that Harris was a member of was called the Church of Christ and they worshiped in the Kirtland Temple.<sup>67</sup>

In February 1862 James McKnight was at Kirtland and Martin Harris came to see 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!*<sup>68</sup>

On April 18, 1862 Russell Huntley purchased by quit claim deed the land on which the Kirtland Temple stands.<sup>69</sup>

---

one years old. In 1847 he published an account of the endowment ceremony performed in the Nauvoo Temple. He at one time 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: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27 (Fall 1994):275-86. Increase died in 1882 and is buried with his wife in the Kirtland North Cemetery.

<sup>65</sup> 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; reprinted in *Saints' Herald* 35 (12 May 1888):297.

<sup>66</sup> William W. Blair Journal, entry for August 9, 1860, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

<sup>67</sup> When Stephen Post visited Kirtland in March 1864 he wrote, "The Brooks party I learned have possession of the temple." Stephen Post Journal, entry for March 18, 1864, CHL.

<sup>68</sup> James McKnight to George Q. Cannon, February 27, 1862 in *Millennial Star* 24 (April 19, 1862):251, emphasis in *Star*. For an 1860 domestic problem of George Harris see *Painesville Telegraph* 38 (September 13, 1860):3.

<sup>69</sup> Roger D. Launius, *The Kirtland Temple: A Historical Narrative* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1986), 103-104. For various events associated with the Kirtland

Eight years later Edward Stevenson, on a mission for the LDS church, visited Kirtland to see the temple. Stevenson wrote concerning this visit:

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 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.<sup>70</sup>

After Stevenson returned to Utah he wrote to Harris "and soon received a reply that the Spirit of God, for the first time prompted him to go to Utah."<sup>71</sup> Brigham Young requested Stevenson to get up a subscription and emigrate Martin. Two hundred dollars was raised and Stevenson eventually returned to Kirtland. Edward Stevenson mentioned that Martin had "a great desire to see Utah, and his children that live there"<sup>72</sup> and that Harris was "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."<sup>73</sup>

Harris and Stevenson left Kirtland on August 19, 1870. They arrived ten days later in Ogden, Utah. In early September Martin spoke in the old Tabernacle, told about "many early incidents of the early rise of the Church" and bore his testimony to the Book of Mormon.<sup>74</sup> His earlier experiences were of a different Mormonism than in his renewed faith. On September 17 Martin was rebaptized in the font of the Salt Lake Endowment House,<sup>75</sup> and he later spoke at the general conference in October.<sup>76</sup> On October 21 he

---

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.

<sup>70</sup> Stevenson to Editor, *Deseret News*, November 30, 1881, *Deseret Evening News* 15 (December 13, 1881); reprinted in "One of the Three Witnesses. Incidents in the Life of Martin Harris," *Millennial Star* 44 (January 30, 1882):78. Stevenson recorded in his journal, "fou[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, entry for February 9, 1870, typed copy, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, original in CHL).

<sup>71</sup> Stevenson to Editor, *Deseret News*, November 30, 1881, *Deseret Evening News* 15 (December 13, 1881); reprinted in "One of the Three Witnesses. Incidents in the Life of Martin Harris," *Millennial Star* 44 (January 30, 1882):79.

<sup>72</sup> Letter of Edward Stevenson, August 10, 1870 in *Deseret Evening News* 3 (August 19, 1870):3.

<sup>73</sup> Edward Stevenson to George A. Smith, August 21, 1870 in *Deseret Evening News* 3 (August 27, 1870):3.

<sup>74</sup> Joseph F. Smith Journal, entry for September 4, 1870, CHL.

<sup>75</sup> Church Historian's Office Journal, under the date of September 28, 1870, Vol. 31:132-33, CHL.

received his own endowment in the Endowment House.

Martin Harris spent the remaining four and a half years of his life in Cache Valley bearing his Book of Mormon testimony. He died in Clarkston on July 10, 1875 at the age of ninety-two.

Martin Harris followed and was associated with a number of churches throughout his life. He always maintained a belief in the organizations he joined. It appears that Harris was unstable in his religious ideals. He was influenced by Warren Parrish, William E. McLellin and others. Harris accepted a number of prophetic leaders after the death of Joseph Smith and like many other spiritual gypsies he wanted a place where he would be important. Martin followed or believed in Joseph Smith Jr., James J. Strang, David Whitmer, Gladden Bishop and William Smith as prophets, seers and revelators. This is a brief overview of our understanding of Martin Harris in the Mormon Movement. In all of these associations Martin Harris never denied any of his experiences. Thank you.

---

<sup>76</sup> Joseph F. Smith Journal, entry for October 9, 1870, CHL.