

## Chapter 24

# NEWSPAPER EDITING AND GHOSTWRITING

*W*. W. Phelps's second significant role in Nauvoo was superintending both printing and editing in the printing office as well as writing multiple pieces in nearly each issue of the church's three periodicals: the *Times and Seasons* (emphasizing history, church growth, and theology), *The Wasp* (a secular newspaper), and the *Nauvoo Neighbor* (the successor to *The Wasp*). Phelps served as de facto editor in the printing office during the latter part of Joseph Smith's lifetime and beyond.<sup>1</sup>

### THE *TIMES AND SEASONS* BECOMES A CHURCH OPERATION

The historical context is important here.<sup>2</sup> In 1839 Don Carlos Smith and Ebenezer Robinson, who both had worked on previous church publications, retrieved the press that had been buried in Far West and transported it to Nauvoo. In their own names, Smith and Robinson established a new periodical, the *Times and Seasons*. Soon Robert Thompson also aided in the production of the newspaper. When D. C. Smith and Thompson both died unexpectedly from pulmonary illnesses in August 1841, Ebenezer Robinson bought out completely the printing office along with the accompanying stereotype foundry and bookbinding business. He became the sole owner, proprietor, and editor. Since the *Times and Seasons* appeared to represent the whole church in its dual missions of proselytizing and building up Nauvoo, the First Presidency and the Twelve looked into purchasing Robinson's interests and putting the printing enterprises under church control. Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball began visiting the printing office in December 1841. Then in January 1842, Joseph Smith and leaders of the Twelve made their move to obtain the office, which became a matter of considerable chagrin to Robinson.<sup>3</sup>

Joseph Smith summoned Ebenezer Robinson to his office on January 28, 1842. Also present at the meeting were Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, William Clayton, and W. W. Phelps.<sup>4</sup> At this noteworthy meeting, Joseph Smith dictated the following revelation: “Verily thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant Joseph, go and say unto the Twelve, that it is my will to have them take in hand the editorial department of the *Times and Seasons*, according to that manifestation which shall be given unto them by the power of my Holy Spirit in the midst of their counsel, saith the Lord. Amen.”<sup>5</sup> Robinson was startled and disappointed at this development, but he complied. However, he demanded that the church buy out the foundry and bookbindery as well, to which Joseph Smith agreed. W. W. Phelps then directed Robinson, “Go home and make out your invoice.” Robinson returned with his invoice and later published a copy of it.<sup>6</sup>

Willard Richards recorded on February 3, 1842: “Elder Woodruff took the superintendence of the printing office, and Elder Taylor the editorial department of the *Times and Seasons*; and he commenced by taking an inventory of the establishment this day.” Then the next day Willard Richards confirmed that the church had purchased Robinson’s entire establishment for about seven thousand dollars, which was paid in installments over time.<sup>7</sup> In his memoir, Robinson provided the exact invoice for this transaction as well as his frustration with how the whole business was handled.<sup>8</sup> Subsequent church records from January 1844 reported that Phelps, Richards, and Bishop Newel K. Whitney indicated that by that time the value of the printing office and lot to be \$1500, the printing apparatus \$950, the binder \$112, the foundry \$270, with the total coming to \$2,832.<sup>9</sup> This sum was substantially less than the amount promised to Robinson.

## EDITING IN BEHALF OF JOSEPH SMITH

Apparently, Joseph Smith changed his mind about who should be the editor of *Times and Seasons*, because at the publication of the first issue after Robinson was bought out, on February 15, 1842, Joseph Smith was designated as the official editor and John Taylor as assistant editor. Perhaps the Twelve had asked Smith to be the editor. The Prophet used W. W. Phelps as his daily representative in effectively overseeing the editing and publishing of the paper. This arrangement remained the same for the next eight months.

The assertion that W. W. Phelps was the *de facto* editor at the printing office contrasts with previous historical understanding.<sup>10</sup> To reach this new conclusion, there must be evidence. Other potential editors must be excluded. Content in the newspapers must show evidence of Phelps’s influence.

Joseph Smith, the nominal editor, was exceptionally engaged in other activities from February to November 1842 that excluded him from hands-on operation at the printing office and the composition of doctrinal essays. Smith’s activities included supervising a land-developing and -selling business, entering into Masonry, establishing the Nauvoo Female Relief Society, administering the sacred endowment ceremonies for the first time, coping for months with the knotty John C. Bennett affair, presiding over the church and its priesthood quorums, promoting the baptism for the dead doctrine, dealing with the temporary falling away of Elder Orson Pratt, entering into bankruptcy, becoming mayor

and municipal judge of Nauvoo, commanding the Nauvoo Legion, losing his trusted clerk Willard Richards for a season to a mission to the East, coping with domestic concerns such as Emma's prolonged illness, supervising the building and financing of the temple, dealing forthrightly with Illinois electioneering, continuing his secretive participation in plural marriage by marrying as many as twelve women, corresponding with Illinois governor Thomas Carlin about Missouri extradition proceedings, and, in August through October, constantly hiding out from those who sought either to arrest him or to kidnap him. Joseph Smith scarcely had the chance even to visit the printing office, much less to provide editing.<sup>11</sup> Wilford Woodruff, who also helped direct the printing office, wrote in a letter: "I have never seen Joseph as full of business as of late he hardly gets time to sign his name."<sup>12</sup> Joseph Smith's journal during these months does not indicate his working on any writings whatsoever, and some articles in the *Times and Seasons* that carry his name or "ED" (for "Editor") as a byline were exceptionally lengthy. In contrast, his journals note the many times he gave a sermon, such as on Sundays in Nauvoo or in outlying Mormon settlements. The Prophet likely consulted often with Phelps about what should be included in the *Times and Seasons*. This could have easily occurred because Phelps lived nearby and also went almost every day into Smith's office in the red brick store or to Smith's residence. Furthermore, Phelps was often in council meetings with other leading brethren when doctrinal items were discussed. Thus, even though Joseph did not himself write doctrinal or informational pieces in the paper, the sentiments were for the most part reflective of his own beliefs. Absolutely certain is W. W. Phelps's desire to uplift Joseph Smith as God's prophet on earth and to increase Joseph's place in God's eternal plan. But this does not mean that Joseph wrote those editorials with "ED" attached. Based on contemporary evidence, Joseph Smith was not an efficient writer.<sup>13</sup> The literary style of his personal writings and recorded speeches does not match that of the newspaper editorials attributed to him.

John Taylor was an assistant editor and office manager of the church's printing operation at this time. He was assisted by fellow apostle Wilford Woodruff, but neither had previous printing experience.<sup>14</sup> Joseph Smith wanted the Twelve Apostles to have control over the *Times and Seasons*. Taylor had some experience with writing. He had authored a piece recounting the atrocities of Missourians against the Saints in 1838 in Carroll, Daviess, and Caldwell Counties.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Taylor had done some writing and editing en route to the British Mission and while he was serving in the Isle of Man, although his writings were in a narrow context.<sup>16</sup> He was a powerful speaker and missionary, but these roles do not necessarily translate into writing extensive editorials. Taylor's known writing to that point does not match the style of the 1842 editorials in the *Times and Seasons* attributed to Joseph Smith. Also, Taylor himself suffered severe illness during part of these eight months in 1842. Otherwise he was deeply involved in city council and apostolic business. Hence, he was frequently away from the printing office and not able to provide constant oversight. No evidence exists that Taylor wrote any pieces in the *Times and Seasons* at this time, whether they may have been in behalf of Joseph Smith or otherwise.

William Smith was a younger brother of Joseph Smith and a member of the Twelve Apostles. Up through early 1842, William had been engaged off and on in church leadership and missionary work in the eastern United States. He had been generally considered an unreliable apostle until Joseph designated him as editor of a new secular weekly newspaper, *The Wasp*, which began publication in April 1842.<sup>17</sup> William thus may have occasionally gone to the office that printed and published both papers. However, in his journal Wilford Woodruff, business manager of the printing office, did not mention William's presence at the printing office. Furthermore, several years later Woodruff wrote, "His name appears as the Editor of the *Wasp*, published in Nauvoo, Illinois, April, 1842, but a very small part of the labor was performed by him."<sup>18</sup> William was not renowned as an accomplished writer or scholar. By his own admission, he was a man of little education. Often he and Joseph had clashed over differences of opinion and temperament and rarely had much contact with each other. Significantly, after William Smith went to Springfield, the Illinois state capital, in late 1842, *The Wasp* continued its publication unabated without him and in precisely the same style and format as before.

Benjamin Winchester, a highly literate church elder and experienced printer, has also been suggested as a possible editor or contributor. Winchester was a devoted scriptorian, theologian, and writer.<sup>19</sup> In Philadelphia he founded and edited the *Gospel Reflector*, from which numerous articles were reprinted in the *Times and Seasons* from 1839 to 1842.<sup>20</sup> However, Winchester left Nauvoo in January 1842 after a brief residence and was not present in Nauvoo when the Prophet was the nominal editor. Nonetheless, he could have written some items in advance or sent by mail contributions to the printing office. As a writer, Winchester especially focused on these themes: proclaiming the restored gospel with all of its miraculous intricacies; the marvelous coming forth of the Book of Mormon, including external evidences of its authenticity; the origins of the spurious Spalding theory concerning the origin of the Book of Mormon; the history of the Jews; spiritualizing one's scripture reading; Christian history; and interpretations of Old Testament passages. Winchester's potential unattributed contributions to the *Times and Seasons* beginning in January 1842 were inserted and edited by W. W. Phelps. In the significant cases of the external evidences of the veracity of the Book of Mormon and the history of the Jews, Phelps likely edited Winchester and added his own conclusions.

Other men and apprentices worked at the printing office during Joseph Smith's eight-month editorship. We know the names of two of them: Gustavas Hills and Lyman O. Littlefield. Neither was close to Joseph Smith at this time nor possessed sufficient background to be theological editorial writers in behalf of Joseph Smith. Also, at this point Hills was caught up in his musical teaching career and was accused of illicit sexual activity as well.<sup>21</sup> Littlefield, only twenty-two years old at this juncture, contributed ideas and some poetry to the newspapers, but he was also often out of town from 1842 to 1845. Furthermore, he was even disfellowshipped for a period and not in harmony with the leadership. In Littlefield's extensive, often self-laudatory autobiography, he never claims to have written in behalf of Joseph Smith.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, it falls to W. W. Phelps as the main ghostwriter and editor for the Joseph Smith materials in 1842. Wilford Woodruff, who in 1842 was in a position to know this, stated in 1872 at Phelps's death that "[Phelps] Has been with Joseph a good dele & has written for him."<sup>23</sup> The articles in the *Times and Seasons* not attributed to others correspond closely to Phelps's style, rhetoric, paragraph length, exaggeration, punctuation, length, forcefulness, and use of foreign phrases as used in his earlier writings. Most of Phelps's pieces in Independence, Kirtland, and Far West were doctrinal in nature and reflected the teachings and revelations of Joseph Smith. He was accustomed to proclaiming latter-day doctrine in behalf of the Prophet. These articles in the *Times and Seasons* mirrored in many ways those that Phelps had written earlier.<sup>24</sup>

It is likely that Joseph Smith and Phelps jointly decided that Phelps's work in the *Times and Seasons* should *not* be attributed to him. Phelps's name never appeared in the "boilerplate" colophons at the beginning and end of each issue. At most, Phelps was listed as only a "junior editor," and that in editions of the *Times and Seasons* long after Joseph Smith's editorship. Phelps is acknowledged as the author of only some poetry in the 1842–1844 period. Joseph Smith desired that readers of the *Times and Seasons* understand that the contents of this official church publication came from the top echelons of the church. Phelps's reputation as a recent apostate could have detracted from the importance of the paper had his contributions carried a byline or been otherwise publicly recognized.

Since W. W. Phelps had such close contact with Joseph Smith on nearly a daily basis, the articles he contributed were surely influenced by Smith's revelations, thoughts, and beliefs. This system of writing in behalf of the Prophet is seen in the previous and contemporaneous journal or editorial entries in the name of Joseph Smith by Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer, Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, Warren Parrish, George Robinson, James Mulholland, Robert Thompson, Willard Richards, and William Clayton. All of these men along with Phelps were participants in Joseph Smith's liberal scribal culture.

W. W. Phelps may have ghostwritten more than twenty-five articles in the *Times and Seasons* in behalf of Joseph Smith during Smith's editorship. Phelps had more influence on the contents of the *Times and Seasons* than any other individual during these eight months in 1842.<sup>25</sup>

His ghostwriting began with Smith's first issue as "editor" on February 15, 1842. That issue carried a lengthy article on the past and future of the Jews, a subject that had captivated Phelps's previous interest in *The Evening and the Morning Star* and *The Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*. As would continually be the case with his contributions, Phelps did not append his name or initials to this article. Because it demonstrates his style, Phelps also likely ghostwrote the editor's [Smith's] statement about the future course of the paper:

As it regards ourselves we have very little to say, but shall leave it for the future to unfold; and for a discerning public to judge. The important events that are daily transpiring around us; the rapid advance of truth; the many communications that we are receiving, daily, from elders abroad; both in this country, in England, from the

continent of Europe, and other parts of the world; the convulsed state of the nations; the epistles and teachings of the Twelve; and the revelations which we are receiving from the most High, will no doubt furnish us with material to make this paper interesting to all who read it, and whilst we solicit the patronage, and support of our friends, we pray that the God of Israel may inspire our hearts with understanding and direct our pen in truth. ED.<sup>26</sup>

## THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM PUBLISHED IN THE *TIMES AND SEASONS*

The first issue of the *Times and Seasons* with Joseph Smith's editorial impact<sup>27</sup> was dated March 1, 1842. Printed therein was what is now Abraham 1:1–2:18. The second installment of the Book of Abraham appeared in the March 15 issue, and the remainder of the visuals from the papyri were featured in the May 16 issue. Notably, all three issues were printed somewhat later than the date on the paper owing to delays at the printing office.

A Book of Abraham historian has noted that “the historical record highlights two separate translation periods that produced the current Book of Abraham, one in 1835 (Abraham 1:1–2:18) and the other in 1842 (Abraham 2:19–5:21).”<sup>28</sup> Indeed, in the official history, Joseph Smith noted on March 2, 4, 8, and 9 that he was translating the Book of Abraham and otherwise preparing it for publication.<sup>29</sup>

Undoubtedly, W. W. Phelps had a hand in preparing the Book of Abraham text for publication. First, Phelps was the acting editor of the *Times and Seasons* and had the printing and editing experience to take the lead with production. Second, Phelps had been one of three main scribes to Joseph when the Prophet “translated” the Book of Abraham, and Phelps had compiled the Egyptian alphabet and grammar. (Two of the other three scribes, Oliver Cowdery and Warren Parrish, were out of the church and totally absent from Nauvoo in 1842. The third, Frederick G. Williams, was living in Quincy, Illinois, in ill health and was not involved at that time with Joseph Smith.) Third, the second phase of translation in 1842 “incorporated Hebrew words to elucidate some of its ‘Egyptian’ terminology, particularly in regard to Abrahamic astronomy,”<sup>30</sup> thus suggesting a possible Phelps contribution. Fourth, Phelps had retained in his possession additional documents pertaining to the Book of Abraham translation while he was away from the church.<sup>31</sup> Because of his enthusiasm for the doctrines found in Abraham’s text, Phelps could have urged Joseph Smith finally to publish it. Phelps may have helped edit the text and even compose some of its contents. Phelps may have perceived it to be his revealed duty to help bring forth the Book of Abraham as part of his stewardship over the revelations to Joseph Smith as outlined in D&C 70:1–4.

## PHELPS’S ACHIEVEMENTS WITH THE *TIMES AND SEASONS*

During ensuing months under Joseph Smith’s editorship, up through October 15, 1842, Phelps continued to post articles derived from exchange papers or books. He also wrote



many pieces and even editorials in behalf of Joseph Smith. The Prophet undoubtedly provided oversight to the paper, however, when Phelps encountered him nearly daily. Phelps visited Smith's office or his home regularly to work on the official history and to consult with the Prophet.

William W. Phelps contributed to the *Times and Seasons* during the eight months of Joseph Smith's editorship in the following general ways:

1. Inserting foreign and domestic articles about the contemporary condition of Jews and their desire to gather to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Phelps himself contributed considerable commentary on the Jews. He demonstrated how much he knew about British and European history in these commentaries.<sup>32</sup>
2. Inserting articles about calamities such as earthquakes, threatening meteors, fires, whirlwinds, riots, baffling diseases, and further outbreaks of cholera, which he designated "signs of the times."<sup>33</sup> Phelps had included similar articles in his previous editing of *The Evening and the Morning Star* and the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*.
3. Inserting articles about contemporary Mormonism. Phelps occasionally commented on the truths or untruths disseminated by these articles.<sup>34</sup>
4. Writing editorials about contemporary events, particularly about the persecution of the Saints and the problems associated with the apostasy of John C. Bennett.<sup>35</sup>
5. Writing articles about the progress on the temple and promoting contributions to its building and the one-day-in-ten ("tithing") labor on the temple by males in the Nauvoo community.<sup>36</sup> Phelps also promoted the need to contribute money to the construction of the Nauvoo House.<sup>37</sup>
6. Writing an article about the development and growth of the "Female Relief Society."<sup>38</sup>
7. Writing doctrinal treatises in Joseph Smith's behalf, sometimes even with the "ED" imprimatur from Joseph Smith.<sup>39</sup>
8. Inserting anonymously his own letters to the editor (Joseph Smith) indicating his loyalty to the Prophet and principles of Mormonism.<sup>40</sup>
9. Inserting articles about the present condition of Indian tribes in the United States.<sup>41</sup> Phelps had done this often in previous Latter-day Saint publications.
10. Inserting articles about missionary successes and growth of the church in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and continental Europe.<sup>42</sup>
11. Inserting two September 1842 letters from Joseph Smith (who was in hiding) about baptism for the dead and redeeming the dead. (Conceivably, these letters could have been added to or edited by Phelps, given their stylistics and the use of the Latin phrases *propria persona* [D&C 128:8] and *summum bonnum* [D&C 128:11].) These two letters were later canonized and are now found in Doctrine and Covenants 127 and 128.<sup>43</sup>
12. Inserting articles about recent discoveries by John L. Stephens (Stephens published a book in 1841 with the title *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*)<sup>44</sup> about amazing archaeological discoveries. Phelps also

inserted other articles about ancient antiquities in the Americas. Phelps repeatedly indicated that these discoveries helped prove the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.<sup>45</sup> Joseph certainly agreed with Phelps's conclusions.

13. Inserting poetry of his own composition, twice with his name attached and twice with no attribution.<sup>46</sup>
14. Traveling by wagon to St. Louis in December 1842 to obtain more paper for the printing office.<sup>47</sup>

The historical importance of the *Times and Seasons* to Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo and throughout the church in the 1840s is widely appreciated. A historian of the Nauvoo period indicated that this prominent periodical “reflected a continuing Latter-day Saint interest in news of earthquakes, wars, plagues, and other signs of the time—a steady reminder of the church’s millennialist orientation. Doctrinal articles educated the Saints in spiritual matters.” The *Times and Seasons* “offered continuity for church members and a sense of belonging” and “helped define the Nauvoo-era Saints as a people of faith and destiny.”<sup>48</sup>

W. W. Phelps may not have been acknowledged until the early twenty-first century as the primary contributor to the content of the *Times and Seasons* during Joseph Smith’s editorship. However, he was indeed the primary contributor and therefore had profound influence on the Mormon belief system.

## JOSEPH’S GHOSTWRITER FOR DOCTRINAL TREATISES

Phelps’s greatest contributions likely were doctrinal articles that appeared in the newspaper, most of them in Smith’s name (i.e., “Ed” or “ED”). The first of these was “Try the Spirits,” which has been widely used and quoted in Latter-day Saint doctrinal texts to illustrate the Prophet’s teachings on how a person or group of persons could differentiate between true revelation and false prophesying. Church historian Joseph Fielding Smith placed this piece (minus a few paragraphs and with editing) along with many others ghostwritten by Phelps in his 1938 classic and oft-quoted compendium *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, thus identifying these articles forever as coming from the Prophet of this dispensation.<sup>49</sup> “Try the Spirits” occupied nearly five pages of dense text in the *Times and Seasons*.<sup>50</sup> It was placed into the official history of the church with some editing of punctuation, printing mistakes, and paragraph structure.<sup>51</sup>

Phelps likely continued to be Smith’s ghostwriter for the following significant doctrinal essays that appeared in the *Times and Seasons* with the “ED” byline during Joseph Smith’s editorship and that also appear as part of the quasi-canonical *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*: “Baptism for the Dead,”<sup>52</sup> “Gift of the Holy Ghost,”<sup>53</sup> “The Government of God,”<sup>54</sup> and “Baptism.”<sup>55</sup> Benjamin Winchester could have contributed portions of some of these essays.<sup>56</sup>



## PHELPS'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO NAUVOO NEWSPAPERS, 1842–1844

Nauvoo's secular newspaper, *The Wasp*, came into existence in April 1842 with William Smith as the nominal editor. Evidence shows, however, that Phelps wrote much more for *The Wasp* than did Smith (see chapter 25 for discussion of political editorials in *The Wasp*). In 1843 the *Nauvoo Neighbor* replaced *The Wasp*, with Phelps once again acting as editor and John Taylor as nominal editor.

After Joseph Smith officially handed the editorship of the *Times and Seasons* to John Taylor in October 1842, W. W. Phelps continued to work tirelessly in the printing office, where he went nearly daily after first checking in with Joseph Smith or Willard Richards in the president's office.<sup>57</sup> The printing office was only a few blocks to the west on Water Street.<sup>58</sup> The Phelpses also lived on the north side of Water Street for their first two years in Nauvoo.<sup>59</sup> As an example of interaction between Joseph Smith and Phelps in the printing ventures, the Prophet accompanied Phelps on February 13, 1843, to the printing office.<sup>60</sup> Phelps's writings, though not published in his own name, continued to be many. He still contributed to the *Times and Seasons* as an ongoing ghostwriter in behalf of the Prophet or the church in general. In that newspaper, he published serially an official history of Joseph Smith that Richards and he were preparing and editing. Phelps continued as before to insert noteworthy contemporary articles from domestic and foreign newspapers. On a regular basis he wrote pieces for companion newspapers, first *The Wasp* and then the *Nauvoo Neighbor*.

Knowing that he now had Joseph Smith's trust, W. W. Phelps robustly provided both prose and poetry in the Nauvoo newspapers. His writing juices flowed freely. He was absolutely prolific with his writing. Phelps did not waver in expounding doctrinal principles associated with revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Phelps also operated under the watchcare of the Twelve Apostles, especially John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff. Brigham Young, the dynamic and effective president of the Twelve, often posted pieces from the quorum in the *Times and Seasons*.

Perhaps the most significant contribution made by W. W. Phelps to the lore of Joseph Smith's doctrinal teachings are two poems, "Go with Me" and "The Answer." The latter poem has "A Vision" as part of its title, as well an attribution to Joseph Smith.<sup>61</sup> Phelps was from the first a complete admirer and promoter of "The Vision," now found in Doctrine and Covenants 76, recorded February 16, 1832. These two poems are a direct takeoff from that multipage revelation and, like their model, take up several pages of their own. Particularly since the 1970s, "The Answer" (allegedly by Joseph Smith) has become well known among Latter-day Saints. Most of its fans hail the poem as evidence of Smith's prowess as a poet, even comparing it to the likes of the psalmist David and the poet-prophet Isaiah.<sup>62</sup>

Scholars of Mormon history, however, generally recognize W. W. Phelps as the actual author of the rejoinder poem attributed to Joseph Smith. For example, historian and musician Michael Hicks makes this assertion:





But to assess the poem's authenticity, we must consider its cultural context—the literary habits of early Mormons, their methods for producing poems, and this poem's specific background. We must also scrutinize the structure and diction of the poem. Does it ring true to Joseph's already established voice? Finally, we must sift through whatever manuscript sources might answer a fundamental question: did Joseph have both the occasion and the ability to write the poem? As it turns out, virtually all of the evidence in these matters weighs against Joseph Smith as the poem's author and points instead to W. W. Phelps.<sup>63</sup>

Phelps even promoted the value of sacred poetry—in five paragraphs that introduced the two poems in the *Times and Seasons*. Among other self-serving statements, he likely wrote this:

The following very curious poetic composition, is at once both novel and interesting; for while the common landmarks of modern poetry are entirely disregarded; there is something so dignified and exalted conveyed in the ideas of this production, that it cannot fail to strike the attention of every superficial observer.

Uncontrolled by the narrow limits of this earth, and raised above all sublunary objects, his [Joseph Smith's] mind soars aloft unto other kingdoms, unravels the secrets of eternity, and contemplates the organization of worlds, in other spheres: the destiny of the living, the dying, and the dead are developed. . . .

Concerning the style of the poetry, there seems to be a native simplicity, a brilliance of thought, and an originality in the composition, that can only be equaled in the oracles of truth; and by those who profess the same spirit: and when the muse of those ancient poets was fired by the spirit of God, and they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. . . .

[The reader] will now be convinced that the modern Prophets can prophesy in poetry, as well as the ancient prophets and that no difference, even of that kind any longer exists.<sup>64</sup>

Why did Joseph Smith allow Phelps's loquacious and flamboyant style to represent his own in so many writings from 1842 to 1844? Joseph likely was preoccupied with governing the city of Nauvoo, the Nauvoo Legion, and the Church of Jesus Christ simultaneously during such turbulent times. He also admired Phelps's learning and capacity to use foreign languages in his writing.

Throughout his relatively short ministry, Joseph Smith sought to be conversant in several languages, primarily to better understand the holy scriptures. Yet because of pressing concerns and being hounded by enemies, the Prophet was not able to become a master of any of them. It became Joseph's default position in Nauvoo to rely heavily on Phelps in that regard. Samuel Brown observed, "The story of the ghostwritten pieces and their displays of linguistic prowess provide an important window into Smith's desire to be seen as a skilled translator and sacred linguist, a hunger Phelps shared."<sup>65</sup>

Phelps had taught himself rudiments of a number of different languages, but he appears to have overstated his abilities. In any event, Joseph Smith called on Phelps to

write for him an editorial in the *Times and Seasons* to answer critics of his translations. A well-known example of language manipulation, ghostwritten by Phelps, follows:

Through the medium of your paper, I [allegedly Joseph Smith] wish to correct an error among men that profess to be learned, liberal and wise. . . . The error I speak of, is the definition of the word "Mormon." It has been stated that this word was derived from the Greek word mormo. This is not the case. There was no Greek or Latin upon the plates from which I, through the grace of God[,] translated the Book of Mormon. Let the language of that book speak for itself. In the 523d page, of the fourth edition, it reads: "And now behold we have written this record according to our knowledge in the characters, which are called among us the Reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech." . . .

. . . God in his superior wisdom, has always given his saints, wherever he had any on the earth, the same spirit, and that spirit, [. . .] John says, is the true spirit of prophe[c]y, which is the testimony of Jesus, I may safely say that the word Mormon stands independent of the learning and wisdom of this generation. . . . We say from the Saxon, good; the Dane, god; the Goth, goda; the German, gut; the Dutch, goed; the Latin, bonus; the Greek, kalos; the Hebrew, tob; and the Egyptian, mon. Hence, with the addition of more, of the contraction, mor, we have the word Mormon; which means, literally, more good.<sup>66</sup>

One of Phelps's editorial tricks was to write a letter to the editor of the *Boston Bee*, a paper sympathetic to Mormonism, under his oft-used pseudonym "Viator" (from the Latin, meaning a Christian "wayfarer") and then reprint the article in the *Times and Seasons*, thus striving to show how others were visualizing Mormonism.<sup>67</sup> He published one such "letter" on September 1, 1843, that defended Mormons as a virtuous and truthful people and not as the contemptible Missourians had tried to depict them. Then immediately following, in the *Times and Seasons*, Phelps, unbeknownst to most others, in the name of "ED" lauded himself: "There is something so very novel and interesting in the communication of 'Viator,' that we cannot let it pass without making a few remarks. Whoever the gentleman is who is the author of the following translation, he is evidently a man of great tact and genius, and of no mean literary attainments." He then as "Viator" posted his translation of Isaiah 18 from the Hebrew!<sup>68</sup> For the rest of his sojourn in Nauvoo and then later in Salt Lake City, Phelps would offer various "translations" of sacred texts. Some of them would be published and others not.

After John Taylor took over the nominal editorship of the *Times and Seasons*, Phelps continued to write multiple doctrinal articles, albeit with pseudonyms or in the name of Joseph Smith or the editor (John Taylor). However, his articles beginning in October 1843 also included those of a political bent. Joseph Smith and the Saints had failed to get any favorable attention for the redress of their Missouri grievances from President Martin Van Buren in 1839. They harbored fine hopes that William Henry Harrison, who was elected in 1840, would aid them, but sadly, in the Mormons' minds and in the opinion of most Americans, Harrison died after only one month in office in 1841. He was replaced by John Tyler, who over four years never gave Mormons hope for redress.

However, the presidential election of 1844 was approaching. Joseph Smith and W. W. Phelps decided, with the counsel of other leaders, to inquire of the most likely candidates what each felt regarding the Mormon question. Thus, Phelps posed the question to the public in October 1843: “Who shall be our next President?” In his loquacious and ponderous style, Phelps indicated that the Saints suffered under the “tyranny and oppression” of a “great injustice from the hand of a neighboring state [Missouri].” His concluding remarks represent the ideas of Joseph Smith and other church leaders:

We shall ask no one to commit themselves on our account; we want no steps taken but what are legal, constitutional, and honorable—but we are American citizens, and as American citizens, we have rights in common with all that live under the folds of the “star spangled banner.” Our rights have been trampled upon by lawless miscreants, we have been robbed of our liberties by mobocratic influence, and all those honorable ties that ought to govern and characterize Columbia’s sons have been trampled in the dust.—Still . . . as American citizens we claim the privilege of being heard in the councils of our nation. We have been wronged, abused, robbed, and banished, and we seek redress. . . .

We make these remarks for the purpose of drawing the attention of our brethren to this subject, both at home and abroad; that we may fix upon the man who will be the most likely to render us assistance in obtaining redress for our grievances.<sup>69</sup>

This was a first step that culminated in late January 1844 with Joseph Smith being nominated by his closest advisers to be a presidential candidate himself. Phelps contributed the lion’s share of political documents and newspaper articles that promoted this candidacy. Phelps’s writing and publishing roles in this campaign will be discussed in chapter 25.

In the early months of 1844, William and Sally Phelps were in harmony with the church they loved and with whom they had cast their lot in June 1831. Phelps’s influence was immense given that he had become Joseph Smith’s right-hand man on Nauvoo city matters and on state and national political issues. Phelps was clearly happy that he had pleased the Prophet with his contributions that were grounded in the talents he had nourished throughout his life. Joseph would rely heavily on Phelps in ensuing months in 1844.

## NOTES

1. This assertion challenges preconceived ideas held by many Latter-day Saints, including some scholars. My in-depth study of the Nauvoo newspapers and the writing styles of W. W. Phelps, Joseph Smith, John Taylor, William Smith, and other potential contributors has led me to this conclusion. I have also carefully surveyed the daily, weekly, monthly, and annual activities of other candidates to see when and how they might have contributed to the writing or editing of those publications and have discovered that, at least for lengthy periods, they could not have done so to any significant degree. These conclusions are mine, and I take responsibility for them.
2. The earliest extended study of Nauvoo newspapers is by historian of Illinois newspapers Terence A. Tanner, “The Mormon Press in Nauvoo, 1839–1846,” *Western Illinois Regional*

- Studies* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 5–29. This same piece was reprinted in Roger D. Launius and John E. Hallwas, eds., *Kingdom on the Mississippi Revisited: Nauvoo in Mormon History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 94–118. In exploring the basic history and value of the Nauvoo printing office, Tanner did not seriously probe the nature and content of the articles in the *Times and Seasons*, *The Wasp*, and the *Nauvoo Neighbor*. Nor did he consider any other authors of pieces in these newspapers beyond the listed editors at any given time, namely, Don Carlos Smith, Ebenezer Robinson, Robert Thompson, Joseph Smith, William Smith, and John Taylor. The name of W. W. Phelps does not appear at all in Tanner's piece.
3. Ebenezer Robinson wrote his reminiscences of the creation and development of the *Times and Seasons* in a newspaper, *The Return*, which he started as a publication for the Whitmerite church in 1889. He published his historical memories serially until he died in 1891. His specific story of losing his role as editor and selling the printing establishment is found in *The Return* 2, no. 9 (September 1890): 321–25; and 2, no. 10 (October 1890): 346.
  4. *The Return* 2, no. 9 (September 1890): 325.
  5. *JSP*, J3:38; *MHC*, vol. C-1, 1272–73, *HC*, 4:503.
  6. *The Return* 2, no. 9 (September 1890): 325.
  7. *JSP*, J2:38; *HC*, 4:513. Wilford Woodruff confirmed Elder Taylor's and his appointment at the printing establishment under the direction of the Twelve Apostles. *WWJ*, 2:153.
  8. *The Return* 2, no. 10 (October 1890): 346.
  9. *MHC*, vol. E-1, 1867; *HC*, 6:185.
  10. Most previous historical accounts about the Nauvoo period do *not* list Phelps, but rather mention that Joseph Smith edited the *Times and Seasons* for several months in 1842 and thus exercised complete editorial control over the contents. Phelps is rarely mentioned as having anything to do with the paper during that year. For example, "Operated first as a self-sustaining private business venture, the *Times and Seasons* was purchased by the church in January 1842. Brigham Young supervised the purchase of the press, type, fixtures, stereotype equipment, and bookbindery. For the next nine months, Joseph Smith served as editor, with John Taylor assisting." Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 219.
  11. At this point in his career, Joseph Smith had at his side two of the best scribes he ever had—Willard Richards and William Clayton—who faithfully kept up with the Prophet's daily movements. Joseph Smith's near-daily journal for this period, kept by these scribes, mentions that he visited the printing office, headquarters of the *Times and Seasons*, only five times during the period he was nominally "editor" of the paper (May 10, 22, and 28 and June 4 and 12, 1842). And according to the journal, Joseph only "called at the printing office," mostly to look at the arriving papers from elsewhere that spoke about issues he cared about. See *JSP*, J2:55, 62, 64, 65, 66; *MHC*, vol. C-1, 1330, 1335–36, 1339; *HC*, 5:6, 14, 21, 22, 25. Eli B. Kelsey, a prominent pamphleteer in the British Mission in the late 1840s who as a resident in Nauvoo by 1843 knew the dynamics in the printing office, wrote in the *Millennial Star* in 1850 regarding Joseph's editorship: "[Joseph Smith] placed a foreman over it [the printing office] to take charge of the printing department, and although the business was done in his name, it was frequently the case that he was not inside the office once in a month." See "A Base Calumny Refuted," *Millennial Star* 12 (March 15, 1850): 92. Joseph Smith spent many days either at home or at his office at his store conducting business, wherein he likely exercised some editorial control over the *Times and Seasons*.
  12. Wilford Woodruff (Nauvoo, Illinois) to Parley P. Pratt (Liverpool, England), June 12, 1842, *CHL*.
  13. As evidenced, for example, in his personal writings preserved in *JSP*, J1:8ff.
  14. *The Return* 2, no. 10 (October 1890): 347.



15. Taylor intended this account for publication in the *St. Louis Gazette*, but the newspaper refused to do so, even though it had requested the piece. Taylor published it independently in 1839, likely with the printing press retrieved from Far West by Ebenezer Robinson and Don Carlos Smith. Taylor's account is found online at <http://latterdaytruth.org/pdf/100961.pdf>.
16. David J. Whittaker, "John Taylor and Mormon Imprints in Europe, 1840–52," in *Champion of Liberty: John Taylor*, ed. Mary Jane Woodger (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 111–42. Taylor's writings focused on refuting arguments against Mormonism by local sectarian clergy in the Isle of Man and were published as tracts or news items in the *Millennial Star*. See subtitle "British Mission Publications, 1840–1841" and footnotes 20–32 from Whittaker's article as found at [https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/champion-liberty-john-taylor/john-taylor-and-mormon-imprints-europe1840-52#\\_ednref28](https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/champion-liberty-john-taylor/john-taylor-and-mormon-imprints-europe1840-52#_ednref28). Enroute to his mission, Taylor also published a short account of the persecution of the Saints by Missouri mobs and militias. *JSP*, H1:491.
17. William Smith's biographer, Kyle R. Walker, took at face value that Smith as the founding editor of *The Wasp* gave the paper its name and was the author of all its editorial comment. See Kyle R. Walker, *William B. Smith: In the Shadow of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015), 158–61. Walker agrees with an earlier historian's view that William Smith wrote all the editorials in *The Wasp*. See Jerry C. Jolley, "The Sting of the Wasp: Early Nauvoo Newspaper—April 1842 to April 1843," *BYU Studies* 22, no. 4 (Fall 1982): 487–96. Walker and Jolley both believe that William Smith's biting attacks against members of the Anti-Mormon clique, particularly Thomas Sharp, who edited the *Warsaw Signal*, were not helpful to the church. My assessment is that W. W. Phelps was the actual author of *The Wasp's* sarcastic editorial columns, not William Smith. The rhetorical and aggressive style match that of Phelps. Part of my reasoning is that similarly written and politically motivated articles, including attacks against Sharp, continued in *The Wasp* after Smith left Nauvoo for Springfield, Illinois, in the fall of 1842 to serve in the state legislature and after John Taylor became the editor, thus making it impossible for William Smith to be the author. Furthermore, William Smith spent many days away from Nauvoo when he was the nominal editor, and without him *The Wasp* continued its regular publication and editorial policy.
18. *Deseret News* 8, no. 12 (May 26, 1858): 57–58.
19. David J. Whittaker provides extensive biographical and bibliographical details on Benjamin Winchester in his article "East of Nauvoo: Benjamin Winchester and the Early Mormon Church," *Journal of Mormon History* 21, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 31–83.
20. Jonathan Neville strongly asserts that Benjamin Winchester had an impact on the content of the *Times and Seasons* during Joseph Smith's editorship. He lists all the articles that Winchester clearly contributed to the newspaper in *The Lost City of Zarahemla: From Iowa to Guatemala—and Back Again*, 2nd ed. (n.p.: Digital Legend, 2015), appendix iv, pp. 338–42. Neville considers Winchester to be a "mystery man" whose contributions to the *Times and Seasons* were magnified beyond the proportion they deserved, particularly when they related to the external evidences of the Book of Mormon and Book of Mormon geography. See chapters 1–2, 5–10, 16–18, 20–21 and appendixes 1–4 of *Lost City of Zarahemla*. See also Jonathan Neville, *Brought to Light*, 2nd ed. (n.p.: Digital Legend, 2016), xi–xii, 1–11, 401–3.
21. See Michael Hicks, *Mormonism and Music: A History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 41–42, 58.
22. <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/LLittlefield.html>.
23. *WWJ*, 7:62–63 (March 9, 1872).
24. Neville wrote a chapter titled "W. W. Phelps" in his *Brought to Light*, 148–55, giving his reasons for Phelps's major role in editing the *Times and Seasons* and *The Wasp*.
25. I compared the writing style of many leading essays in the *Times and Seasons*, including even those with "ED" appended at the end, with the newspaper articles known to be written in *The Evening and the Morning Star* and the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* by W. W.

Phelps. Phelps has heretofore been identified by at least five historians as a “ghostwriter” for Joseph Smith for numerous articles, a significant poem, and a few political pamphlets during the Nauvoo period: Bruce A. Van Orden, “William W. Phelps’s Service in Nauvoo as Joseph Smith’s Political Clerk,” *BYU Studies* 32, nos. 1–2 (Winter/Spring 1991): 81–94; Michael Hicks, “Joseph Smith, W. W. Phelps, and the Poetic Paraphrase of ‘The Vision,’” *Journal of Mormon History* 20, no. 2 (1994): 63–84; Samuel Brown, “The Translator and the Ghostwriter: Joseph Smith and W. W. Phelps,” *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 26–62; Matthew J. Grey, “‘The Word of the Lord in the Original,’” in *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World*, ed. Lincoln H. Blumell, Matthew J. Grey, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2015), 279; Patrick Q. Mason, “God and the People Reconsidered: Further Reflections on Theodemocracy in Early Mormonism,” in *The Council of Fifty: What the Records Reveal about Mormon History*, ed. Matthew J. Grow and R. Eric Smith (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2017), 31–32, 39n1. Brown in 2008 correctly noted that I did not adequately identify the extent of Phelps’s ghostwriting for Joseph Smith (p. 53). According to Brown, “Phelps’s first obvious ghostwriting effort in Nauvoo” took place in February 1843 (p. 41). However, according to my current analysis, Phelps started his ghostwriting and ghost-editing for Joseph Smith a year earlier when Smith first began as “editor” of the *Times and Seasons*, on February 15, 1842.

26. “To Subscribers,” *T&S* 3 (February 15, 1842): 696.
27. According to Wilford Woodruff, by February 19, 1842, Joseph Smith intended to publish the writings of Abraham in the *Times and Seasons*. Woodruff wrote regarding the Abrahamic work: “Joseph the Seer has presented us some of the Book of Abraham which was written by his own hand but hid from the knowledge of man for the last four thousand years but has now come to light through the mercy of God. Joseph has had these records in his possession for several years but has never presented them before the world in the English language untill now.” *WWJ*, 2:155. See also *WWJ*, 2:159.
28. Brian M. Hauglid, “The Book of Abraham and Translating the Sacred,” *BYU Religious Education Review* (Winter 2017): 13. See also Grey, “Word of the Lord in the Original,” 274.
29. *MHC*, vol. C-1, 1368, 1373, 1381, 1384; *HC*, 4:542–43, 548.
30. Grey, “Word of the Lord in the Original,” 274.
31. That Phelps, following his 1838–1840 apostasy, had brought to Nauvoo historical documents that only he possessed is suggested in Robin Scott Jensen, “Ignored and Unknown Clues of Early Mormon Record Keeping,” in *Preserving the History of the Latter-day Saints*, ed. Richard E. Turley Jr. and Steven C. Harper (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2010), 135–64. The only extant handwritten text for portions of the Book of Abraham as published in the *Times and Seasons* is in the hand of Willard Richards, which makes sense because in early 1842 he was Joseph Smith’s private scribe and keeper of Smith’s journal.
32. For articles and other references to the Jews, see “The Jews,” *T&S* 3 (February 15, 1842): 691–62; *T&S* 3 (March 15, 1842): 725–26; “The Jews,” *T&S* 3 (April 15, 1842): 754–55; “The Jews,” *T&S* 3 (May 2, 1842): 780–81; “The Jews,” *T&S* 3 (June 1, 1842): 810–11; “The Jews. Letter of the Rev. Mr. Cheyne. Mt. Carmel,” *T&S* 3 (July 1, 1842): 834; “Ascent of Mt. Sinai” and “From Jahn’s Biblical Archaeology,” *T&S* 3 (September 15, 1842): 917–18, 918–19; “The Jews,” *T&S* 3 (October 15, 1842): 958; “The Jews” and “Going to Jerusalem,” *T&S* 4 (November 15, 1842): 7–8.
33. For such articles, see the following from *T&S* 3: “Signs of the Times” (April 15, 1842): 758; “Signs of the Times” (May 2, 1842): 782; “Signs of the Times” (May 16, 1842): 784–85; “Awful Destruction of Life—Terrible Earthquake in the Island of St. Domingo” (July 1, 1842): 837–38; “Earthquake in Greece” (July 1, 1842): 838; “Destruction of One Fifth of the City of Hamburgh by Fire” (July 15, 1842): 854–55; “Riots in Ireland” (August 1,

- 1842): 867; "Situation of the Operatives in England" (August 15, 1842): 892; "Distress in Manchester" (August 15, 1842): 892–93; "Extraordinary Whirlwind" (August 15, 1842): 893; "Great Fire in Russia" (August 15, 1842): 893; "Distress of Nations" (September 1, 1842): 900–901; "Earthquake at Antigua" (September 15, 1842): 925–26; and "Passing Events" (October 15, 1842): 946–48. Many of these notices are included whole or in part in the official history of the church.
34. For such articles, see the following from *T&S* 3: "Honor Among Thieves" (February 15, 1842): 710; "Extract from the London Dispatch" (February 15, 1842): 711–12; "Nauvoo and the Mormons" (April 1, 1842): 749–50; "From the Western Reserve Cabinet and Family Visitor" (April 15, 1842): 758–59; "The Mormons—A Leaf from Joe Smith" (May 2, 1842): 773–75; [Untitled] (May 16, 1842): 790; "Evangelical Religion" (May 16, 1842): 790–91; "Mormonism" (May 16, 1842): 791–95; "The Mormons in Boston and Vicinity" (May 16, 1842): 796; "The Mormons—Joe Smith, the Prophet" (May 16, 1842): 796–98; [Untitled] (June 1, 1842): 806; "Gov. Duncan" (June 1, 1842): 806–8; "The Mormons or Latter Day Saints" (June 1, 1842): 813; "Mormonism" (June 15, 1842): 822; "Mormonism" (June 15, 1842): 829; "Latter Day Saints, or Mormons" (July 1, 1842): 835–36; "Dr. West and the Mormons" (July 15, 1842): 862; "Great Discussion on Mormonism Between Dr. West and Elder Adams at the Marlboro' Chapel" (August 1, 1842): 863–65; "Great Discussion on Mormonism Between Dr. West and Elder Adams at the Marlboro' Chapel" (August 15, 1842): 886; "Gen. John C. Bennett" (August 15, 1842): 893; "Mormons, or 'Latter Day Saints'" (September 1, 1842): 899–900; "Mormonism and the Mormons" (September 1, 1842): 905–6; "A Visit to Joe Smith" (September 15, 1842): 926; "Difference Between the Baptists and Latter Day Saints" (October 1, 1842): 931–33; "Missouri Law" (October 1, 1842): 940–41; and "The Mormons" (October 15, 1842): 948.
  35. For such articles, see the following from *T&S* 3: "Notice" (June 15, 1842): 830; "To the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and To All the Honorable Part of the Community" (July 1, 1842): 839–43; "John C. Bennett" (August 1, 1842): 868–78; "Persecution" (August 15, 1842): 886–89; "Persecution of the Prophets" (September 1, 1842): 902–3; "Health of Nauvoo, &c" (September 1, 1842): 906; "Mob Law" (September 15, 1842): 920–21; "On Marriage" (October 1, 1842): 939–40; and "Mormonism—Gen. Bennett, &c" (October 15, 1842): 955–56. Portions of some of these articles also appear in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1938).
  36. For articles on the temple, its financing, and its construction, see the following from *T&S* 3: "To the Brethren in Nauvoo City, Greeting" (March 1, 1842): 715; "The Temple" (May 2, 1842): 775–76; "Temple Funds" (May 2, 1842): 782; "To the Saints Abroad" (September 15, 1842): 923; "Nauvoo" (October 1, 1842): 936–47; and "The Temple" (October 1, 1842): 937–40.
  37. Articles promoting the funding and building of the Nauvoo House are in *T&S* 3: "Notice" (September 1, 1842): 909; "To the Saints Abroad" (September 1842): 923; and "Nauvoo" (October 1, 1842): 936–37.
  38. The article on the Relief Society is "Ladies' Relief Society," *T&S* 3 (April 1, 1842): 743. Sally Phelps was "received" into the Relief Society at the early date of August 31, 1842. <https://churchhistorianspress.org/the-first-fifty-years-of-relief-society/part-1/1-2/1-2-17>.
  39. Many of these doctrinal articles, attributed at the time to Joseph Smith, appeared in the official history of the church as if they were authored by the Prophet. Undoubtedly, Smith contributed to the ideas and oversaw the content of these essays, but my conclusion is that Phelps was the ghostwriter. Most of these articles are discussed later in this chapter.
  40. "To the Editor of the Times and Seasons," *T&S* 3 (September 1, 1842): 906–8; "To the Editor of the Times and Seasons: Cold Comfort," *T&S* 3 (October 15, 1842): 953–54.

41. "To the Editor of the Times and Seasons" [a thoroughgoing article with up-to-date statistics on all US Indian tribes and their conditions received from the government's Bureau of Indian Affairs], *T&S* 3 (August 15, 1842): 890–91; "Western Indians," *T&S* 4 (November 15, 1842): 8.
42. These articles were taken from the church's periodical in Britain, the *Millennial Star*, newspapers in the eastern US, or from letters from apostles and missionary elders.
43. D&C 127 is in "Tidings," *T&S* 3 (September 15, 1842): 919–20; MHC, vol. D-1, 1389–90; and HC, 4:142–44. D&C 128 is in "To the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Sendeth Greeting," *T&S* 3 (October 1, 1842): 935–36; MHC, vol. D-1, 1392–96; and HC, 5:148–53.
44. John L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1841). On September 8, 1841, John Bernhisel, LDS Church bishop in New York City, wrote Joseph Smith that he was sending him a copy of Stephens's book as a gift. When he received the book and had a chance to peruse it, Smith dictated a letter to Bernhisel with immense gratitude and stated that Stephens had given the "most correct luminous & comprihensive" depiction of places connected to the Book of Mormon (PWJS, 533–34). W. W. Phelps, who had daily contact with Joseph Smith, could easily have read the Prophet's copy or another copy and then reported on the book in the *Times and Seasons*.
45. For such articles in *T&S* 3, see "A Catacomb of Mummies Found in Kentucky" (May 2, 1842): 781–82; "From Priest's American Antiquities" (June 1, 1842): 813–14; "Traits of the Mosaic History, Found Among the Aztaeca Indians" (June 15, 1842): 818–20; "American Antiquities" (July 15, 1842): 858–60; "From Stephen's 'Incidents of Travel in Central America'" (September 15, 1842): 911–15; "Facts are Stubborn Things" (September 15, 1842): 921–22; and "Zarahemla" (October 1, 1842): 927–28. In *T&S* 4 see "Ruins Recently Discovered in Yucatan" (November 15, 1842): 15–16. Portions of some of these articles also appear in *TPJS*.
46. Phelps included his name as the author of the poems "The Temple of God at Nauvoo" and "The Spirit of God" (not the same poem as the famous hymn) in *T&S* 3 (June 15, 1842): 830 and (September 1, 1842): 910. Phelps is the likely author of the poems "The Signs of the Times" and "Mote and Beam," in *T&S* 3 (October 1, 1842): 942 and *T&S* 4 (November 15, 1842): 16.
47. *WWJ*, 2:193.
48. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace*, 219.
49. "Try the Spirits" is found on pp. 202–15. The LDS Church's manual used in Relief Society and priesthood quorums in 2008–2009, *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, also quotes from these doctrinal treatises that I claim were ghostwritten by W. W. Phelps.
50. "Try the Spirits," *T&S* 3 (April 1, 1842): 743–48. Jonathan Neville has written specifically about the authorship of "Try the Spirits" in his second edition of *Brought to Light* (n.p.: Digital Legend, 2016), 41–81. He concludes that Joseph Smith was definitely not the actual author of "Try the Spirits," but that the piece was a combination of the writings or contributions of Benjamin Winchester, W. W. Phelps, and John Taylor. I generally agree with Neville. See chapter 27 herein for further discussion of "Try the Spirits."
51. MHC, vol. C-1, 1303–12; HC, 4:571–81.
52. "Baptism for the Dead," *T&S* 3 (April 15, 1842): 759–61; *TPJS*, 217–23; MHC, vol. C-1, 1321–24; HC, 4:595–99.
53. "Gift of the Holy Ghost," *T&S* 3 (June 15, 1842): 823–26; *TPJS*, 242–48; HC, 5:26–31.
54. *T&S* 3 (July 15, 1842): 855–58; *TPJS*, 248–54; MHC, vol. C-1, addenda pp. 32–38; HC, 5:61–66. This famous essay foreshadowed the March 1844 creation of the Council of Fifty, in which Phelps would play a major role. *JSP*, CFM:xxix states that this editorial was written



by John Taylor, editor of the *Times and Seasons*. I have studied all of Taylor's writings on this subject and see no similarity to this article in terms of wording, style, or even content. To the contrary, "The Government of God" displays many signs of Phelps's authorship.

55. "Baptism," *T&S* 3 (September 1, 1842): 903–5; *TPJS*, 262–66.
56. See Neville, *Brought to Light*, 41–148.
57. As during Smith's nominal editorship of *Times and Seasons* in 1842, Phelps's stylistics are obvious in the unattributed articles and editorials during Taylor's nominal editorship from 1843 to 1846. Taylor is said to have asked Joseph Smith not to be involved directly with the editing of the paper; this is according to an 1860 statement by Heber C. Kimball to Wilford Woodruff. See David J. Whittaker, "The Book in Early Mormon Culture," *Journal of Mormon History* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 15n36.
58. Each edition of *Times and Seasons* up through 1845 indicated that the printing office was on the corner of Water and Bain Streets. In August 1845 John Taylor moved the office to a new location on Main Street. According to Kenneth E. Stobaugh, former director of RLDS sites in Nauvoo, an archaeological crew from the University of Missouri–Columbia "moved to the northeast corner of Water and Bain streets in 1975 to determine if that was the location of the *Times and Seasons* building. That site proved to be the location not only of a frame 16' x 32' building where the *Times and Seasons* was published but also of the original brick building where the paper was printed beginning in 1839." Kenneth E. Stobaugh, "The Development of the Joseph Smith Historic Center in Nauvoo," *BYU Studies* 32, nos. 1–2 (Winter–Spring 1991): 37.
59. Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, ed., "The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith (1832–1914)," *Saints Herald* (Independence, MO) 81, no. 45 (November 6, 1934): 1612; *JSP*, J3:91n420.
60. *JSP*, J2:263.
61. *T&S* 4 (February 1, 1843): 81–85. These poems have longer titles not reproduced here.
62. Michael Hicks, "Joseph Smith, W. W. Phelps, and the Poetic Paraphrase of 'The Vision,'" *Journal of Mormon History* 20, no. 2 (1994): 63n1; Roger K. Petersen, "Joseph Smith Prophet-Poet: A Literary Analysis of Writings Commonly Associated with His Name" (PhD dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1981), 151–52; Karl Best, "Changes in the Revelations," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 25 (Spring 1992): 106; Richard N. Holzapfel, "Joseph Smith's Psalm: The Poetic Version of Doctrine and Covenants Section 76," paper read at the Sperry Symposium, September 26, 1992, Brigham Young University, and published with considerable revisions as "'Eternity Sketch'd in a Vision': The Poetic Version of Doctrine and Covenants 76," in *Heavens Are Open: The 1992 Sperry Symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants and Church History*, comp. Byron R. Merrill et al. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 141–62. The Merrill volume also cites other recent references to the poem. See also Chad M. Orton and William W. Slaughter, *Joseph Smith's America: A Celebration of His Life and Times* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005): 226–28. A 2015 book still identifies Joseph Smith Jr. as the author of "The Answer." See Hal Robert Boyd and Susan Easton Black, eds., *Psalms of Nauvoo* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2015), 130, though at 130n118 the editors acknowledge, "The authorship of Joseph's reply is contested." See chapter 27 for further discussion of this poem.
63. Hicks, "Poetic Paraphrase of 'The Vision,'" 64. Hicks's astute essay gives conclusive evidence that Joseph Smith was not a poet and not even a good writer per se. Hicks acknowledges that I was among the first to attribute the authorship of Joseph Smith's poem to Phelps (see p. 64n2). Since Hicks's 1992 essay, Samuel Brown in 2008 extends the argument that Phelps wrote the poem in his article "The Translator and the Ghostwriter," 26–62, especially 41–42.
64. "Ancient Poetry," *T&S* 4 (February 1, 1843): 81. Through this laudatory language, Phelps was actually trying to promote Joseph's prophetic gifts and likely inserted these two poems into the *Times and Seasons* with the approval of Joseph Smith or John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff.

65. Brown, "The Translator and the Ghostwriter," 27. A recent compilation of seventeen essays by LDS scholars emphasizes that Joseph Smith focused on learning other languages in order to further understand ancient texts. See Lincoln H. Blumell, Matthew J. Grey, and Andrew H. Hedges, eds., *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2015).
66. "Correspondence. To the Editor of the Times and Seasons," *T&S* 4 (May 15, 1843): 194; emphasis added. Samuel Brown was probably the first person to identify this well-known editorial as being ghostwritten by W. W. Phelps in his "The Translator and the Ghostwriter," 42–44. Brown indicated that Phelps was basically accurate in his short usage of other languages, but he doubts that "Mormon" meaning "more good" is to be trusted. That this folk etymology has merit is strongly challenged in a piece by Paul Hoskisson, who makes a case for its having been written tongue in cheek. "What's in a Name? Mormon—Part 2," *Insights* 32/2 (2012), [https://publications.mi.byu.edu/pdf-control.php/publications/insights/32/3/S00002-Whats\\_in\\_a\\_Name\\_MormonPart\\_2.html](https://publications.mi.byu.edu/pdf-control.php/publications/insights/32/3/S00002-Whats_in_a_Name_MormonPart_2.html).
67. Samuel Brown first identified "Viator" as Phelps in his "The Translator and the Ghostwriter: Joseph Smith and W. W. Phelps," 53–55. Editors of the *Joseph Smith Papers: Journals, Volume 2* state that "Viator" was Willard Richards. Possibly Richards was the author of the first seven letters by Viator to the *Boston Bee*. But letters 8 and 9 are admittedly in William W. Phelps's handwriting and were the letters published in the *Times and Seasons* that was under Phelps's de facto direction. See *JSP*, J2:312n644. Recently, Jeffrey O. Johnson explained the significance of Viator's letters to the *Boston Bee* and their reproduction in the *Times and Seasons*. Jeffrey O. Johnson, "Messaging the Public: Joseph Smith, Willard Richards, and W. W. Phelps and the *Boston Bee*," in *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 37, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2017): 147–56.
68. "From the Boston Bee," *T&S* 4 (September 1, 1843): 305–6; *T&S* 4 (September 1, 1843): 306; "From the Boston Weekly Bee," *T&S* 4 (September 1, 1843): 306–7.
69. "Who Shall Be Our Next President?," *T&S* 4 (October 1, 1843): 343–44; MHC, vol. E-1, 1738–39; HC, 6:39–40.