Joseph Smith's Interest in the Ancient Americas

5

Joseph Smith and Native American Artifacts

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Material culture plays a fundamental role in the production narrative (or "coming forth") of the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith did not claim to produce it through purely spiritual or revelatory means; rather, he asserted that he was divinely guided to physical objects that were to be used in the translation process. In his published testimony, Joseph declared that on the night of September 21, 1823, an angel named Moroni appeared before him to give instructions concerning an ancient record that lay concealed. The angel explained that the record was presently in a stone box buried in the side of a hill near the Smith home in New York. Joseph wrote,

> [The angel] said there was a book deposited written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent and the

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> source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fullness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it as delivered by the Saviour to the ancient inhabitants. Also that there were two stones in silver bows and these put into a breast plate ~~which~~ constituted what is called the Urim & Thummin deposited with the plates, and that was what constituted seers in ancient or former times and that God <had> prepared them for the purpose of translating the book.[1]

The contents of the stone box were instrumental in the production of the Book of Mormon. These contents consisted of the plates and the Urim and Thummim through which they were to be translated (comprising the stones and the breastplate into which they were set). However, other purportedly ancient objects also played a crucial role in the coming forth narrative of the Book of Mormon. In June 1829, Joseph Smith declared he had received a revelation from the Lord containing words of instruction for the three men who were hoping to become eyewitnesses of the gold plates, which indicated they would be permitted to see the other objects as well: "Behold, I say unto you, that you must rely upon my word, which if you do with full purpose of heart, you shall have a view of the plates, and also of the breastplate, the sword of Laban, the Urim and Thummim, which were given to the brother of Jared upon the mount, when he talked with the Lord face to face, and the miraculous directors which were given to Lehi while in the wilderness, on the borders of the Red Sea" (D&C 17:1). The "miraculous directors" (also known as the Liahona) and the sword of Laban served no functional purpose to either Joseph or the witnesses other than to lend credence to the claims of historicity for the Book of Mormon.

Although Joseph claimed to have received these objects through supernatural guidance, he likewise attributed theological significance to relics that were discovered in more mundane ways. He left precious few first-person accounts of his encounters with such objects, so we are often limited to second- or third-hand accounts

found in newspaper articles, journals, letters, and recollections of those who claim to have been present with Joseph during such discoveries. This paper will review accounts in which Joseph or his close associates became aware of or interacted with and subsequently commented on Native American artifacts (regardless of whether the relics proved to be genuine or fake). The aim is to understand the ways in which he and others used such objects to bolster the truth claims of the very scriptures that Joseph had purportedly translated.

As the Book of Mormon was being prepared for publication, one of the primary concerns of the men who were to sign their names as witnesses to the plates was that the claims of advanced civilizations described in the book would prove too far-fetched for people to believe. By their own admission, it was not thought to be plausible based on what was commonly believed about Native Americans at the time. David Whitmer recalled, "When we [the Witnesses] were first told to publish our statement, we felt sure the people would not believe it, for the Book told of a people who were refined and dwelt in large cities; but the Lord told us that He would make it known to the people, and people should discover the ruins of lost cities and abundant evidence of the truth of what is written in the Book."[2] In light of the Lord's reassurance that "abundant evidence" supporting the Book of Mormon would be forthcoming, it seems somewhat curious that they did not actively search for such ruins or evidence to bolster their truth claims. Though surrounded by burial mounds, or *tumuli*, virtually everywhere the Saints settled,[3] there was never an active program to excavate them.

In this regard, the Saints were very comfortably situated within the cultural context of their day. The discipline of North American archaeology was still in its infancy, an era we now refer to as the "Speculative period," which began in 1492 and lasted until 1840.[4] According to North American archaeologist Larry Zimmerman, "Epistemologically . . . [during the Speculative period, people] were

mostly prescientific. What they knew was based on theological models of explanation. Essentially, if something wasn't in the Bible, it had no real explanation."[5] The expectation, then, was that the Bible would explain the sometimes strange things that were being unearthed by antiquarians—and, conversely, that the artifacts and remains would validate the Biblical narrative. In this regard, Joseph Smith and his followers were very much products of their time. The primary difference, of course, was that for them the Book of Mormon supplanted the Bible in its ability to explain Native American artifacts.

Beyond merely explaining the artifacts, the very existence of Native Americans demanded explanation, and during the Speculative period the majority of such explanations were theologically based. In an idea that arose nearly from the time the New World was discovered and which endured for centuries, the Native Americans were believed to be descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. This theory was espoused by revered thinkers such as the Dominican friar Diego Duran in the sixteenth century, the influential American writer James Adair in the eighteenth century, and the Irish antiquarian Lord Kingsborough in the nineteenth century. Other, less popular theories that sought to explain the existence of Native Americans involved Atlantis, the land of Mu, the Norse countries, Scythians, and Asians, among others.[6] Archaeologists Gordon Willey and Jeremy Sabloff note, "The chroniclers and early forerunners of the discipline of archaeology indulged in speculations as to American Indian origins which were no less imaginative than those of the explorers and writers of belles-lettres. In fact, it is rampant speculation, whether of an enthusiastic or restrained, or of a logical or illogical variety, which acts as the thread linking all the trends and characterizes the entire period."[7] Historian Stephen Conn similarly notes, "For Christian believers in the antebellum period, the origin of the Indians was an intellectual square peg, and writers worked with great if tortured vigor to jam it into the round hole of biblical and classical history."[8]As an

illustrative example, the US superintendent of Indian Trade from 1816 to 1822, Thomas Loraine McKenney, wrote in his memoir concerning the origins of Native Americans, "There is, however, but one source whence information can be derived on this subject—and that is the Bible."[9]

By the end of Joseph Smith's life, American archaeology was just beginning to transition into the Classificatory-Descriptive period (1840–1914), which marked the first attempts to systematically document indigenous artifacts and architecture and move away from theologically based explanations for Native Americans and their material culture.[10] The academic discipline of archaeology did not emerge as a vocation until well after 1840,[11] and it was not until 1866 that the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology was established at Harvard, the first museum in the country to be devoted entirely to anthropology.[12]

Zelph

On June 2, 1834, Joseph Smith led members of the Zion's Camp march across the Illinois River at Phillips Ferry.[13] Less than one mile south of where they crossed stood a very large mound, and the next day, June 3, several members of the camp went to explore the area and to do some digging. Unfortunately, due to discrepancies in the six primary accounts of the day's activities, it is impossible to ascertain what Joseph actually said as the events unfolded. In essence, during the course of their excavation they found some skeletal remains one to two feet beneath the surface with an arrowhead embedded in or near the ribs, and Joseph proclaimed that the remains belonged to a righteous Lamanite warrior or prophet named Zelph, who was killed in battle while serving under the great king (or warrior or prophet) Onandagus. Heber C. Kimball's autobiography adds a curious detail not found in any of the other accounts. He claims that on the top of the mound were "three altars . . . having been erected one above the

other, according to the ancient order," but the lateness of the recollection (around 1843) may have affected his memory of the events,[14] which he may have conflated with some ruins found at Spring Hill in 1838 during the Missouri expeditions (discussed below).

The stone arrowhead found among the ribs was supposedly taken as a keepsake, but there are conflicting accounts as to who retained possession of it. Sources from the mid-1840s variously attribute initial possession of it to Elder Burr Riggs[15] or Brigham Young.[16] An 1850 account notes that Emma Woodruff, the wife of Wilford Woodruff, was then currently in possession of it. In 1893, James E. Talmage recorded that Wilford Woodruff showed him the arrowhead and claimed it had come into his possession through of one of Brigham Young's daughters, Zina Young Card. Finally, in a 1909 biography of Wilford Woodruff compiled from his journals, Matthias Cowley claimed, "The arrowhead referred to is now in the possession of President Joseph F. Smith in Salt Lake City, Utah."[17]

There is a projectile point located in the LDS Church archives that is believed by some to be the very point that was found in the ribs of the skeleton. However, Donald T. Schmidt, the former archivist for the Church, stated, "There are no indications . . . that this is the same arrowhead spoken of by Wilford Woodruff."[18] It should be noted that the arrowhead in the Church archives "is likely either a modern reproduction or a western Great Basin aboriginal point from the Salt Lake City area;" morphologically, it seems to be an Elko Corner-Notched variety.[19] The point was apparently either "miscataloged or acquired at some point to fill a void in the Joseph Smith collection in Salt Lake City."[20]

There are no firsthand accounts from Joseph himself about Zelph, but in a letter to his wife Emma dated June 4, 1834, he gave a general account of what they encountered on their excursion: "The whole of our journey, in the midst of so large a company of social honest and sincere men, wandering over the plains of the Nephites,

recounting occasionaly the history of the Book of Mormon, roving over the mounds of that once beloved people of the Lord, picking up their skulls & their bones, as a proof of its divine authenticity, and gazing upon a country the fertility, the splendor and the goodness so indescribable, all serves to pass away time unnoticed."[21] Although he makes no mention of Zelph, Joseph delights in the physical remains and terrain that provide "proof of [the Book of Mormon's] divine authenticity." Notably, the names Zelph and Onandagus never appear in the Book of Mormon and the primary source material from the Zion's Camp members differ as to the nature of the battle in which Zelph was killed.[22] In other words, the story Joseph reportedly told was based on characters and perhaps events that are not actually described in the Book of Mormon.[23]

The Ruins at Adam-Ondi-Ahman

In May and June of 1838, Joseph Smith led a number of expeditions up to Daviess County, Missouri, to survey potential settlement locations for the Saints.[24] They encountered several Native American ruins in the course of these expeditions. On May 19, 1838, George W. Robinson, who was serving as general Church recorder and clerk for the First Presidency at the time, recorded in Joseph Smith's journal, "We struck our tents and marched crossed Grand river at the mouth of Honey Creek at a place called Nelsons ferry . . . We next kept up the river, mostly in the timber, for ten miles, untill we came to Col. Lyman Wight's who lives at the foot of Tower Hill, a name appropriated by Pres smith in consequence of the remains of an old Nephitish Alter an Tower, where we camped for the sabath." The account then indicates they traveled about a half mile up the river and came to a place they called Spring Hill, but Joseph claimed that he had learned by revelation that the place was named Adam-ondi-Ahman, because "it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of days shall sit as spoken of by Daniel the Prophet."[25]

Three days later (May 22) they came across another set of ruins. According to Robinson, he and Joseph came across "some ancient antiquities about one mile west of the camp, which consisted of stone mounds apparently low set in square piles, though somewhat decayed and obliterated by the almost continual rains. Undoubtedly these were made to seclude some valuable treasures deposited by the aborigines of this land." [26] The use of the word *undoubtedly* in this account seems to indicate that this was to be understood as speculation rather than Joseph claiming he had received the information through revelatory means. Although Robinson mentions that the mounds were intended to "seclude some valuable treasures," there is no indication that they dedicated any time attempting to dig for them.[27] This account is somewhat anomalous in that the "aborigines of this land" are not explicitly linked to scriptural peoples in any way, although the reference to secluded treasures may have been an allusion to Book of Mormon passages that refer to the fate of treasures that are hidden up as well as those who hide them (see Helaman 13:19–20, 35). That the ruins are in the same vicinity as those explicitly described as being "Nephitish"[28] may suggest that the connection to the Book of Mormon is implicit.

Times and Seasons Editorials

The *Times and Seasons* was a Latter-day Saint–produced newspaper published in Nauvoo, Illinois, between November 1839 and February 1846, geared toward publishing "all general information respecting the Church."[29] It covered a broad range of topics, from local matters such as letters from missionaries and obituaries to world news and politics. News concerning discoveries relating to the antiquities of the Americas was eagerly shared and discussed. Two important books that received a great deal of attention in its pages were Josiah Priest's *American Antiquities*[30] (a work focused on North American archaeological discoveries) and *Incidents of Travel*

in Central America and Yucatan, written by famed travel writer John Lloyd Stephens and lushly illustrated by his traveling companion and gifted artist Frederick Catherwood. Each book provided glimpses of complex ancient societies that had inhabited the Americas that were virtually unknown to the general public at the time, and the editors of the *Times and Seasons* explicitly cited such works to bolster the claims of historicity for the Book of Mormon. [31]

For example, on April 3, 1841, Charles Anthon penned a letter to Reverend Dr. Coit in New York giving his version of the events concerning Martin Harris and the characters that were copied from the gold plates that were brought to him for authentication purposes. Anthon admittedly could not recall the name of his visitor and referred to him somewhat derisively as a "countryman." He went so far as to suggest that perhaps it was Joseph Smith himself in disguise.[32] The September 15, 1841, issue of the *Times and Seasons* published a letter sent by Charles W. Wandell (dated July 27, 1841, from New Rochelle, New York) that sought to turn Anthon's criticism onto its head and attempted to demonstrate that Anthon's own words served to prove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Wandell notes that Anthon's description of the characters presented to him closely match the description of writings found in *American Antiquities*, which was not published until after the Book of Mormon was published.[33]

Josiah Priest's *American Antiquities* received more attention in the May 2, 1842, issue of the *Times and Seasons* in an article titled "A Catacomb of Mummies Found in Kentucky," which is a direct response to a section by that same name found in Priest's book.[34] Priest summarized an account by Thomas Ashe (called only "Mr. Ash" by both Josiah Priest and Joseph Smith) published in London in 1808 wherein he recounted finding a catacomb near Lexington, Kentucky. Mr. Ashe estimated the catacomb could have contained upwards of two thousand mummies, though the majority of them had been intentionally trampled into dust and burned by the

"profane and violating hands" of white men bent on taking revenge on the Indians.[35] Priest quotes Mr. Ashe's lamentation:[36] "How these bodies were embalmed, how long preserved, by what nations, and from what people descended, no opinion can be formed, nor any calculation made, but what must result from speculative fancy and wild conjecture. For my part, I am lost in the deepest ignorance. My reading affords me no knowledge, my travels no light. I have neither read nor known of any of the North American Indians who formed catacombs for their dead, or who were acquainted with the art of preservation by embalming." Priest continued to cite Ashe, who claims that the Egyptians had four methods of embalming, and suggested, "I cannot think it presumptuous to conceive that the American mummies were preserved after that very manner, or at least with a mode of *equal* virtue and effect."[37] The *Times and Seasons* article then proudly declares: "Had Mr. Ash in his researches consulted the Book of Mormon his problem would have been solved, and he would have found no difficulty in accounting for the mummies being found in the above mentioned case. . . . This art was no doubt transmitted from Jerusalem to this continent, by the before mentioned emigrants, which accounts for the finding of the mummies, and at the same time is another strong evidence of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.—Ed."[38]

The following month, the *Times and Seasons* cited yet more from Priest, but also quoted from Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews*, concerning some pieces of old parchment that had been discovered in the summer of 1815 in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, that appeared to have writing on them. The parchment pieces were said to have been sent by their discoverer, Joseph Merrick, Esq., "a highly respectable character," to Cambridge, where they were examined, and discovered to have been "written in Hebrew with a pen, in plain and intelligible writing."[39] The article continued with an account of one "Dr. West of Stockbridge," who "relates that an old Indian informed him,

that his fathers in this country had not long since, been in the possession of a book, which they had for a long time, carried with them, but having lost the knowledge of reading it, they buried it with an Indian chief."[40] For obvious reasons this account resonated with the Saints; it spoke of antiquated records, supposedly written in Hebrew, which were buried in the earth by a people who had lost their knowledge. As to the actual origin of the parchment, one of the first scholars to examine it was the Reverend William Allen, president of Bowdoin College (and former minister of the First Congregational Church in Pittsfield). He noted in a letter dated March 30, 1821, that the Joseph Merrick farm, where the parchment was discovered, had employed German and British prisoners during the War of 1812, and it was likely dropped by "a concealed Jew" among the prisoners as they worked his land. Allen opined that the general lack of deterioration of the phylactery and its contents indicated that they were relatively recent rather than ancient productions.[41]

The July 15, 1842, issue of the *Times and Seasons* reproduced another set of lengthy excerpts from *American Antiquities* focusing on ancient technologies such as "forts, tumuli, roads, wells, mounds, walls," and idols made of clay and stone, as well as metalworking in iron, copper, brass, and gold. It concludes the series of excerpts with Priest's assertion that "weapons of brass have been found in many parts of America, as in the Canadas, Florida, &c., with curiously sculptured stones, all of which go to prove that this country was once peopled with civilized, industrious nations,—now traversed the greater part by savage hunters."[42] The article then shifts from excerpted text to editorial commentary: "The Book of Mormon speaks of ores, swords, cities, armies, &c., and we extract the following." Several passages from the Book of Mormon that specifically mention each of those items are then quoted. After presenting the evidence from the Book of Mormon, the editors conclude with this telling summary:

> If men, in their researches into the history of this country, in noticing the mounds, fortifications, statues, architecture, implements of war, of husbandry, and ornaments of silver, brass, &c.—were to examine the Book of Mormon, their conjectures would be removed, and their opinions altered; uncertainty and doubt would be changed into certainty and facts; and they would find that those things that they are anxiously prying into were matters of history, unfolded in that book. They would find their conjectures were more than realized—that a great and a mighty people had inhabited this continent—that the arts sciences and religion, had prevailed to a very great extent, and that there was as great and mighty cities on this continent as on the continent of Asia. Babylon, Ninevah, nor any of the ruins of the Levant could boast of more perfect sculpture, better architectural designs, and more imperishable ruins, than what are found on this continent. Stephens and Catherwood's researches in Central America abundantly testify of this thing. The stupendous ruins, the elegant sculpture, and the magnificence of the ruins of Guatamala [*sic*], and other cities, corroborate this statement, and show that a great and mighty people—men of great minds, clear intellect, bright genius, and comprehensive designs inhabited this continent. Their ruins speak of their greatness; the Book of Mormen [*sic*] unfolds their history.—ED[43]

Notably, debates concerning the specific geographic locations for the Book of Mormon are apparently of little concern to anyone at this point. By citing Priest, Stephens, and Catherwood within the same editorial, this article shows there is no conflict in using both North American evidence and Mesoamerican evidence in support of the historicity of the Book of Mormon. In September through October 1842, a flurry of articles appeared in the *Times and Seasons* that cited and commented extensively on Stephens and Catherwood's *Incidents of Travel in Central America and Yucatan*, the first broadly available book that revealed the magnificent art and architecture of the ancient Maya to a general American audience (see Roper, this volume). Joseph Smith never showed any interest in creating a geographic

model for the Book of Mormon; any and all artifacts from virtually anywhere in the Americas were treated equally as evidence for the book's divine authenticity.

The Kinderhook Plates

The following year, in April 1843, a group of men conspired to create a half dozen small bell-shaped metal plates with "inscriptions" etched with acid and chemically treated to make them appear ancient. The plates were created by W. P. Harris, Wilbur Fugate, Bridge Whitton, Robert Wiley, and other accomplices. The plates were placed atop a skeleton in a burial mound in Kinderhook, Illinois, and the men invited several others who were unaware of the hoax to witness their discovery. One of the witnesses was a Mormon. The forgers appear to have been attempting to lay a "translation trap" for Joseph "by way of a joke,"[44] as Wilbur Fugate claimed, but Joseph did not dedicate much time to them. Fugate claimed, "We understood Jo Smith said [the plates] would make a book of 1200 pages but he would not agree to translate them until they were sent to the Antiquarian society at Philadelphia, France, and England."[45]

Although there are minor discrepancies in the accounts surrounding the discovery of these plates and Joseph's subsequent involvement with them, it does seem clear that he spent a brief amount of time with them and made some attempt to "read" them. The May 1, 1843, issue of *Times and Seasons* reported that "Mr. Smith has had those plates, what his opinion concerning them is we have not yet ascertained."[46] Significantly, unlike Joseph's purported translations of the Book of Mormon, the Bible, and the Egyptian papyri, there is never any indication that a scribe was hired, there is no record of any translation session, nor is there any discussion of plans to publish or distribute the translations.[47] As LDS scholar Stanley B. Kimball notes, "Significantly, there is no evidence that the Prophet Joseph Smith ever took up the matter with the Lord, as he did when working with the

One of the Kinderhook Plates, a forgery made to be a "translation trap" for Joseph Smith. Photo courtesy of the Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham."[48] This may suggest that Joseph was either skeptical about the authenticity of the Kinderhook plates or he simply did not have the time to deal with them, but regardless of the reason, he did not make their translation a priority.

Evidence suggests that Joseph may have intended to "decipher" the Kinderhook plates using somewhat more conventional methods compared to his "translation" of the Book of Mormon. With the gold plates, he seems to have worked primarily using supposedly revelatory instruments (either a "seer stone" or the "Urim and Thummim," depending on the account) by "the gift and power of God."[49] In contrast, in relation to the Kinderhook plates, one non-LDS witness stated that "the plates are evidently brass, and are covered on both sides with hieroglyphics. They were brought up and shown to Joseph Smith. He compared, in my presence, with his Egyptian Alphabet, . . . and they are evidently the same characters. He therefore will be able to decipher them."[50] Don Bradley has argued that the Egyptian Alphabet mentioned above refers to what is known as the *Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language*,[51] and a comparison of its contents reveals that by coincidence a boat-shaped character contained therein is virtually identical to one of the most prominent etchings on the Kinderhook plates.[52] The translation given on the *Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language* for this boat-shaped character (named *ho-ee-upah*) is "Honor by birth, kingly power by the line of Pharaoh, possession by birth, one who reigns upon his throne universally—possessor of heaven and earth, and of the blessings of the earth."[53] This closely matches William Clayton's report that the Kinderhook plates evidently "contain the history of the person with whom they were found and he was a descendant of Ham through the loins of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the ruler of heaven and earth."[54] Parley Pratt's account seems to both validate and add to Clayton's. Pratt noted that the plates were "small and filled with engravings in Egyptian language and *contain the genealogy of one of the ancient Jaredites* back to Ham the son of Noah."[55] Pratt's addition is significant, because it explicitly connected those supposed artifacts to the Book of Mormon, as had come to be expected of all Native American artifacts.

Conclusion

Although the Saints were surrounded by Native American material culture nearly everywhere they settled, there are only a handful of events that indicate that Joseph Smith was directly interacting with or commenting on them. Terryl Givens suggests that "Joseph and his fellow leaders actually did all they could to strengthen the Book of Mormon's position as a Rosetta stone to vanished American civilizations, as if both ancient history and modern religion would benefit by the connection."[56] However, there is little evidence that Joseph actively sought out relics to bolster his truth claims after the Book of Mormon was published, but rather he only appears to have commented on such items when they were brought to his attention by others. Yet when Native American artifacts were brought to his attention, Joseph would virtually always attempt to sacralize them by placing them within the context of scriptural peoples or places—generally, the very scriptures he claimed to bring to light. The artifacts and the scriptures had a symbiotic relationship in his mind; the scriptures provided the history of the objects and the objects proved the history of the scriptures.

Notes

1. Karen Lynn Davidson, David J. Whittaker, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Histories, Volume 1: 1832–1834*, vol. 1 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2012), 222.
2. Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness* (Orem, UT: Grandin Book, 1991), 96.
3. Samuel Morris Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 98–101.
4. Gordon R. Willey and Jeremy A. Sabloff, *A History of American Archaeology* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), 19–27.

5. Larry J. Zimmerman, "Archeology," in *A Companion to the Anthropology of American Indians*, ed. Thomas Biolsi (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 527.
6. Willey and Sabloff, *History of American Archaeology*, 25.
7. Willey and Sabloff, *History of American Archaeology*, 22.
8. Steven Conn, *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 16.
9. Thomas Loraine McKenney and Felix Octavius Carr Darley, *Memoirs, Official and Personal: With Sketches of Travels Among the Northern and Southern Indians: Embracing a War Excursion, and Descriptions of Scenes Along the Western Borders*, vol. 1 (New York: Paine and Burgess, 1846), 14.
10. Jesse D. Jennings, *Prehistory of North America*, 3rd ed. (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1989), 4.
11. Willey and Sabloff, *History of American Archaeology*, 21.
12. Franklin Parker, "The Legacy of George Peabody: Special Bicentenary Issue." *Peabody Journal of Education* (1994): 24–25.
13. Marlene C. Kettley, Arnold K. Garr, and Craig K. Manscill, *Mormon Thoroughfare: A History of the Church in Illinois, 1830–1839* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2006), 50.
14. Kenneth W. Godfrey, "The Zelph Story," *BYU Studies* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 39.
15. *Manuscript History of the Church*, volume A-1, xxx.
16. *Times and Seasons*, February 4, 1845, 788; January 1, 1846, 1076.
17. Matthias F. Cowley, ed., Wilford Woodruff, Fourth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: History of this Life and Labors as Recorded in His Daily Journals (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909), 41.
18. Godfrey, "Zelph Story," 55n16.
19. Kenneth B. Farnsworth, "Lamanitish Arrows and Eagles with Lead Eyes: Tales of the First Recorded Explorations in an Illinois Valley Hopewell Mound," *Illinois Archaeology* 22, no. 1 (2010): 39.
20. Farnsworth, "Lamanitish Arrows," 39.
21. Joseph Smith Jr. to Emma Smith, June 4, 1834, in *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 345–46.

22. According to the different accounts, Zelph was killed during the final battle of annihilation between the Nephites and the Lamanites; during a different battle between the two peoples; or during a battle between two warring factions of the Lamanites. Kenneth W. Godrey, "What Is the Significance of Zelph in the Study of Book of Mormon Geography?," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8, no. 2 (1999): 70–79.
23. Modern archaeological excavations of the "Zelph Mound" (technically designated Naples-Russell Mound #8) describe it as "a ceremonial mortuary center for regional Hopewellian populations during early portions of the Middle Woodland period (ca. 50 BC–AD 100, uncalibrated)." See Farnsworth, "Lamanitish Arrows," 25–48. As it happens, then, the remains found by the members of Zion's Camp do date to purported Book of Mormon times.
24. Alex Baugh, "Joseph Smith in Northern Missouri, 1838," in *Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2010), 303.
25. Joseph Smith, journal, May 19, 1838, in Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen. eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 271; hereafter *JSP*, J1.
26. Joseph Smith, journal, May 22, 1838, in *JSP*, J1:273.
27. Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The Mature Joseph Smith and Treasure Searching," *BYU Studies* 24, no. 4 (Fall 1984): 507.
28. The wording of this account, along with differing recollections of many of Joseph Smith's contemporaries concerning the events of May and June 1838, has led to a great deal of confusion concerning the origin of this altar, the number of altars actually encountered, and even their alleged locations. For example, Heber C. Kimball wrote: "The Prophet Joseph called upon Brother Brigham, myself, and others, saying, 'Brethren, come, go along with me, and I will show you something.' He led us a short distance to a place where were the ruins of three altars built of stone, one above the other, and one standing a little back of the other, like unto the pulpits in the Kirtland Temple,

representing the order of three grades of Priesthood; 'There,' said Joseph, 'is the place where Adam offered up sacrifice after he was cast out of the garden.' The altar stood at the highest point of the bluff. I went and examined the place several times while I remained there." Orson Ferguson Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball: An Apostle, the Father and Founder of the British Mission* (Kimball family, 1888), 222. The "Nephitish altar" and the "Adamic altar" likely refer to the same set of ruins, although some have argued they refer to distinct locations. For example, Elder Alvin R. Dyer, *The Refiner's Fire* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1968), 166, 171–72, argued that there were two altars; an "altar of prayer," located near Lyman Wight's house on Tower Hill, and the other, an "altar of sacrifice," located approximately one mile away near the top of Spring Hill. Alex Baugh, however, notes that Dyer is mistaken and there is only one set of ruins (personal communication, June 2013).

29. *Times and Seasons*, November 1839, 16.

30. The complete name of Priest's book is *American Antiquities, and Discoveries in the West: Being an Exhibition of the Evidence That an Ancient Population of Partially Civilized Nations, Differing Entirely from those of the Present Indians, Peopled America, Many Centuries Before Its Discovery by Columbus and Inquiries into Their Origin, with a Copious Description of Many of Their Stupendous Works Now in Ruins, with Conjectures Concerning What May Have Become of Them* (Albany, NY: Hoffman and White, 1833).

31. Joseph Smith briefly served as the editor of *Times and Seasons* from March 15, 1842, through October 15, 1842. He was assisted by Wilford Woodruff and John Taylor in the printing office. There are debates—often heated—as to which editorials were penned by Joseph Smith and the degree to which he may have agreed with content written by others that was published during his tenure as editor. Stylometric analyses point to Joseph Smith's hand in editorials that are both signed as "Editor" as well as those which were left unsigned. Matthew Roper, Paul J. Fields, and Atul Nepal, "Wordprint Analysis and Joseph Smith's Role as Editor of the *Times and Seasons*," *Insights* 30, no. 6 (2010). As to whether or not he would consent to the publication of items he fundamentally disagreed with, the following episode may be illustrative: The February

15, 1842, issue, which prematurely listed Joseph Smith as editor (it was actually Ebenezer Robinson's final issue as editor), contained a rather risqué marriage announcement. The following week, the *Warsaw Signal* harangued Joseph for it in print in an attempt to publicly humiliate him. *Warsaw Signal*, February 23, 1842. The next week, Joseph assumed full responsibility as editor of the *Times and Seasons* (March 1, 1842). The following issue (March 15, 1842) contained a lengthy explanation and apology from Ebenezer Robinson, which made it clear that Joseph had neither seen nor approved of the marriage announcement and was in fact "very sorely mortified" upon seeing it in print. Though arguably qualitatively different, this episode may suggest that Joseph, once he became editor, was quick to distance himself from content he disagreed with. No such repudiations are ever made with regards to Priest's *American Antiquities* or Stephens and Catherwood's *Incidents of Travel*. To the contrary, they are repeatedly excerpted and praised in editorials during Joseph's tenure.

32. Charles Anthon to Rev. Coit, April 3, 1841, in *Gleanings by the Way*, ed. John A. Clark (Philadelphia: W. J. & J. K. Simon, 1842), 232–38.
33. Charles W. Wandell, letter to the editor, *Times and Seasons*, September 15, 1841, 545. The *Times and Seasons* editorials that cite Priest are coming from the fifth edition printed in 1838. The first edition of Priest's book was published in 1833, but it does not appear to have received much notice among the Saints prior to the 1838 edition, despite Priest's inclusion of disparaging comments about the Book of Mormon beginning in the second edition, printed in 1834.
34. "A Catacomb of Mummies Found in Kentucky," *Times and Seasons*, May 2, 1842, 781–82. Citing Priest, *American Antiquities, and Discoveries in the West*, 114–16.
35. Thomas Ashe, *Travels in America, Performed in 1806, For the Purpose of Exploring the Rivers Alleghany, Monongahela, Ohio, and Mississippi, and Ascertaining the Produce and Condition of their Banks and Vicinity* (London: William Sawyer & Co., 1808), 196.
36. Josiah Priest, *American Antiquities* (Albany, NY: Hoffman and White, 1833), 115–16, quoting Ashe, *Travels in America*, 98.

37. Italics appear in Priest but were not used by Ashe, who originally said, "I cannot think it presumptuous to conceive that the Indians were acquainted with it, or with a mode of equal virtue and effect." Priest, *American Antiquities*, 112; Ashe, *Travels in America*, 198.
38. "A Catacomb of Mummies Found in Kentucky," *Times and Seasons*, May 2, 1842, 781–82.
39. Ethan Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 2nd ed. (Poultney, VT: Smith and Shute, 1825), 164–65, quoted later in "From Priest's American Antiquities," *Times and Seasons*, June 1, 1842, 814.
40. "From Priest's American Antiquities," *Times and Seasons*, June 1, 1842, 814.
41. William N. Goetzmann, "The Case of the Missing Phylactery," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 95, no. 1 (1985): 69–79.
42. Priest, *American Antiquities*, 216, 224.
43. "American Antiquities," *Times and Seasons*, July 15, 1842, 859–60. The Book of Mormon had not yet been divided into chapters and verses, but using current versification here for convenience the following passages were quoted as evidence: 1 Nephi 18:25; 19:1; 2 Nephi 5:14–16; Ether 15:1–3, 12–16.
44. Brian M. Hauglid, "Did Joseph Smith Translate the Kinderhook Plates?," in *No Weapon Shall Prosper: New Light on Sensitive Issues*, ed. Robert L. Millet (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2011), 95.
45. Stanley B. Kimball, "Kinderhook Plates Brought to Joseph Smith Appear to Be a Nineteenth-Century Hoax," *Ensign*, August 1981, 72.
46. "Ancient Records," *Times and Seasons*, May 1, 1843, 186.
47. Brian M. Hauglid, "Did Joseph Smith Translate the Kinderhook Plates?," 95.
48. Stanley B. Kimball, "Kinderhook Plates," *Ensign*, August 1981, 74.
49. For more a detailed discussion of the Urim and Thummim and seer stone, see Michael Hubbard MacKay, Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, Grant Underwood, Robert J. Woodford, and William G. Hartley, eds. *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, vol. 1 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, Richard Lyman Bushman, and Matthew J. Grow (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2013), xxix–xxxii.

50. "Late and Interesting from the Mormon Empire on the Upper Mississippi," *New York Herald*, May 30, 1843.
51. The *Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language* is part of a larger corpus of documents known as the Kirtland Egyptian Papers. A great deal of controversy surrounds their creation, authorship, and purpose. See, for example, Hugh Nibley, "The Meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers," *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4 (Summer 1971): 350–99; H. Michael Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papers* (Cullman, AL: Printing Service, 1981); Brian M. Hauglid, *A Textual History of the Book of Abraham: Manuscripts and Editions* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2010); Samuel M. Brown, "The Translator and the Ghostwriter: Joseph Smith and W. W. Phelps," *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2008); Christopher C. Smith, "The Dependence of Abraham 1:1–3 on the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 29 (2009): 38–54.
52. Don Bradley, "'President Joseph Has Translated a Portion': Solving the Mystery of the Kinderhook Plates," paper presented at the annual FAIR Conference, Sandy, UT, August 5, 2011.
53. "Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language" [Kirtland, OH, ca. July–ca. December 1835], 4–5, Kirtland Egyptian Papers, Church History Library, Salt Lake City; original spelling preserved.
54. George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 100.
55. Brian M. Hauglid, "Come & Help Build the Temple & City: Parley P. and Orson Pratt's May 1843 Letter to John Van Cott," *Mormon Historical Studies* 12, no. 7 (Spring 2011): 97.
56. Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 95.