

Chapter 25

POLITICAL CLERK IN NAUVOO

The church under Joseph Smith, always sooner rather than later, became embroiled in local political conflicts. This had happened with tragic results in Ohio in 1836–1837 and in Missouri both in 1831–1833 and in 1837–1839. W. W. Phelps was intimately involved with both Missouri episodes. In all three cases, local and state residents had taken umbrage with the Mormons and even feared their presence. Dual reasons for this were the doctrine of gathering the Saints together in one general location and then as a group appearing to be unusual, radical, cohesive, and un-American. As years went by in Illinois, the Saints once more became socially and religiously isolated, thereby antagonizing their nearby non-Mormon neighbors. As much as anything, Illinois citizens didn't like Mormons showing unwavering support of Joseph Smith, who possessed unprecedented political power in Nauvoo. Again, Phelps was closely connected to these Illinois developments.

Phelps subscribed to whatever teachings and practices were taught by Joseph Smith, both privately and publicly. Most of all, Phelps loved the Prophet's theological and revelatory ideas. He also eagerly embraced Smith's desires to build a political kingdom before the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. He was ready to stick by the Prophet through thick and thin. Phelps would have his hands full in helping Joseph Smith in 1843 and 1844.

CHALLENGES FROM THE ANTI-MORMON PRESS

The "Anti-Mormon press" challenged Joseph Smith's authoritarian rule in Nauvoo and vowed to abolish it.¹ A number of Illinois newspaper editors took up the attack on Smith and the Mormons, but the shrillest and most effective was Thomas C. Sharp of the *Warsaw Signal*, located eighteen miles south of Nauvoo. Sharp, only in his early twenties, fretted about the Mormons' gaining a lion's share of the Mississippi River business trade and

colluded with Warsaw businessmen to undercut Nauvoo's prosperity. He was likewise concerned about the Mormons' rapidly increasing political leverage. W. W. Phelps took point in countering Sharp and other newspaper editors with cutting gibes of his own.

In the first edition of *The Wasp*, nominally edited by William Smith, Phelps took on Thomas Sharp with robust sarcasm.² Phelps referred to Sharp in a lengthy editorial, only a portion of which follows:

[Sharp] is a friend to sinners or sin, and has rendered himself obnoxious to his former friends; or if he is a liar, a fool, a knave, a rascal, a mobocrat, a traitor to democracy, a tory to his country, a Mormon eater . . . an ignoramus, or a noncompositis [meaning "not of sound mind"] editor of a newspaper, devotes his columns, exclusively, to the publishing of lies, foul calumnies, and every slander that he can invent, and then pour them upon the heads of unoffending Mormons, by saying they are murderers, and such like expressions, that go to show an editor a mean, contemptible puppy, whose tongue is set on fire of hell, and whose heart is the very seat of wickedness.³

Phelps continued to blast Sharp similarly numerous times in nearly every weekly issue of *The Wasp*, even referring to his editor-rival as "Tom-ass."⁴ On May 7, 1842, Phelps identified Sharp as the evil spokesman for the burgeoning Anti-Mormon faction that was determined to destroy Mormonism.

It is well known that there is arrayed against us, in this county, a party styling themselves "Anti-Mormons," who are opposed to our dearest and best interests; and it is equally as well known that the Signal [*Warsaw Signal*] is the main vehicle through which they convey all their concocted falsehoods and base vituperations to the world. The editor [Thomas Sharp] has become the pliant tool and cats-paw of that faction, and when their ingenuity fails to propagate a superabundant stock of calumny, he engage[s] all his very *productive* faculties to fill up the vacuum of their defect, and lends all his *puny* and *insignificant* efforts at slander and detraction.⁵

Political leaders of all stripes began seeking to limit Smith's unilateral civil as well as ecclesiastical power in Nauvoo. Newly elected Illinois governor Thomas Ford, a Democrat, sought as much as anyone in the Illinois government to repeal the Nauvoo Charter. The charter had granted considerable power and autonomy to the executive mayor, the judicial mayor's court, the legislative Nauvoo City Council, and the militia, the Nauvoo Legion, which were all thoroughly under the control of Joseph Smith. By mid-1843, W. W. Phelps had become one of Smith's chief political advisers. In 1844 he came under assault himself. Phelps kept busy striving to combat all attacks, both in the press and otherwise, from the Anti-Mormon Party.

SMITH AND PHELPS IN CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

W. W. Phelps entered the local political arena as one of Joseph Smith's key aides in Nauvoo city governance. A second "election" of Nauvoo municipal officers took place on

February 6, 1843. It was not an election in the modern sense. Church members simply voted for the slate put before them. Joseph Smith was elected as mayor unanimously. Also elected were four aldermen and nine councilmen.⁶ In their first meeting after the election, the council voted on city appointees for specific offices. W. W. Phelps was simultaneously named mayor's clerk and fire warden of the fourth ward.⁷ As Mayor Smith's clerk, Phelps was always at Joseph's side in city council meetings and in mayor's court proceedings. Joseph frequently called on Phelps for legal advice on city ordinances and on court activities regarding ongoing attempts to arrest him. On March 9, Joseph "told Brother Phelps that he should be a lawyer and understand law, and the time will come when I shall not need say to you, thus and thus is the law; for you shall know it."⁸ Phelps began to serve as acting city attorney.⁹ From that point on, he freely offered his legal and political opinions to Joseph Smith and city councilors.¹⁰ When he could, he studied law and lawmaking, particularly as it applied to Illinois. He also proudly bore the titles of "Judge Phelps" and "Esquire Phelps." On June 1, Phelps and three others were elected by the council to be "Members of the City Council, pro tem," thus filling positions of others who were given church assignments as missionaries of some sort.¹¹ Phelps was pleased that he was able to receive a salary for serving on the city council.¹² With obvious enthusiasm Phelps jumped with both feet into city, state, and soon national politics.

In June 1843, Illinois governor Thomas Ford signed a writ allowing Missouri officials to extradite Joseph Smith to their state.¹³ Thus, as had been the case a year earlier, Smith's personal safety became a major discussion item at city council meetings and in various priesthood councils.

In one of these councils, the brethren concluded that church leaders should ascertain what the views of prospective presidential candidates might be in relation to the Mormons. In October Phelps wrote in the *Times and Seasons* and the *Nauvoo Neighbor* that the church would pay close attention to who could be trusted to provide redress to the Saints.¹⁴ Thereafter, Phelps went to work in various ways to enhance Smith's public reputation, but also simultaneously to see what leading candidates for the presidency would do on the "Mormon question."

PROMOTING JOSEPH SMITH IN THE PRESS

Phelps applied ingenious journalistic tactics to promote Joseph Smith. One method considered dishonorable in the twenty-first century was to use a pseudonym to write a favorable review of Joseph as if the writer were an outside observer. Phelps had done this before, but now he would put this method to strategic use.¹⁵ Under the name of "A Traveller," Phelps wrote a highly laudatory piece in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* about "Gen. Smith" that included the following: "Mr. Smith is a man possessing a good disposition—a strong mind, and a liberal heart. His theme appears to be religion, but still he is free to converse on all subjects; he has a thorough knowledge of the scriptures, while on the other hand, is not unfamiliar with the pages of Blackstone, and I believe has a very correct view on points of law most difficult to decide."¹⁶ Phelps would continue to use the same moniker of

“Traveller” as well as other pseudonyms to praise Joseph Smith in the pages of the *Nauvoo Neighbor* and the *Times and Seasons*.

Joseph Smith also used Phelps to court favor with prominent men throughout the country, including those known to Phelps who were engaged in the newspaper business in some form. The first of these appeals was addressed to the flamboyant educator, newspaperman, and promoter James Arlington Bennet of Long Island, New York.¹⁷ Bennet first became interested in Smith and Mormonism when he was granted a command in the Nauvoo Legion and an honorary doctor's degree from the University of Nauvoo. Through his many contacts with the press, Bennet deliberately defended Joseph Smith to counter multiple Anti-Mormon press accounts. In 1842 James Arlington Bennet rejected John C. Bennett's attempt to turn him against the Mormons. Joseph Smith dispatched Brigham Young to New York to further cement relationships with Bennet. On August 30, 1842, Young baptized Bennet in the ocean off Coney Island in New York. On October 24, Bennet wrote a complimentary letter to Joseph and, tellingly, referred to his baptism as only “a glorious frolic in the clear blue ocean.” Bennet indicated that he might soon move to Illinois to buy huge land parcels and seek political office. Joseph Smith and his advisers considered Bennet a potential worthy ally who had excellent friends in high places and who could help the Mormons.

Soon after receiving James Arlington Bennet's missive, Smith directed W. W. Phelps to write a response and then Joseph signed the letter.¹⁸ Here is part of it:

The *boldness of my* [Joseph Smith's] *plans and measures* can readily be tested by the touchstone of all schemes, systems, projects, and adventures—*truth*; for truth is a matter of fact; and the fact is, that by the power of God I translated the Book of Mormon from hieroglyphics, the knowledge of which was lost to the world, in which wonderful event I stood alone, an unlearned youth, to combat the worldly wisdom and multiplied ignorance of eighteen centuries, with a new revelation, which (if they would receive the everlasting Gospel,) would open the eyes of more than eight hundred millions of people, and make “plain the old paths,” wherein if a man walk in all the ordinances of God blameless, he shall inherit eternal life.

Phelps loquaciously continued in behalf of Joseph Smith to warn Bennet not to rely on the wisdom of ancient or contemporary scholars and philosophers. If he, Bennet, had any real intent to be a partner with Joseph Smith in political matters, he should submit to God and Jesus Christ and truths that emanate from scripture, ancient and modern.¹⁹ As it would turn out, Bennet did not come to Nauvoo in Joseph's lifetime, nor did he ever play an important political role pertaining to the Mormons. In retrospect, historians have come to see Bennet as a flatterer and a self-promoting windbag.²⁰

On November 2, 1843, Joseph Smith conducted a political council that decided to send letters in his name to the five most likely men to run for the presidency of the United States “to inquire what their feelings were towards us as a people, and what their course of action would be in relation to the cruelty and oppression that we have suffered from the State of Missouri, if they were elected.”²¹ These five were John C. Calhoun (Democratic senator from South Carolina and former vice president under Andrew Jackson), Lewis

Cass (a Democrat, former army general, governor of Michigan Territory, Secretary of War, and ambassador to France), Richard M. Johnson (a noted militia officer and politician from Kentucky and Democratic vice President under Martin Van Buren), Henry Clay (recently retired Whig senator from Kentucky, former Secretary of State, and twice a candidate for president), and Martin Van Buren (a Democrat, former governor of New York, vice president under Andrew Jackson, and president from 1837 to 1841). Nearly all of Joseph Smith's political letters and pamphlets were ghostwritten by W. W. Phelps.²²

Throughout the rest of November 1843, Joseph Smith and his chief advisers, including W. W. Phelps, discussed various political options. They decided to write others who might have political authority and influence. With the help of a non-Mormon but friendly politician from Quincy named John Frierson, Phelps prepared a formal "memorial" to Congress outlining persecutions that the Mormon people had suffered at the hands of law-breaking Missourians from 1833 to 1838. "Finally, your memorialists pray your honorable body to take their wrongs into consideration, receive testimony in the case, and grant such relief as by the Constitution and laws you may have power to give."²³ After printing the document, the brethren sent messengers to Latter-day Saint neighborhoods and communities to gather signatures. Frierson also obtained signatures in Quincy. The memorial ultimately was signed by about 3,400 individuals.²⁴

DEALING WITH THREATS TO KIDNAP JOSEPH SMITH

Joseph Smith and his advisers reconnoitered in early December 1843 to craft Nauvoo City ordinances that would protect him from outside threats. W. W. Phelps was a key player in this project. The most serious threats were the ongoing attempts of Missouri government officials to kidnap Joseph and extradite him to Missouri. Mormon leaders were fully cognizant that Thomas Sharp in Warsaw was gathering up enemies of Joseph Smith, including Mormon dissidents, an Anti-Mormon vigilante group in Carthage (the Hancock County seat), and many government officials in Illinois' capital (Springfield) determined to repeal the Nauvoo City Charter and keep the Mormons in their place.²⁵

Joseph Smith conducted a public meeting on December 7 near the temple to discuss recent vexatious lawsuits and kidnapping attempts. W. W. Phelps read a resolution pointing out that Missouri enemies were constantly striving to kidnap Mormons, not just Joseph Smith, and to rob them of property and to harass, beat, and even murder their victims. His resolution declared that Joseph Smith was not guilty of any crimes and was most upstanding in his personal behavior and the way he led the city. The document resolved to formally request Governor Thomas Ford that he forthwith provide protective measures for Nauvoo so that the citizens would have peace. Anyone coming into Nauvoo for the purpose of arresting or capturing Joseph Smith or other Mormons would be arrested themselves. The city had recently hired forty police officers who by day and night would protect Joseph Smith and the city and enforce the new ordinances. The Nauvoo Legion would also be called on as necessary to enforce the ordinances.²⁶

On December 16, W. W. Phelps began helping draft a petition to Congress for assistance to repel the mob threats and for Nauvoo to be considered a "territory" under the

immediate direction of the United States.²⁷ Phelps wrote other political documents and letters for Joseph Smith during December.

To further curry public favor, to show the Mormons' resolve, and to flatter Governor Ford, who had surprisingly changed from an opponent of Smith to a neutral protector, Phelps wrote in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*: "We thank God that we have not got a mobocratic governor in this state, but one who will abide the laws of the land, who will magnify his office, and does not feel disposed to prostitute it to the base principles of mobocracy, nor truckle to the influence of an unholy alliance that would add to the oppression of the innocent."²⁸

RESPONSES FROM PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

Meanwhile, three of the aforementioned presidential candidates—Senator Clay, Senator Calhoun, and Secretary Cass—wrote back to Joseph Smith. Henry Clay's response is dated November 15, 1843, from Ashland, Kentucky. Joseph considered writing back to Clay for months before responding in May 1844—after Clay became the official Whig candidate for president. Calhoun wrote from Fort Hill, South Carolina, on December 2, and Lewis Cass wrote from Detroit to Joseph Smith on December 9.²⁹

On December 27, 1843, W. W. Phelps visited Joseph Smith, who handed him the letters written by Cass and Calhoun. President Smith directed Phelps to write responses to both and show them "the folly of keeping p[e]ople out of their right[s] and that there was power in governme[n]t to redress wrongs."³⁰ Phelps went immediately to this task. Smith's letter to Calhoun (ghostwritten by Phelps) was dated January 2, 1844, and was published straightaway in both the *Times and Seasons* and the *Nauvoo Neighbor*. There is no indication that Joseph sent a letter to Cass; nothing about it appeared in any of the available media.

Both Cass and Calhoun had written back to Joseph Smith in similar ways. Cass indicated that "Mormonites" (a derogatory term) should be treated as well as anyone else in the country. But since Congress in 1840 had rejected the Mormons' petitions for redress, Cass felt that the president would have no authority to interfere with Missouri.³¹ Calhoun said that if he were elected president, he would abide by the Constitution without any respect to creeds. As to the Missouri situation, he expressed the same opinion he had given to Smith in Washington in 1839: "According to my views the case does not come within the jurisdiction of the federal government, which is one of limited and specific powers."³²

Joseph Smith and his close advisers were fed up with such responses. In his letter to Calhoun (ghostwritten by Phelps and printed in the newspapers), Joseph soundly rebuked the famous South Carolina senator. The letter's verbosity was common to Phelps's writing.³³ It contained nine long paragraphs filled with contempt and sarcasm. The following is but a small sample:

I am surprised, that a man, or men, in the highest stations of public life, should have made such a fragile view of a case, than which there is not one on the face of the

globe fraught with so much consequence to the happiness of men in this world, or the world to come. To be sure, the first paragraph of your letter appears very complacent, and fair on a white sheet of paper, and who, that is ambitious for greatness and power, would not have said the same thing? Your oath would bind you to support the constitution and laws, and as all creeds and religions are alike tolerated, they must, of course, all be justified or condemned, according to merit or demerit—but why, tell me why, are all the princip[al] men, held up for public stations, so cautiously careful, not to publish to the world, that they will judge a righteous judgment—law or no law: for laws and opinions, like the vanes of steeples, change with the wind. One congress passes a law, and another repeals it, and one statesman says that the constitution means this, and another that; and who does not know that all may be wrong? The opinion and pledge, therefore, in the first paragraph of your reply to my question, like the forced steam from the engine of a steamboat, makes the show of [a] bright cloud at first, but when it comes in contact with a purer atmosphere, dissolves to common air again.³⁴

JOSEPH SMITH TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT

Throughout January 1844, Joseph Smith and his advisers, including W. W. Phelps, pondered whom they might support for the US presidency. They learned from newspapers that Senator Calhoun had taken his name out of consideration.³⁵ They certainly didn't like what Cass and Clay had to say. They still hadn't heard from Van Buren and Johnson. There was little chance they would support Van Buren in any event given their sad past experience with him. They wondered if President John Tyler or Congress might be helpful, but they were not optimistic. They couldn't wait endlessly. On January 19, Joseph Smith gave an evening lecture before many citizens on the Constitution and candidates for the presidency.³⁶

In council, the brethren (with Phelps as a major participant) came up with a plan: put forward General Joseph Smith as a candidate for the presidency of the United States! They announced this momentous decision on January 29, 1844. They decided that Smith would not run in either of the two dominant political parties—the Whigs and the Democrats. Rather, the brethren would seek out “independent electors” (for the Electoral College) in every state. To accomplish this, General Smith said, “eve[r]y man in the city [Nauvoo] who could speak—th[r]oughout the land” would be commandeered to go to their native states and electioneer. Beginning at the church's April general conference, brethren would be sent to all the states. Examples would be Parley Pratt to New York, Erastus Snow to Vermont, and Sidney Rigdon to Pennsylvania. The apostles would lead the way in this political mission. Joseph said the brethren would “tell the people we have had whig & democrats presidnts long enough we want a Presedint of the United States.”³⁷ If General Smith were to obtain sufficient electoral votes, the election could then be decided in the House of Representatives.

Joseph assigned W. W. Phelps to compose a document on Smith's views on the powers and policies of the US government.³⁸ Phelps finished the platform within a week,

and on February 5 he went to Joseph Smith's office and read it to him. The document received the title "General Smith's Views on the Power and Policy of the Government of the United States."³⁹ Both Smith and Phelps used other Nauvoo men to help them refine the document.

In the February 7 *Nauvoo Neighbor*, Phelps teased the public: "Who shall be our next President?—Do you want to know? We will let it out soon. We have our eye upon the man, and when the time proper time comes, we will publish it 'from Dan to Beersheba,' and then as American citizens, we will go it with a rush."⁴⁰

The first formal meeting to nominate Joseph Smith took place the next day, February 8, 1844, in the upper floor of the red brick store. W. W. Phelps was called on to read "Views," which would become twelve printed pages in pamphlet form.⁴¹ This Joseph Smith-directed but Phelps-written platform included the following planks:

1. The US president should have the power to send troops to quell illegal mobocratic action without waiting for a state governor to make a request.
2. The president should support "liberty, freedom, and equal rights" together with "protection of person and property."
3. Slavery should be abolished; federal funds from the sale of public lands or by reducing the salary of congressmen should be used to pay a reasonable fee for slaveholders to free their slaves.
4. There should be fewer members of the House of Representatives—only one for every million persons in a state.
5. The United States should annex Texas and Oregon and with the cooperation of Indian tribes extend the nation from the Atlantic to the Pacific.
6. The penal system should be improved by helping reform the incarcerated.
7. A true national bank should be established and not one run independently by businessmen.
8. The president should pursue peace, but he should also be ready to prudently use arms against enemies of the nation.
9. The president should not promote self-serving office seekers, as was the case in the hypocritical administration of Martin Van Buren.

Following Phelps's reading, General Smith stood and told his council:

I would not have suffered my name to have been used by my friends or anywise as President of the United States, or candidate for that office, if I and my friends could have had the privilege of enjoying our religious and civil rights as American citizens, even those rights which the Constitution guarantees unto all her citizens alike. But this as a people we have been denied from the beginning. Persecution has rolled upon our heads from time to time, from portions of the United States, like peals of thunder, because of our religion; and no portion of the Government as yet has stepped forward for our relief. And in view of these things, I feel it to be my right and privilege to obtain what influence and power I can, lawfully, in the United States, for the protection of injured innocence.⁴²

This announcement to close advisers was followed the next evening, Friday, February 9, in a public meeting. Again, Phelps read “Views” and Joseph Smith explained to those assembled why he chose to be a candidate for the presidency. Many other leading Nauvoo gentlemen followed with their endorsement.⁴³ The campaign was off and running.

W. W. Phelps immediately did his part. He wrote an editorial entitled “Who Shall Be Our Next President?” that ran in *Times and Seasons* and in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*. It was hoped that the article would have wide distribution among Latter-day Saints and would be picked up by other newspapers in the country. He explained the choice of General Joseph Smith:

Executive power when correctly wielded, is a great blessing to the people of this great commonwealth, and forms one of the firmest pillars of our confederation. It watches the interests of the whole community with fatherly care. . . . If he be a man of enlightened mind, and capacious soul—if he is a virtuous man, a statesman, a patriot, and a man of unflinching integrity; if he possess the same spirit that fired the souls of our venerable sires, who founded this great commonwealth, and wishes to promote the universal good of the whole republic, he may indeed be made a blessing to community. But if he prostrates his high and honorable calling, to base and unworthy purposes; if he makes use of the power which the people have placed in his hands for their interests, to gratify his ambition, for the purpose of self-aggrandizement, or pecuniary interest; . . . he renders himself unworthy of the dignified trust reposed in him, debases the nation in the eyes of the civilized world, and produces misery and confusion at home. “When the wicked rule, the people mourn.”

There is perhaps no body of people in the United States who are at the present time more interested about the issue of the presidential contest, than are the Latter Day Saints. And our situation in regard to the two political parties, is a most novel one. It is a fact well understood, that we have suffered great injustice from the State of Missouri, that we have petitioned to the authorities of that state for redress in vain; that we have also memorialized congress, under the late administration, and have obtained the heartless reply that “congress has no power to redress your grievances.” After having taken all the legal, and constitutional steps that we can, we are still groaning under accumulated wrongs. Is there no power anywhere to redress our grievances? . . .

Under these circumstances the question again arises, who shall we support? General Joseph Smith. A man of sterling worth and integrity and of enlarged views; a man who has raised himself from the humblest walks in life to stand at the head of a large, intelligent, respectable, and increasing society, that has spread not only in this land, but in distant nations; a man whose talent and genius, are of an exalted nature, and whose experience has rendered him every way adequate to the onerous duty. Honorable, fearless, and energetic; he would administer justice with an impartial hand, and magnify and dignify the office of chief magistrate of this land; and we feel assured there is not a man in the United States more competent for the task.⁴⁴

Phelps followed in the next issue of the *Times and Seasons* with another promotion of Joseph Smith’s candidacy. He acknowledged that “Mr. Smith is not generally known

personally” as other known candidates and that “he has been a great deal calumniated and misrepresented.” Therefore, it falls to Nauvoo citizens to solve this problem “by lecturing, and publishing, and circulating his works; his political views; his honor, integrity, and virtue; stop the foul mouth of slander, and present him before the public in his own colors, that he may be known, respected, and supported.”⁴⁵

In the latter part of February and the early part of March 1844, the brethren frequently met and then came to some preliminary decisions about the campaign. On March 4, Joseph Smith (with Willard Richards writing in his behalf by) said, “I suggested the name of James Arlington Bennet of Long Island, as a candidate for Vice-President.” That same day, Richards wrote Bennet informing him of his nomination as vice president and urging him to study carefully Joseph Smith’s “Views” and then promote the candidacy in the nation’s leading newspaper, the *New York Herald*, and other papers with large circulation.⁴⁶

In the March 6 edition of the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, Phelps placed a large notice in a large and bold font: “For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois. Vice-President, Gen. James A. Bennet, New York.” Phelps then announced the forthcoming general conference of the church to be held the next month in April and then admonished the elders who were preaching in the East:

Another thing that we would remind the brethren of, is that of the Presidential election. Don’t forget to mention this in your peregrinations. Tell the people who would be the best man, the most able statesman; who could stand uncorrupted by bribes, and uninfluenced by power, other than the power of justice, and the cause of right; tell them where they can find a man of morality, purity, and virtue; tell them where they can find a man of sterling integrity, who is governed by the principles of righteousness; a patriot and philanthropist, who has both the disposition and moral fortitude to administer justice, and whose delight it would be to administer to the wants of the nation; to “break of every yoke and to let the oppressed go free.” Use all of your own influence, and get the brethren, in every part to use theirs also. Recollect, for President, General Joseph Smith, and for Vice President, General James Arlington Bennet.⁴⁷

Just two days later, on March 8, Willard Richards informed Joseph Smith that James Arlington Bennet would be constitutionally ineligible for the vice presidency because he was born in Ireland. (This was probably a rumor because later evidence shows that Bennet was born in New York.)⁴⁸ Smith indicated that his council would take that new information under advisement that evening. The brethren then agreed to drop Bennet from the ticket and to invite Colonel Solomon Copeland, a military veteran from Tennessee and a wealthy landowner, to be the vice-presidential candidate. Wilford Woodruff, who had known Copeland well in Tennessee and had taught him the gospel, was assigned to write Copeland.⁴⁹ Copeland did not respond to the request, and in May Joseph Smith picked Sidney Rigdon as vice-presidential candidate.⁵⁰

Back on February 24, fifteen hundred copies of Joseph Smith’s written platform, “Views,” had been printed and readied for distribution.⁵¹ This action befitted the times. Campaigning in those years was primarily accomplished by circulating large volumes of printed documents.⁵² However, Smith and his advisers needed to plan strategies to

promulgate “Views” and to campaign widely in each of the states. They also needed to influence key opinion makers throughout the nation. What could be done?

COUNCIL OF FIFTY

Joseph Smith and the brethren decided to set up a larger council.⁵³ This would be a theocratic group to prepare for the millennial kingdom of God under Christ, a planning unit to oversee all political activities of the Saints and of Joseph Smith’s campaign for the presidency, and a council to discuss developing profitable relationships with American Indians.⁵⁴ On March 11, 1844, Joseph Smith created an official new council to be known as the “Council of Fifty,” known also frequently as the “Kingdom of God.” W. W. Phelps was one of the twenty-three founding members who included Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, John Taylor, George A. Smith, John M. Bernhisel, George Miller, Newel K. Whitney, and William Clayton.⁵⁵ Other prominent church and community leaders were soon added to the ranks until the number rose to fifty-two by mid-April.⁵⁶

On the same day, William Clayton recorded the purposes of the council:

This organization was called the Council of Fifty or Kingdom of God, and was titled by revelation as follows. “Verily thus saith the Lord, this is the name by which you shall be called, *the Kingdom of God and his Laws, with the Keys and power thereof, and judgment in the hands of his servants, Ahman Christ.*” In this Council was the plan arranged for supporting President Joseph Smith as a candidate for the presidency of the U.S. President Joseph was the standing chairman of the council and myself the Clerk. In this Council was also devised the plan of establishing an emigration to Texas, and plans laid for the exaltation of a standard and ensign of truth for the nations of the earth. In this Council was the plan devised to restore the Ancients to the Knowledge of the truth and the restoration of union and peace amongst ourselves. In this Council was President Joseph chosen our Prophet, Priest, and King by Hosannas.⁵⁷

W. W. Phelps participated in myriad ways in the highly secret and confidential Council of Fifty. First, at the initial meeting, Joseph Smith appointed Phelps along with John Taylor, Willard Richards, and Parley P. Pratt to a committee to write a “constitution” for the Council of Fifty.⁵⁸ On March 21, Phelps was appointed to a committee to write a memorial to Congress, and this memorial was read at the council’s meeting of March 26.⁵⁹ On April 4, Phelps “read a communication from the *Washington Globe* on the subject of General Joseph Smiths views of the power & policy of the government of the United States.”⁶⁰ Phelps wrote a response to the *Washington Globe* in the name of Joseph Smith and reported on his action in a meeting of the council on April 18. In this rejoinder, Phelps introduced the term *theodemocracy*, which would characterize the council’s government concept wherein “God and the people hold the power to conduct the affairs of men in righteousness.”⁶¹

The constitution committee diligently labored on a document.⁶² Phelps considered this assignment “the most important ever undertaken by any committee” and felt that they needed more time to complete their work.⁶³ They finally read a draft of the constitution to the council on April 18, 1844. This constitution declared that God was the only legitimate lawgiver and that only the “Kingdom of God” could truly protect life, liberty, and possession of property. This document had the markings of Phelps’s influence, such as this sentence: “the cruelty, oppression, bondage, slavery, rapine, bloodshed, murder, carnage, desolation, and all the evils that blast the peace, exaltation, and glory of the universe, exist in consequence of unrighteous rule, and unlawful dominion.”⁶⁴ Council members discussed the proposed constitution for days and could not arrive at a conclusion as to its appropriate contents. Finally, on April 25, Joseph Smith said to “let the constitution alone” and dictated a revelation: “Verily thus saith the Lord, ye are my constitution, and I am your God, and ye are my spokesmen. From henceforth do as I shall command you. Saith the Lord.”⁶⁵

PHELPS’S MULTIPLE POLITICAL ESSAYS

Meanwhile, W. W. Phelps continued his promotion of Joseph Smith through the press. Again, he took the name “A Traveller” to lavishly praise Smith.

The General appears perfectly at home on every subject; and his familiarity with many languages affords his ample means to become informed concerning all nations and principles, which his familiar and dignified deportment towards all, must secure to his interest the affections of every intelligent and virtuous man that may chance to fall in his way; and I am astonished that so little is known abroad concerning him. . . .

Free from all bigotry and superstition, he dives into every subject, and it seems as though the world was not large enough to satisfy his capacious soul, and from his conversation, one might suppose him as well acquainted with other worlds as this.

So far as I can discover, Gen. Smith is the nation’s man, and the man who will exalt the nation, if the people will give him the opportunity: all the parties will find a friend in him, so far as right is concerned. . . .

From my brief acquaintance, I consider Gen. Smith, independent of his peculiar religious views, (in which, by the by, I have discovered neither vanity nor folly,) the sine-qua-non of the age, to our nations’ prosperity. He has learned the all important lesson, “to profit by the experience of those who have gone before,” so that, in short, Gen. Smith begins where other men leave off.⁶⁶

W. W. Phelps’s additional political writings, beyond those already mentioned above, were either official political manifestos ghostwritten in behalf of presidential candidate Joseph Smith or yet other articles (sometimes using pseudonyms and false identities) to promote the character and candidacy of General Smith. In order of their writing, they were as follows:

1. “An Appeal to the Freemen of the State of Vermont, the ‘Brave Green Mountain Boys,’ and Honest Men” [in the name of Joseph Smith].⁶⁷

2. "To the Editor of the Neighbor" [a diatribe against the "senior editor" of the *Pittsburg Gazette*, who had attacked Joseph Smith after a visit to both Nauvoo and Warsaw; by "Not the Prophet," a pseudonym of Phelps].⁶⁸
3. "Missouri Justice" [a description of a recent lynching of a number of blacks in Missouri, showing how evil Missouri justice is, as in how the Missourians also treated the Mormons].⁶⁹
4. "Carthage, Warsaw and Green Plains" [a fiery discussion against the Anti-Mormon Party's illegal actions and intents from the citizens of these three communities in Hancock County].⁷⁰
5. "Pacific Innuendo" [a favorable response to Governor Ford's pleading for peace in the *Warsaw Signal*; in the name of Joseph Smith].⁷¹
6. "A Voice of Innocence" [an editorial defending the virtue of women in Nauvoo, some of whom had been publicly accused of prostitution and spiritual wifery by one Orsimus F. Bostwick; in the name of Joseph Smith and later also of Emma Smith, president of the Nauvoo Relief Society].⁷²
7. "To the Editor of the Neighbor" [an appeal in the name of Joseph Smith to not speak evil of the *Warsaw Signal*].⁷³
8. "For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois. Religion and Politics."⁷⁴
9. "A Friendly Hint to Missouri" [in the name of Joseph Smith].⁷⁵
10. "For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois" [a report pointing out that not many "exchange newspapers" had commented on Joseph Smith's candidacy, but also including a report from those that had commented].⁷⁶
11. "For the Times and Seasons" [a testimonial of the character of Joseph Smith by "A Constant Reader," a pseudonym].⁷⁷
12. "The Globe" [a response to a mocking article by Francis Blair in the Washington (DC) *Globe* about Joseph Smith's "Views"; in the name of Joseph Smith].⁷⁸
13. "A New Advocate for the National Bank" [a lengthy article highlighting a key plank in Joseph Smith's platform].⁷⁹
14. "Public Meeting" [minutes of meeting on April 23, 1844, to discuss campaign strategy wherein Phelps proposed an Illinois State Convention for candidacy at Nauvoo in May].⁸⁰
15. "To the Editor of the Neighbor. Sir" [a lengthy letter dated April 10, 1844, purportedly from a visitor to Nauvoo and the Mansion House who also attended the April general conference and gave high praise to General Smith and the Mormons; by "Sissimus," a pseudonym].⁸¹
16. "For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois. To Our Subscribers."⁸²
17. "For the Neighbor. Mr. Editor" [a promotion of Joseph Smith's "Views" by "An American," a pseudonym].⁸³
18. "For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois."⁸⁴
19. "State Convention" [a lengthy report on the Illinois State Convention for Joseph Smith, president, and Sidney Rigdon, vice president, held on May 17, 1844, in Nauvoo and in which Phelps played a predominant role in reading many resolutions that he had helped author].⁸⁵

20. "Correspondence between Gen. Joseph Smith and the Hon. Henry Clay" [in the name of Joseph Smith].⁸⁶
21. "For the Times and Seasons. Mr. Editor" [a testimonial of the beauties and successes of Nauvoo under Gen. Joseph Smith by "Hospes" (which means a guest or stranger), a pseudonym].⁸⁷
22. "A Word to the Wise" [a charge to the people of the United States to correct their own political faults before criticizing others].⁸⁸
23. "Religion and Politics" [a lengthy description of the evils of Martin Van Buren and Henry Clay contrasted with the pure religious nature of Joseph Smith].⁸⁹
24. "Proclamation" [an appeal from Joseph Smith, but assigned to be written by Phelps, for all Nauvoo citizens to help him as mayor keep peace and order in Nauvoo in light of the publication of the *Nauvoo Expositor*].⁹⁰

The campaign for the presidency required a considerable amount of attention, hours, and energy from W. W. Phelps. Several Council of Fifty meetings took place in which Phelps often received an assignment to write a letter or a document or to offer an opinion. Definitely, Phelps was the most significant publicist of the presidential campaign through his articles, notices, and advertisements in the *Times and Seasons* and the *Nauvoo Neighbor*.

APPEALS TO THE RESPECTIVE STATES

Early on in the presidential campaign, clear back in November 1843, the brethren decided that appeals to various native states in the union could possibly help bring the plight of the Saints in Missouri to the attention of legislators, governors, and the public at large. The first of these was Joseph Smith's appeal to the "Green Mountain Boys" of his native state of Vermont. Joseph had directed W. W. Phelps to write this piece, and the Prophet seemed pleased with it because he had Phelps read it often to other brethren.

Joseph Smith's public appeal to Vermont turned out to be a prototype for similarly passionately worded manifestos to other native states of many of the brethren.⁹¹ Each was exceedingly lengthy. These appeals, which were likewise published in the *Times and Seasons* and/or the *Nauvoo Neighbor* because Phelps and the brethren knew that other newspaper editors might read them and comment on them, are as follows.

1. "An Appeal to the People of the State of Maine," with the attached name of Benjamin Andrews.⁹²
2. "To the Honorable, the Senate and House of Representatives of Pennsylvania, in Legislative Capacity Assembled," with the attached name of Sidney Rigdon P.M. [postmaster].⁹³
3. "An Appeal to the Inhabitants of Massachusetts," with the attached name of Phineas Richards.⁹⁴
4. "An Appeal to the State of Tennessee," with the attached name of A. [Dr. Alphonso] Young.⁹⁵
5. "House—No. 61. Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Memorial," with the attached name of Noah Packard.⁹⁶

6. "To the Church in Maine," with the attached name of Benjamin Andrews. This piece is different from the previous "appeal" to Maine by the same author. The first one was primarily about justice regarding Missouri because Joseph Smith had not declared his candidacy for the presidency. This second essay was more of a campaign document that also solicited help from Maine church members.⁹⁷
7. "For the Neighbor," a letter from Sidney Rigdon to Paul M. Closkey, a man sympathetic to the Mormons and a member of the Pennsylvania state legislature, and his response.⁹⁸

Each of these essays was at least influenced by Phelps's first epistle to the citizens of Vermont, if not partly ghostwritten by Phelps. They employ his style of writing.

Key events pertaining to the campaign took place at the church's annual general conference held in the open air near the temple in Nauvoo on April 6–9, 1844. Impressive steps were taken during the conference and the subsequent two weeks to send out emissaries (actually missionary elders) to campaign for Joseph Smith in all states of the union.⁹⁹

The *Times and Seasons* of April 15 identified the names of 342 elders who were assigned by Brigham Young and the Twelve Apostles to go to each state both to preach the gospel and to campaign for Joseph Smith. (Other elders were added later.) They were charged to "present before the people 'General Smith's views of the power and policy of the General Government,' and seek diligently to get up electors who will go for him for the presidency." By and large, these elders hailed from the states to which they were assigned and would logically campaign among former associates. The states with a large number of these political missionaries were New York (forty-seven), Ohio (forty-one), Illinois (thirty-seven), Tennessee (twenty-four), and Indiana (twenty-three). The apostles would go from state to state supervising the effort.¹⁰⁰

According to contemporary reports and journal entries, these men went to their assigned states and set up both church conferences and political meetings.¹⁰¹ The brethren planned to set up political conventions to garner "electors" that would be associated with Joseph Smith on the ballot of each state.¹⁰² Then they all would gather in Baltimore on July 13, 1844, to officially nominate Joseph Smith in a national convention.¹⁰³ Members of the Twelve visited as many political meetings as possible. Nearly all political missionaries were performing their duty when word reached them that Joseph Smith had been slain.

Meanwhile, from the April general conference to the June arrest of Joseph Smith, W. W. Phelps continued to publish his aforementioned articles in the *Times and Seasons* and the *Nauvoo Neighbor*. Furthermore, Smith instructed Phelps in a Council of Fifty meeting on May 13 to respond to Orson Hyde's reports of his political activities in the nation's capital.¹⁰⁴

W. W. Phelps was part of Joseph Smith's political team that planned an Illinois State Convention for May 17 in Nauvoo to promote Smith's campaign. He wrote the following:

Our friends must not forget the 17th inst. This is the time set apart for holding our State Convention, in this city, for nominating electors, for this State. Let the friends of Gen. Smith not be derelict in the performance of their duty. Many important

questions, involving the election of Gen. Smith, are expected to be laid before the people upon that occasion, highly necessary to be understood. Come to the rescue. Rally around the standard of freedom which Gen. Smith has raised, battle for liberty side by side with this patriot; enter the political campaign, determined, by all honorable means, to throw off the great burthen of corruption under which our beloved country groans, and victory will be the reward of our exertions. Every friend to the triumph of Gen. Smith should be vigilant;—vigilance is the price of liberty;—and use every exertion to secure his success.¹⁰⁵

A week later Phelps reported at length about the convention in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, including his own future committee assignments to lead the campaign. Delegates were also named for each state that would help organize the Baltimore convention in July.

The band assembled in the evening and several national airs were played, a song prepared for the occasion, was sung by Mr. Levi Hancock, and speeches delivered by a number of gentlemen, and to conclude, we had a general serenade on the departure of the nominees; a barrel of tar which had been prepared was set fire to, and the names of Gen. Smith, and Sidney Rigdon, *free trade and sailor's rights*, and *Jeffersonian democracy* were repeated with universal acclamation, until the sound reverberated from hill-top to hill-top. Gen. Smith, was then escorted by a number of gentlemen, accompanied by the band. Three cheers were given at the "Mansion" for the General and Sidney Rigdon, which closed the proceedings of the day.¹⁰⁶

CAMPAIGN ENDS

However, the campaign stalled and did not go forward as planned. Joseph Smith's journal during this period revealed the rapidly growing antagonism within the church to undermine his authority. Rather than working on his campaign, Smith was forced to direct the majority of his energy in coping with the dissent within. The same was also true for Phelps, who was equally involved at the side of the Prophet during this most trying time. Indeed, Phelps accompanied Joseph and Hyrum Smith to Carthage and was himself under indictment for the same charges as the two Smiths. Ultimately, Joseph Smith's campaign came to a crashing halt with his arrest and subsequent martyrdom in Carthage.

W. W. Phelps decided to compile a booklet on Joseph Smith's campaign in June 1844 that would be used as a political tract, but the booklet could not be published until after Smith's death.¹⁰⁷ It turned out that these were the most memorable and widely distributed pieces of his political ghostwriting for Joseph Smith. The pamphlet was entitled *The Voice of Truth, Containing the Public Writings, Portrait, and Last Sermon of President Joseph Smith* and featured these essays (in the order of their appearance):

1. "Correspondence between Gen. James Arlington Bennett [*sic*], and Gen. Joseph Smith."
2. "An Appeal to the Freemen of the State of Vermont, the 'Brave Green Mountain Boys,' and Honest Men."

3. "Correspondence of Gen. Joseph Smith, and the Hon. John C. Calhoun."
4. "Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the U.S."
5. "Pacific Innuendo."
6. "A Friendly Hint to Missouri."
7. "The Globe."
8. "Correspondence between Gen. Joseph Smith and the Hon. Henry Clay."

To these articles was added an appendix of sorts: "Joseph Smith's Last Sermon, Delivered at the April Conference, 1844," also known as the King Follett discourse. Phelps wrote the preface to this booklet in his obvious style and added a poem at the end entitled "The Capstone." One of the most significant contributions that Phelps made to the ministry of his prophet-leader was serving as his political clerk and political ghostwriter in 1843 and 1844.

JOSEPH SMITH'S FRIEND

W. W. Phelps and Joseph Smith had grown exceptionally close to each other during Joseph's last year of life, as evidenced in his journal that recorded friendly interactions either in the office or in Joseph and Emma's home. Emma appeared to enjoy Phelps's company as well.¹⁰⁸ Like any other human, Joseph needed friends and moments in which he could unwind and be himself and not constantly be in the forefront of a meeting.

To celebrate the new year of 1844, Phelps composed an unrhymed poem in honor of Joseph Smith and arranged to have about fifty singers and musicians perform it at the Prophet's window at the turn of midnight, January 1. Five of the twelve verses of Phelps's "New-Year's Hymn" follow:

Up, up! for there's a fun'ral pass'd,
 And not a mourner seen.—
 Wake, wake! for there's a new year born,
 While all the world's a sleep!

'Tis twelve o'clock, and all is well
 In beautiful Nauvoo:
 The old year's dead; the young one lives
 To bless created things.

.....

*What though the devil raises mobs
 To vex the saints of God;
 A little time will take them all,
 Where vengeance keeps a feast.*

What though the sects all worship, too,
 A shadow for a God;
 We have the living prophet's voice
 To show a better way.

.....

What though the world is thunder struck
 At Joseph's glorious deeds,—
 We'll pray to God for kings and priests
 To reign with Christ on earth.¹⁰⁹

NOTES

1. Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 305.
2. William Smith's biographer, Kyle R. Walker, assumed that Smith was the author of all editorial material and notices in *The Wasp* simply because he was the editor. See Kyle R. Walker, *William B. Smith: In the Shadow of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015), 158–61. Walker did not analyze who also worked at the Nauvoo printing office, nor did he grasp throughout his biography that Phelps was even around to play a role. I maintain that Phelps's inimical style is evident in numerous articles in *The Wasp*. Wilford Woodruff claimed that William Smith was only the nominal editor of *The Wasp* ("History of William Smith," *Deseret News*, May 26, 1858, 57–58). My conclusion is that Phelps was the author of *The Wasp* editorials, not William Smith. I am responsible for this assertion.
3. "Mr. Sharp, Sir," *The Wasp* 1 (April 16, 1842): 2 (original spelling preserved).
4. The first use of this epithet appeared in "The Turkey," *The Wasp* 1 (April 23, 1842): 2.
5. "Apology," *The Wasp* 1 (May 7, 1842): 2; emphasis in original.
6. The results of the election were recorded in *The Wasp*, February 8, 1843. See also MHC, vol. D-1, 1464; HC, 5:264; John S. Dinger, ed., *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011), 156n23, February 11, 1843 (hereafter *Nauvoo City Minutes*).
7. MHC, vol. D-1, 1467; HC, 5:270; Dinger, *Nauvoo City Minutes*, February 11, 1843, 157, 159. The Nauvoo City Council minutes are online at <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/nauvoo-city-council-rough-minute-book-november-1842-january-1844/1>.
8. *JSP*, J2: 301; MHC, vol. D-1, 1490; HC, 5:299–300.
9. The Nauvoo City Council identified duties of the city attorney (Phelps) on February 25, 1843: "It shall be the duty of the City Attorney to defend the interests of the Corporation in all Suits instituted by or against this Corporation, to make such returns to the Mayor, of the State & condition of the said Suits, at such periods and in such manner as he shall prescribe, & generally to give such legal advice on matters Pertaining to the interests of the Corporation, as the Mayor and Aldermen shall from time to time require." Phelps was to receive fifty dollars per annum for this service. See Dinger, *Nauvoo City Minutes* (February 15, 1843), 160.
10. See *JSP*, J2:278 (February 25, 1843); MHC, vol. D-1, 1484; HC, 5:240; *JSP*, J2:299 (March 7, 1843); Dinger, *Nauvoo City Minutes*, 185 (September 18, 1843); 186 (October 14, 1843, and November 11, 1843); 190–91 (December 16, 1843); 193–95 (December 21, 1843); 195–96 (December 29, 1843); 200–201 (January 3, 1844); 209–10 (January 5, 1844); 212 (January 13, 1844); 216–20 (January 16, 1844); 228–31 (March 5, 1844); 234–36 (April 13, 1844); 236 (April 29, 1844); 239–50 (June 8, 1844); 250–66 (June 10, 1844); 268 (June 21, 1844). Nauvoo City Council minutes are now available at <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/nauvoo-city-council-rough-minute-book-november-1842-january-1844/1>.
11. Dinger, *Nauvoo City Minutes*, 175 (June 1, 1843); 177 (June 10, 1843); 184 (August 12, 1843).

12. Dinger, *Nauvoo City Minutes*, 226 (February 12, 1844).
13. MHC, vol. D-1, 1579, 1581–85; HC, 5:433, 435, 438–42.
14. “Who Shall Be Our Next President?,” *T&S* 4 (October 1, 1843): 343–34; “Who Shall Be Our Next President?,” *NN* 1 (November 8, 1843): 110; MHC, vol. E-1, 1738–39; HC, 6:39–40.
15. As also emphasized in chapter 24, I assert that W. W. Phelps was the chief editorial writer in the Nauvoo Printing Office from 1842 onward, not Joseph Smith, John Taylor, or any other person. I am responsible for this conclusion as well as my claim that Phelps used pseudonyms to write letters to the editor.
16. “For the Neighbor, Mr. Editor,” *NN* 1 (October 18, 1843): 99. “Blackstone” refers to Sir William Blackstone (1723–1780), a prominent British jurist, professor, judge, and politician. He is especially remembered and widely cited for his explanation of English law in the massive four-volume *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765–1769). American jurists often cited Blackstone for the foundation of understanding law. In truth, it was Phelps who put in countless hours studying Blackstone and then cited him in city council meetings and private councils with Joseph Smith and the other leaders.
17. For biographical information on Bennet, see *JSP*, J2:442; Lyndon W. Cook, “James Arlington Bennet and the Mormons,” *BYU Studies* 19, no. 2 (1979): 1–4. The original letter from Joseph Smith (ghostwritten by Phelps and in Phelps’s handwriting) to Bennet on March 17, 1843, is digitally reproduced at <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-james-arlington-bennet-17-march-1843/1>.
18. Most of Joseph Smith’s political letters and pamphlets, as written by W. W. Phelps, were compiled into a booklet posthumously entitled *Voice of Truth, Containing the Public Discourses, Portrait, and the Last Sermon of President Joseph Smith* (Nauvoo, IL: Printed by John Taylor, 1844). These documents were actually previously published in the *Times and Seasons* and/or the *Nauvoo Neighbor*. Samuel Brown discusses the differences in rhetoric between Joseph Smith and W. W. Phelps in his “The Translator and the Ghostwriter,” *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 26–62. The Prophet’s style in his public speaking was distinctly different from that of the documents ghostwritten in his name by Phelps. Brown concludes that obvious evidence showed Phelps as the writer of the “political material” (p. 26) in *Voice of Truth*. I have also come to the same conclusion.
19. The complete correspondence between James Arlington Bennet and Joseph Smith is published in *Voice of Truth*, 7–14; MHC, vol. E-1, 1773–79; HC, 6:71–78; *NN* 1 (December 6, 1843): 127; *NN* 1 (December 13, 1843): 131; emphasis in original. On the day that Phelps composed the letter to Bennet (November 13, 1843), and again on the next day, Joseph Smith directed Phelps to read the letter aloud to significant church leaders and to a friendly Illinois lawyer, Edwin Southwick. See MHC, vol. E-1, 1779; HC, 6:78; Brown, “The Translator and the Ghostwriter,” 43–44.
20. Cook, “James Arlington Bennet and the Mormons,” 2–4.
21. *JSP*, J3:124, 124n559, 125.
22. Bruce A. Van Orden, “William W. Phelps’s Service in Nauvoo as Joseph Smith’s Political Clerk,” *BYU Studies* 32, nos. 1–2 (Winter and Spring 1991): 81–94. These letters are now available at <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-presidential-candidates-4-november-1843-draft/1>.
23. *JSP*, J3:134, 134n594, 135, 135n595; MHC, vol. E-1, 1781–84; HC, 6:84–89.
24. For the memorial’s text and complete list of signees, see Lyman D. Platt, “1843 Petition to the United States Congress,” *Nauvoo Journal* 1 (1989): 31–51. See also *JSP*, J3:135n596.
25. *JSP*, J3:140–44.
26. “Nauvoo Neighbor:—Extra,” *NN* December 7, 1843 (one page printed); “Public Meeting,” *NN* 1 (December 13, 1843): 129; “An Ordinance for Selecting Forty Policemen and for Other

- Purposes," *NN* 1 (December 13, 1843): 130. See also *JSP*, *J3*:140–41, 140n621; *MHC*, vol. E-1, 1794–95, 1801–2; *HC*, 6:101–2, 110–13.
27. *JSP*, *J3*:145, 145n645, 149, 149n666, 210–11, and n922; 213, 213n932; *MHC*, vol. E-1, 1805; *HC*, 6:116. This memorial or another like it was not completed until late March 1844, when it became a matter of concern of the Council of Fifty. *JSP*, *CFM*:58, 59n144, 60, 60n147. The document's text, cowritten by Phelps, is found in *JSP*, *CFM*:67–70; *MHC*, vol. E-1, 1939–42; *HC*, 6:275–77. In its final form, this memorial also requested that Joseph Smith be commissioned an officer in the US Army and be allowed to command a hundred-thousand-man force to protect immigrants traveling to Oregon and California. It was delivered to President John Tyler and members of Congress in April and May 1844.
 28. *NN* 1 (December 20, 1843): 134. Phelps also wrote a letter to Governor Ford on December 30, 1843. See <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-william-w-phelps-to-thomas-ford-30-december-1843/2?highlight=Phelps#ft-source-note>.
 29. *JSP*, *J3*:152, 152n683.
 30. *JSP*, *J3*:152. See also *MHC*, vol. E-1, 1830; *HC*, 6:144.
 31. *JSP*, *J3*:152n683.
 32. "Correspondence of Gen. Joseph Smith and Hon. J. C. Calhoun," *T&S* 5 (January 1, 1844): 394; "Correspondence of Gen. Joseph Smith and Hon. J. C. Calhoun," *NN* 1 (January 10, 1844): 146–47; *Voice of Truth*, 21–22.
 33. See also Crawley, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church*, 1:309–11.
 34. "Correspondence of Gen. Joseph Smith and Hon. J. C. Calhoun," *T&S* 5 (January 1, 1844): 394–96; "Correspondence of Gen. Joseph Smith and Hon. J. C. Calhoun," *NN* 1 (January 10, 1844): 146–47; *Voice of Truth*, 22–26.
 35. "Mr. Calhoun's Withdrawal from the Presidential Contest," *NN* 1 (February 28, 1844): 174.
 36. *JSP*, *J3*:166, 166n737; *JSP*, *CFM*:xxxiv–xxxv.
 37. *JSP*, *J3*:169–71, 169n753.
 38. *JSP*, *CFM*:xxxvi, 17.
 39. *JSP*, *J3*:173, 173n775; *JSP*, *CFM*:17. Phelps eventually published an entire copy of "Views" in the *Times and Seasons* after reporting that many subscribers had requested a copy ("Gen. Smith's Views on the Government and Policy of the U.S.," *T&S* 5 (May 15, 1844): 528–33). See also "General Smith's Views," *NN* 2 (May 8, 1844): 2; *MHC*, vol. F-1, 1876–86; *HC*, 6:351–61. The platform was also published in *The Prophet*, the church's newspaper in New York City: "Gen. Smith on the Policy and Powers of the Government of the United States," *The Prophet* 1 (June 8, 1844): 1–2. John W. Welch, in his "Joseph Smith's Awareness of Greek and Latin," *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2015), asserts that "although Joseph Smith's awareness of classical languages is not nearly as well-known as are his forays in Egyptian and Hebrew, his interest in Greek and Latin were not insignificant" (p. 303). Welch is convinced that Smith composed his own essays that included multiple Latin phrases and that they were not written by a "ghostwriter" (p. 319). My contention, along with Samuel Brown, is that Phelps composed or at least helped compose all of Joseph's essays or letters that were filled with Latin phrases. Welch also believes (p. 308) that Smith wrote his own platform document, "Views," in spite of immense evidence that Phelps is the author.
 40. *NN* 1 (February 7, 1844): 162.
 41. *MHC*, vol. E-1, 1886–87; *HC*, 6:210.
 42. *MHC*, vol. E-1, 1886; *HC*, 6:210; *JSP*, *J3*:175n779.
 43. *JSP*, *J3*:175; *MHC*, vol. E-1, 1886–87; *HC*, 6:210.
 44. "Who Shall Be Our Next President?," *T&S* 4 (February 15, 1844): 439–41; "Who Shall Be Our Next President?," *NN* 1 (February 7, 1844): 2; *MHC*, vol. E-1, 1889–92; *HC*, 6:214–17.

45. "For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois," *T&S* 5 (March 1, 1844): 455; "For President, Joseph Smith," *NN* 1 (February 28, 1844): 2; MHC, vol. E-1, 1899–1900; *HC*, 6:226–27. John Taylor is sometimes inaccurately considered the writer of this and other editorials on Joseph Smith's candidacy, based solely on the fact that Taylor was listed as the editor of both Nauvoo papers. For example, "Taylor then wrote a series of political articles." Susan Easton Black, "The Pivotal Role of John Taylor in the Political Campaign of Joseph Smith," in *John Taylor: Champion of Liberty*, ed. Mary Jane Woodger (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 28–31.
46. *JSP*, *J3*:189–90; MHC, vol. E-1, 1902–3; *HC*, 6:23–33.
47. "Conference," *NN* 1 (March 6, 1844): 2.
48. *JSP*, *J2*:442.
49. *JSP*, *CFM*:57, 57n138; *JSP*, *J3*:199, 199n875; MHC, vol. E-1, 1917; *HC*, 6:248; *WWJ*, 2:359. Nearly two weeks later, Woodruff presented Joseph Smith with the letter he had written to Copeland. *JSP*, *J3*:199, 199n875; MHC, vol. E-1, 1933; *HC*, 6:268; *WWJ*, 2:367. Woodruff's letter is on the Joseph Smith Papers Project website: <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-wilford-woodruff-to-solomon-copeland-9-march-1844>. No response from Copeland has been located.
50. *JSP*, *CFM*:157–58, 158n491.
51. *JSP*, *J3*:183; *JSP*, *CFM*:17; MHC, vol. E-1, 1898; *HC*, 6:224.
52. Joseph Smith acknowledged as much when he met in council on February 25. The brethren prayed that "Views" might be spread far and wide, and be the means of opening the hearts of the people." *JSP*, *J3*:183, 183n817. Under the date February 27, the official history of the church states, "Mailed my 'Views of Powers and Policy,' &c., to the President and cabinet, supreme judges, senators, representatives, principal newspapers in the United States, (all the German), and many postmasters and individuals." MHC, vol. E-1, 1898–99; *HC*, 6:225; *JSP*, *J3*:184. See also *JSP*, *J3*:170n755.
53. The presidential campaign was not the only reason why the Council of Fifty was created. At a critical meeting on Sunday, March 10, 1844, that included W. W. Phelps, Joseph Smith and many advisers considered issues such as taking the gospel to all Indian tribes in other parts of the Western Hemisphere when they decided to organize this new council. *JSP*, *CFM*:17–39.
54. *JSP*, *CFM*:xxv–xxix, 17–18; Spencer W. McBride, "The Council of Fifty and Joseph Smith's Presidential Ambitions," in *The Council of Fifty*, ed. Matthew J. Grow and R. Eric Smith (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2017), 21–30; Jeffrey D. Mahas, "American Indians and the Nauvoo-Era Council of Fifty," in Grow and Smith, *Council of Fifty*, 119–22.
55. All the minutes of the Council of Fifty are contained in *The Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records: Council of Fifty, Minutes, March 1844–January 1846*. This volume outlines the historical context for the minutes and the council itself. *JSP*, *CFM*:40–45 contains the reconstructed minutes of the March 11, 1844, meeting, including the names of those admitted to the council. See also Jedediah S. Rogers, ed., *The Council of Fifty: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2014), 28 (March 11, 1844). Rogers provides a compilation of known documents written by participating persons connected with the Council of Fifty throughout its entire existence in Illinois, in the trek across the plains, and in Utah. Another useful discussion of the creation of the Council of Fifty and its dual purposes is found in Andrew F. Ehat, "It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 3 (Spring 1980): 253–80. The first members of the Council of Fifty are listed in MHC, vol. E-1, 1928.
56. *JSP*, *CFM*:50–51, 64, 109. William Clayton recorded the names of the fifty-two men "who have [been] called upon to form the grand Kingdom of God by revelation." Other than "President J Smith, Standing Chairman," who was listed as number one, the men were listed in order of their age. W. W. Phelps was listed as number eight, or the seventh oldest of the

- council. Phelps was fifty-two at the time. The oldest was Samuel Bent (sixty-five), who was also father-in-law to Phelps's oldest daughter Sabrina, and the youngest were Lorenzo D. Wasson (nephew of Emma Smith) and Benjamin F. Johnson (close friend to Joseph Smith), who were both twenty-four. William Clayton, Journal, April 18, 1844, CHL.
57. Rogers, *Council of Fifty*, 29 (March 11, 1844); emphasis added. Council of Fifty minutes for March 14 indicated that the complete holy name for the council came by revelation from "Ahman Christ." *JSP, CFM*:48. In official minutes for March 11, 1844, Clayton recorded, "All seemed agreed to look to some place where we can go and establish a Theocracy either in Texas or Oregon or somewhere in California &c." *JSP, CFM*:40.
 58. *JSP, CFM*:xxxvii, 42, 42n72, 54, 54n128, 57, 57n137, 80–81, 91–95.
 59. *JSP, CFM*:66–70, 66n167, 70n176.
 60. *JSP, CFM*:74.
 61. *JSP, CFM*:110, 110n302. This response was published in *T&S 5* (April 15, 1844): 510. For a discussion of "theodemocracy" and the Council of Fifty, see Patrick Q. Mason, "God and the People Reconsidered: Further Reflections on Theodemocracy in Early Mormonism," in Grow and Smith, *Council of Fifty*, 32–42.
 62. Nathan B. Oman, "'We, the People of the Kingdom of God': Constitution Writing in the Council of Fifty," in Grow and Smith, *Council of Fifty*, 55–72.
 63. *JSP, CFM*:91–95.
 64. *JSP, J3*:231n1035; *JSP, CFM*:110–14.
 65. *JSP, CFM*:xxxvii, 13–37, 114–30, 135–37.
 66. "Mr. Editor" (letter dated March 1844), *T&S 5* (April 15, 1844): 502; "For the Neighbor. Mr. Editor" (letter dated March 1844), *NN 1* (April 10, 1844): 3; MHC, vol. E-1, 1934–35; *HC*, 6:269–70.
 67. Directions to Phelps to compose this appeal to the citizens of Vermont, dated November 30, 1843, are found in *JSP, J3*:136, 136n599, 137, 138, 138n606. The full text of Joseph Smith's appeal to his native state of Vermont is found in MHC, vol. E-1, 1785–89; *HC*, 6:88–93; and *Voice of Truth*, 15–20. See also *WWJ*, 2:329–30. Phelps, as he was wont to do, exaggerated some of his arguments in this article. But his exaggeration went to new heights, even to fabricating a story, in the following quote from this article: "My father [Joseph Smith Sr.], who stood several times in the battles of the American Revolution, till his companions, in arms, had been shot dead, at his feet . . ." *Voice of Truth*, 19. This false statement is also found word for word in the versions of the piece in MHC and *HC*. Sadly, this untruth went out in the name of Joseph Smith, with Joseph himself approving it, in order to win assistance from Vermont politicians. In Joseph Smith's journal kept by Willard Richards, we read from December 3, 1843: "W[illiam] W. Phelps read 'Appeal to green Moutan [Mountain] Boys' which was dedicated by prayer after all had spoken upon it." *JSP, J3*:138, 138n607; MHC, vol. E-3, 1792; *HC*, 6:98. In truth, Joseph Smith Sr. was born July 12, 1771, in Topsfield, Massachusetts. He would have only been four years old when the Revolution began in 1775 and twelve years old when the Revolution ended in 1783. None of the elder Smith's biographers record that he participated in the American Revolution or in any war battles thereafter.
 68. "To the Editor of the Neighbor," *NN 1* (December 27, 1843): 3. Phelps described the editor's words as a "diarrhea of words" and "choleric flux."
 69. "Missouri Justice," *NN 1* (January 3, 1844): 1.
 70. "Carthage, Warsaw and Green Plains," *NN 1* (January 24, 1844): 2. Among many other fighting words, Phelps wrote, "Is it not enough that we have been robbed, spoiled, massacred, and dispossessed of our inheritance by a lawless banditti, a gang of desperadoes; but we must still have them follow us like blood-hounds and by illegal prosecutions and vexatious law suits, drain our life blood?"

71. "Pacific Innuendo," *T&S 5* (February 15, 1844): 942–44; "Pacific Innuendo," *NN 1* (February 21, 1844): 2; *Voice of Truth*, 39–43; *MHC*, vol. E-1, 1896; *HC*, 6:218–20. *JSP*, J3:178, 178n794 refers to Joseph Smith's assigning Phelps to write "Pacific Innuendo." *JSP*, J3:181, 181n806 refers to the publication of the piece. See also Peter Crawley, ed., *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2012), 1:311.
72. *JSP*, J3:183–84, 184n818, 184n821, 187, 187n826, 191, 191n843, 194, 194n856, 198, 198n869, 199–200, 200n877, 205, 205n898, 206, 206n904; *MHC*, vol. E-1, 1911, 1933; *HC*, 6:225, 229, 241, 248. The actual document is in "Virtue Will Triumph," *NN 1* (March 20, 1844): 2. The Relief Society minutes for March 9 and 16, 1844, refer to the reading of this document and acknowledge that it was written by W. W. Phelps. See Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Kate Holbrook, and Matthew J. Grow, eds., *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-day Saints Women's History* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian's Press, 2016), 12, 127–30, 151–56; Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 1992), 61, 450n9; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/navoo-relief-society-minute-book/120>; <https://churchhistorianspress.org/the-first-fifty-years-of-relief-society/part-1/1-2/1-2-33>.
73. "To the Editor of the Neighbor," *NN 1* (February 21, 1844): 2. See also *WWJ*, 2:356.
74. "For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois. Religion and Politics," *T&S 5* (March 15, 1844): 470–71.
75. "A Friendly Hint to Missouri," *T&S 5* (March 15, 1844): 473–74; "A Friendly Hint to Missouri," *NN 1* (March 13, 1844): 2; *HC*, 6:245–47; *Voice of Truth*, 43–46; *JSP*, J3:199, 199n873; Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church*, 1:311.
76. "For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois," *NN 1* (March 20, 1844): 2.
77. "For the Times and Seasons," *T&S 5* (April 15, 1844): 507.
78. "The Globe," *T&S 5* (April 15, 1844): 508–10; "The Globe and Joe Smith," *NN 1* (April 17, 1844): 1; *Voice of Truth*, 46–50. See *JSP*, J3:231, 231n1034 for discussions about the article "The Globe." See also *JSP*, CFM:xxxvi, 110, 110n302, 118, n347; Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church*, 1:311; Mason, "God and the People Reconsidered," 31–32, 39n1.
79. "A New Advocate for the National Bank," *T&S 5* (April 15, 1844): 510–11; "A New Advocate for the National Bank," *NN 1* (April 10, 1844): 2.
80. "Public Meeting," *NN 1* (April 24, 1844): 2.
81. "To the Editor of the Neighbor. Sir," *NN 2* (May 1, 1844): 2.
82. "For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois. To Our Subscribers," *T&S 5* (May 1, 1844): 519.
83. "For the Neighbor. Mr. Editor," *T&S 5* (May 15, 1844): 534–35; "For the Neighbor, Mr. Editor," *NN 2* (May 13, 1844): 2–3.
84. "For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois," *T&S 5* (May 15, 1844): 535.
85. "State Convention," *NN 2* (May 22, 1844): 2.
86. "Correspondence between Gen. Joseph Smith and the Hon. Henry Clay," *T&S 5* (June 1, 1844): 544–48; "Correspondence between Gen. Joseph Smith and the Hon. Henry Clay," *NN 2* (May 29, 1844): 2; *Voice of Truth*, 51–59. Reference to this project is found in *JSP*, J3:251, 251n1142, 254; Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church*, 1:311.
87. "For the Times and Seasons. Mr. Editor," *T&S 5* (June 1, 1844): 548–49; "For the Neighbor. Mr. Editor, Dear Sir," *NN 2* (June 5, 1844): 2.
88. "A Word to the Wise," *T&S 5* (June 1, 1844): 552.
89. "Religion and Politics," *NN 2* (June 12, 1844): 1–2.

90. "Proclamation," NN 2 (June 12, 1844): 2–3. See *JSP*, J3:278, 278n1262.
91. *JSP*, J3:136n599. The following appears in the official history of the church for November 29, 1843, the same date that Phelps's appeal to Vermont was read and discussed: "Moved by Joseph Smith, That every man in the meeting who could wield a pen write an address to his mother country. Carried." MHC, vol. E-3, 1790; HC, 6:95.
92. "An Appeal to the People of the State of Maine," *T&S* 5 (January 15, 1844): 403–6; "An Appeal to the People of the State of Maine," NN 1 (January 17, 1844): 1.
93. "To the Honorable, the Senate and House of Representatives of Pennsylvania, in Legislative Capacity Assembled," NN 1 (January 31, 1844): 1. A smaller version of this treatise is found in MHC, vol. E-1, 1871–72; HC, 6:191–92.
94. "An Appeal to the Inhabitants of Massachusetts," NN 1 (February 7, 1844): 2. This appeal is referred to in *JSP*, J3:172, 172n759.
95. "An Appeal to the State of Tennessee," NN 1 (February 28, 1844): 1.
96. "House—No. 61. Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Memorial," NN 1 (April 24, 1844): 2; "Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Memorial," *T&S* 5 (May 1, 1844): 514–19. The appeal is actually dated March 5, 1844, and is referred to in a smaller version in MHC, vol. E-1, 1905–6; HC, 6:236.
97. "To the Church in Maine," NN 2 (May 22, 1844): 3; "To the Church in Maine," *T&S* 5 (June 1, 1844): 556–57.
98. "For the Neighbor," NN 2 (June 12, 1844): 2.
99. The decision to send out apostles and other priesthood holders to all the states to campaign for Joseph Smith was made in the Council of Fifty on March 21, 1844. *JSP*, CFM:60, 60n146.
100. "Special Conference," *T&S* 5 (April 15, 1844): 504–6. See also *WWJ*, 2:391; HC, 6:335–40. Margaret C. Robertson analyzed the work of the electioneers in her "The Campaign and the Kingdom: The Activities of the Electioneers in Joseph Smith's Presidential Campaign," *BYU Studies* 39, no. 3 (2000): 147–80.
101. See, for example, *JSP*, J3:233–34, 233n1043, 234n1044, 235, 235n1053; *WWJ*, 2:397, 399, 403–4, 415–16; MHC, vol. F-1, 16, 50–51, 25–26, 58; HC, 6:408.
102. These directions were issued by Brigham Young and other apostles on April 15 and recorded in "Special Conference," *T&S* 5 (April 15, 1844): 506. See MHC, vol. E-3, 2015; HC, 6:340.
103. *JSP*, CFM:133, 133n404.
104. *JSP*, J3:249, 249n1130.
105. "Our State Convention," NN 2 (May 15, 1844): 2. See also *WWJ*, 2:391.
106. "State Convention," NN 2 (May 22, 1844): 2; emphasis original. Using Phelps's report, the official history of the church also reported on the May 17 political convention in MHC, vol. F-1, 39–49; HC, 6:386–97. See also *JSP*, J3:253, 253n1148.
107. Peter Crawley, through his research, learned that Phelps sought the copyright for this booklet on June 22, 1844. This meant that most of the contents was put to press in June and that the booklet was designed as a political tract. However, the martyrdom of Joseph Smith delayed its completion and distribution until later in the year when it served as a memorial to Smith. See Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church*, 1:309–12. These essays, even in Joseph Smith's day, were recognized as having been composed by W. W. Phelps. He was always called on to read them in the council meetings as well as in public gatherings. Immediately inside the pamphlet was printed "Entered according to the act of Congress, in the year 1844, by W. W. Phelps, in the clerk's office of the district court of Illinois."
108. *JSP*, J3:147, 149, 150, 150n671, 152, 153, 155, 157, 159, 160.
109. "New-Year's Hymn," NN 1 (January 3, 1844): 1; emphasis added. See also *JSP*, H3:153, 153n686, 155, 155n695.