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The Rhetoric of Persecution: Mormon Crisis Rhetoric from 1838-1871

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THE RHETORIC OF PERSECUTION: MORMON CRISIS RHETORIC FROM 1838-1871

By

Zachary L. Largey

A thesis submitted to the faculty

of Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Zachary L. Largey

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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ABSTRACT

THE RHETORIC OF PERSECUTION: MORMON CRISIS RHETORIC FROM 1838-1871

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Master of Arts

This study is an attempt to (1) minimize the lack of rhetorical scholarship in Mormon studies, and (2) add to the historical study of rhetoric in nineteenth-century America. Since the Mormon Church's establishment in 1830, sermons have been a vital part of the Church's development into a worldwide institution. From the simple testimonial to the more complex doctrinal explication, early Mormon leaders used the art of preaching to spread their message of God and His glories. But rarely have historians or critics focused on the rhetoric—the persuasive techniques—of these sermons. This, perhaps, stems from early Mormonism's general aversion to the rhetorical textbook, or the theory of rhetoric and rhetorical practice.

But the practice of rhetoric was (and continues to be) vital for the Church. And while the majority of early Mormon speeches concerned scriptural or doctrinal appeals, leaders such as

Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, and Brigham Young were often forced by internal and external difficulties to give persecution sermons: speeches that fused both sacred and secular motifs to transcend the simple testimony of faith, repentance, and baptism.

By analyzing these persecution speeches we can better understand how leaders such as Joseph Smith would use the art of persuasive communication in responding to tragic circumstances, in supporting the Saints, or in reaffirming the Church's position as a separate and peculiar people. This study, then, reviews the general rhetorical framework of early Mormon oratory, the educational backgrounds of the persecution genre's most influential speakers, the major speeches that comprise this tradition with analyses of the technical aspects that ornament the speeches, the various responses of those that heard or read them, and the prevalence and implications of persecution rhetoric today. Thus, the purpose of this study is to understand one section of Mormon history from an oratorical point of view, recognizing the value of seeing a religion through the eyes of its speakers and its communicative practices, a recognition that should be important to critics of early Mormon history and thought.

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An Introduction to Mormon Persecution Rhetoric

The relationship of rhetoric to religion can be a delicate one, in part because of a theoretical divide between the sacred and the secular, or the fusion of divinity with ethos, logos, and pathos. But the history of such often shows a correlation nonetheless—one that transcends basic homiletics bent on moral conversion to reveal a tradition unable to neglect the world in which it lives. To a certain extent, this is the relationship between rhetoric and 19th century Mormonism.

Although in early Mormonism there was some aversion to the theory of preaching, or textbook rhetoric in general, early leaders such as Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Brigham Young were largely influential because of their public speaking abilities. In fact, so “persuasive were [Smith’s] rhetorical efforts among his own people that, when he was arrested for the last time and subsequently killed, thousands of his followers were ready to sacrifice their own lives to save his” (Smith 2). One particular genre that the Mormon leaders succeeded in was the persecution speech—the recitation of injustices against the Church during and after tragic events in the Church’s history. It was, in part, because of this willingness to respond to persecution, to “unsheathe [their] sword[s]” (Rockwood) through language and rhetoric, that Church leaders were able to redefine their roles as more than simple gospel messengers, to sustain the Church through its struggles, and to establish a tradition fit for a religion bent on communal unification.

Purpose of the Study

There is little doubt about the importance of Joseph Smith in Mormon history and scholarship. From the first days of his ministry to the 200-year anniversary of his birth, an understanding of the implications of his life and his teachings has long been a quest for both Mormons and outsiders. As John Taylor penned in 1844, Mormons believe that “Joseph Smith

has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.” This powerful legacy, they believe, is evident from the fact that “in the short space of twenty years, [Smith] . . . brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God . . . has sent the ful[l]ness of the everlasting gospel, which it contained, to the four quarters of the earth; has brought forth the revelations and commandments which compose this book of Doctrine and Covenants, and many other wise documents and instructions for the benefit of the children of men. . .” (Doctrine and Covenants, 135:3; hereafter denoted D&C with section and verse).

Historians and critics have continually tried to explain or discredit Smith’s accomplishments and thousands of books and articles have referred to his life and his career. However, very few have considered his rhetoric. Until 1997 only five documents dealing specifically with Smith’s rhetoric had made it to publication, and the number of articles or books discussing the rhetoric of Brigham Young and Sidney Rigdon numbered fewer than ten (see “Rhetoric” in Allen, Walker, and Whittaker). In contrast, there were more publications concerning a simple historical fact, a leg operation Smith had as a child, than studies analyzing the rhetorical influence he exuded as a prophet (see “Smith, Joseph Jr., leg operation” in Allen, Walker, and Whittaker).

Obviously, rhetorical studies have taken a back seat to social or religious histories within the larger frame of Mormon historiography, and any references to Mormon persecution speeches are few and inconsequential: as of this writing, no study deals primarily with Sidney Rigdon’s 1838 oration or Brigham Young’s multiple persecution speeches as an oratorical genre within the Mormon sermonizing tradition. We are left with numerous questions to ponder, the most noticeable being the following: in spite of their aversion to it, how did Latter-day Saints use

rhetoric in their speaking practices? More specifically related to this study, how did the early Church respond to persecution orally, and how did these responses differ from the usual speeches? What were the rhetorical abilities of three of the Church's leading men—Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, and Brigham Young—and what circumstances led to the creation of this particular genre? What rhetorical techniques did the genre consist of, and why were they used? What were some of the characteristics of preaching during this time, and were Mormon persecution speeches unique to the larger tradition of Puritan or Protestant sermonizing? Finally, what are the implications of this genre for Mormon sermonizing today?

The purpose of this study, then, is to analyze a few of the more important Mormon persecution speeches with these questions in mind—to look at the rhetorical situations and the educational backgrounds of the speakers as well as the devices, the situational irony and hyperbole, that became familiar to Church leaders who sought to emphasize the discrimination of their enemies, to remind the Saints of their struggle for religious freedom, and to evoke a pathetic response to sustain them in their quest for discipleship and unity. We will further study the immediate and gradual responses to the speeches, and consider the ramifications of this genre that played such an important role for the Church in the early 1800s, and that continues to emerge in modern-day Mormon sermonizing.

Sources

Several biographies, studies, and scholarly articles have been vital to this study. Among the primary sources, Joseph Smith's six-volume work, The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and B.H. Roberts' masterpiece, The Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, were particularly helpful. The former contains an exhaustive compilation of journal entries, letters, newspaper articles, and narrations that

contextualize the Mormon perspective from the Church's formation in New York to the exodus from Nauvoo. The latter is a second witness to the Church's chronological history, and supplements Smith's work with a more objective approach in its historical interpretations.

The Journal of Discourses is a multi-volume collection of Mormon sermons and epideictic oratory given by the Church's principle leaders, beginning after Joseph Smith's martyrdom in 1844. The majority of Brigham Young's persecution speeches are contained in this collection.

Among secondary sources, the context for this study has benefited from Davis Bitton's fall, 2002 BYU Studies article "Strange Ramblings," and Barbara Higdon's Ph.D. dissertation, The Role of Preaching in the Early Latter-day Saint Church, 1830-1846. Bitton's article touches upon the Church's aspiration to speak by the spirit, and Higdon adequately surveys the curious nature of Mormon oratory.

Calvin Smith has contributed the only definitive work on Joseph Smith as a public speaker. His Ph.D. dissertation, A Critical Analysis of the Public Speaking of Joseph Smith, First President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is a well-researched study on the Prophet's rhetorical abilities, a study that has been largely neglected by subsequent researchers and biographers of both Joseph Smith and the Church that he led from 1830 to 1844.

Comparisons between Mormon persecution rhetoric and the contemporary oratory have relied largely on Sacvan Bercovitch's important work, The American Jeremiad, for its comprehensive outline of the New England Puritan sermonizing tradition, the tradition that gave birth to evangelical oratory, and Whitney Cross's The Burned-Over District: the Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1855 as a history of American evangelicalism in the New York area. Further, Frances McCurdy's Stump, Bar, and

Pulpit: Speechmaking on the Missouri Frontier is a good source for homiletic practices outside the New England area.

Finally, the use of the term “rhetoric” in this thesis encompasses two basic definitions: (1) the art of persuasion through communicative means, and (2) the technical aspects that make up speech. The term “Homiletics,” a subgenre of rhetoric, is used to denote sermonizing practices and technique. Discussions on rhetoric and rhetorical definitions in this study derive from both classical and modern literature, notably Aristotle. Two particularly important sources include Nan Johnson’s Nineteenth Century Rhetoric in North America and Gideon Burton’s online database Silva Rhetoricae. The former is a significant contribution to American rhetoric studies surveying the nineteenth century, and complements the research on Joseph Smith’s contemporaries by providing important details to the overall picture of American rhetoric in that time period. The latter is a comprehensive source on the makeup of rhetoric, from the basic Aristotelian proofs to the familiar and the largely unknown schemes and tropes from the Greek, Latin, and English traditions.

Outline of the Study

The methodology for this thesis includes a part-historical, part-rhetorical approach to the subject. Chapter One comprises a study of Mormon oratory in three aspects. First, since sermonizing plays a vital role in the Church’s history and development, and inasmuch as Rigdon, Smith, and Young’s influence largely stems from their public speaking, we should contextualize our study within a general framework of Mormon oratory. That is, the basic tenets of Mormon homiletic practices should be understood before we proceed to subgenres such as persecution rhetoric. Because of the chapter’s limited scope, the focus is constrained to three types of discourse: the testimonial, the doctrinal exposition, and the rebuke.

Second, any rhetorical study of Mormon sermonizing should touch upon the early leaders' refusal to adopt general homiletic practices based on their desire to preach by the spirit—to use the Holy Ghost to influence the audience rather than formal logic, ornamentation, or delivery. For instance, Joseph Smith taught his followers to “preach those things the Lord has told you to preach about—repentance and baptism for the remission of sins” (Dahl 432), and warned them to “be careful to respect, not the eloquence, not the smooth speeches, not the multitude of words, not the talents of men, but the offices [church leaders] which God has placed in the Church” (Smith 4:345). Here we have an important distinction to make. Rather than use eloquence to convey truth, early Mormons relied on a supernatural appeal, a spiritual persuasion unconnected to rhetoric, oratory, or sermonizing, and therefore indirectly connected (at best) to previous oratorical traditions. Even though we *can* analyze their oratory rhetorically, we must understand that the overt act of preaching was an inadequate means to teaching truth, not a method of invention. For Smith and Young, truth was absolute and independent of language, and could only be understood through God's power.

Given all of their beliefs in spiritual persuasion through means outside of communicative technique, they were, nevertheless, capable and willing orators, a fact that is evident from their pulpit responses to persecution. Thus, a third way to approach the relationship of rhetoric to Mormonism, to minimize the lack of scholarship on Joseph Smith's public speaking, is to study this emerging genre and its implications. This section will introduce more fully our concept of Mormon persecution rhetoric, and segues into the body of the thesis.

Having analyzed the basic tenets of Mormon sermonizing, the attempt to avoid rhetoric in favor of preaching by the spirit, and the oratorical genre that nonetheless emerged because of the

inability to completely escape the practice, we must proceed to the rhetoric itself. We must analyze the speakers, the speeches, and the conventions that make this genre what it is.

Chapter Two begins our in-depth study of Mormon persecution rhetoric by beginning with one of the major influences on early Mormon oratory: Sidney Rigdon. We begin with Rigdon for two reasons: (1) his major persecution speech at Far West, Missouri (1838) was a catalyst for Mormon persecution speeches overall, being the most complete and reactive speech up to that point, and (2) it was the most powerful example of using irony as a persuasive trope within the tradition.

There is little doubt that elements of persecution speeches existed before Rigdon's Fourth of July oration, but it was then that the Saints began to show a decided resolve to address their persecutions publicly, and they did so through a speaker who relied not on spiritual persuasion, but on rhetorical technique. Because America was a land that boasted of religious equality, and because the Church struggled to maintain its independence, Rigdon used irony to remind his audience of their trials, and to prepare them to accept a church-wide resolve to protect themselves militarily in the near future.

Accordingly, the first section introduces Rigdon's background, education, and station in the Church. The second contextualizes the speech by looking at events leading up to it. The third section summarizes the speech and several of its rhetorical qualities, such as Rigdon's repetitious sentence structure and logical appeals, and the fourth consists of an analysis of Rigdon's irony, the rationale for using it in such instances, and the influence it might have had on the audience.

Chapter Three introduces another pervasive tool of Mormon persecution rhetoric, hyperbole, by studying Joseph Smith's two alarmist speeches. Although Smith openly opposed

preaching techniques, when it came to his speaking abilities he was more than a match for his contemporaries. This is partially evidenced through his hyperbolic statements, the exaggerations that he made directly and often to sustain the Saints in their faith. Though he was known for his pacifistic rhetoric, he was also a protector, a Lieutenant General, and through the hyperbolic release of pent-up frustrations, he was able to help the Saints cope with their difficulties.

The structure of this chapter is similar to the Chapter Two: the first section introduces the major speaker, the second contextualizes the major speeches, the third analyzes the rhetoric according to the use of hyperbole, and the fourth touches upon audience response, both immediate and in hindsight.

Of course, there is more to persecution speeches than style. For example, the recitation of past injustices not only accentuated discrimination against the Church, but presented the audience with precedent and cause and effect arguments. Consequently, when leaders such as Brigham Young sought to warn the church of impending difficulties, or to justify present actions or decisions, they could narrate the past to argue that if they weren't careful, their trials would be repeated. Further, the recitation of Joseph Smith's martyrdom or the Church's expulsion from Illinois served as a type of "us versus them" rhetoric that promoted the Saints' vision of themselves as being a peculiar people, separate and distinct from the world around them.

Chapter Four, then, studies the rhetoric of Brigham Young and some of his Mormon persecution speeches in the early Utah years, focusing on how Young's use of rhetorical commonplaces assisted Mormon leaders in sustaining the Church, explaining the root of certain events or circumstances, and defining Mormons as a Zionistic society. This chapter follows the same pattern established in the previous two.

In contrast to Chapters Two, Three, and Four, Chapter Five compares and contrasts Mormon oratory with the revivalist tradition by first considering the Puritan tradition and Sacvan Bercovitch's "American Jeremiad," and second, by analyzing the rhetoric of the common man as well as the evangelicals. All of this is an attempt to understand whether Joseph Smith's dramatic hyperbole was entirely aberrant, or whether it was similar to the frontier culture and religious emotionalism of the late eighteenth and early to mid nineteenth centuries.

Because early Mormons refused to teach homiletic theory, and because the Church's hierarchy consisted of a lay clergy, early Mormon sermonizing in general was not a direct descendant of previous or contemporary homiletic traditions—it was, in short, a simple practice of speaking by the spirit. But we cannot assume that the rhetorical careers of Smith and Young (and especially Rigdon) were untouched by outside influences, the culture of an expanding frontier, or what Whitney Cross called the Burned-over district. Further, Mormon persecution sermons have often been criticized by their own as being unwise, bitter, strained, and overly emotional. Therefore, Chapter Five attempts to compare the rhetorical devices considered in the previous chapters with speeches given by Joseph Smith's contemporaries, arguing that while Rigdon's fervor or Smith's dramatic imagery were indeed unwise, they were not unusual for the time period.

Finally, Chapter Six concludes the study with a short survey of Mormon persecution rhetoric today, considering the rhetorical need for such speeches in spite of a general lack of persecution, and the implications of this rhetorical genre for critics and biographers of Mormon history and early Mormon thought. This is to say, Mormon persecution rhetoric, like the American Jeremiad, has evolved from a tradition of reaction to a tradition of correction, and, consequently, re-creation. Just as the speeches helped Smith, Rigdon, and Young unify the

Saints behind a cause, the continual referring to past facts (the martyrdom) and consequences serves the same purpose for Latter-day Saints today. Although persecution has largely ceased, the need to maintain community, to remember their place as God's chosen people separate from the world, and to remind themselves of their lot as followers of Jesus Christ, has not.

Understanding Early Mormon Oratory

Chapter One

In order to properly understand Mormon persecution rhetoric as it concerned the early Church's leaders, one must understand some basic tenets—foundations—upon which that oratory was built, or, more correctly, the basic structure of Mormon sermonizing from 1838 to the early 1870's. Inasmuch as the persecution rhetoric in this thesis is generated by the Church's leaders for members rather than proselytes, the following tenets are more applicable to this type of sermonizing.

The Rhetoric

One way to categorize Mormon oratory from this time period is to look at its rhetorical qualities—to analyze it to see how it “worked.” As mentioned in the introduction, early Mormon oratory sought to remove itself from rhetorical eloquence. But as Barbara Higdon points out, such Mormon oratory does deserve to be rhetorically tested because even with all of its determination to have been *of* the homiletic world but not *in* it, it still followed common, rhetorical methods of communication to achieve its persuasive purposes—even if it failed to embrace a homiletic tradition.

Higdon's doctoral dissertation, entitled The Role of Preaching in the Early Latter-day Saint Church, 1830-1846, is one of the more complimentary texts towards early Mormon rhetoric via her recognition of it as an oratorical tradition—her placement of it into a rhetorical framework. For example, her study begins with the importance of sermonizing in the history of the Mormon Church followed by an analysis of the basic teachings, principles, and practices of LDS rhetoric. Her study also includes missionary applications and testimonies, looking at the relative inexperience of these preachers (their credentials), to their abilities to argue, appeal to

personal credibility within the rhetorical moment, and to forward the Mormon message in a rhetorically acceptable way, if not partially different from their historical moment. Taking Higdon's lead, this chapter will first look at some basic tenets of early Mormon oratory, allowing us to define the genre through general terms, and to see it as a more complex oral tradition than one seeking the Holy Ghost to teach repentance, faith, and baptism.

Of course, any exhaustive approach to early Mormon oratory is far beyond the scope of this chapter; therefore, our study will limit itself to three foci of Mormon sermonizing: the testimony, exposition, and call for repentance.

The Testimony

Without a doubt, early Mormons viewed the bearing of testimony as the apex of any sermon. Brigham Young, the famous prophet and statesman who led the Latter-day Saint pioneers across the American West, once told the Saints that he would

rather hear men tell their own experience and testify that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of the Lord, and that the Book of Mormon, the Bible, and other revelations of God are true; that they know it by the gift and power of God; that they have conversed with angels, have had the power of the Holy Ghost upon them, giving them visions and revelations, than hear any other kind of preaching that ever saluted my ears (Journal of Discourses 10: 121; hereafter denoted as JD with volume and page number).

One curious difference between the LDS Church and other creeds is the presence of lay members within the Mormon hierarchy. The Church functions without a professional clergy, which, in turn, allows congregations to participate in and contribute to their meetings. Whereas a preacher might claim sole authority to preach, Mormons equally share the right to explicate a verse or exhort the group to righteousness. And this right comes in the form of weekly talks,

Sunday School lessons (where they study the Bible and modern revelations) and a once-monthly “Testimony Meeting” where members are encouraged to stand before a congregation and share their feelings, experiences, and thoughts about any gospel subject.

The structure of the testimony is usually characterized by “I know” or “I believe” statements, the purpose of which is to affirm or reaffirm faith in the subject. One example comes from the Church’s official statement of belief: “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost. . . . We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel. We believe that the first [principle] . . . of the Gospel [is]: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (McConkie 17). Here, Joseph Smith’s portrayal of the Church’s critical tenets works as a guideline, or a map by which members and outsiders can see how the Church functions. It is both a statement of direction—an affirmation of belief—and a rhetorical model.

But the role of a testimony becomes clearer when analyzed at a personal level. Mormon Apostle Ezra Taft Benson, for instance, began a sermon noting that he did not feel “competent” enough to “teach” his audience, but felt impressed to share his testimony. He then stated the following: “I testify that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of the Most High, that he was a minister of life to the nations, that he revealed the will of the Father concerning his sons and daughters, that many of the revelations which he gave concerning this nation have already been fulfilled, and that others are being fulfilled before our eyes” (JD 8: 369).

Benson’s words are a declaration of belief, not a logical or pathetic appeal. His opening statement is significant in that it explicitly differentiates teaching with testifying; the first requires structure and organization, the second merely needs to be spoken.

Instead of using rhetorical technique, the testifier, like Benson, talks about his personal feelings toward a subject, doctrine or person as only he can do himself. Like one's faith, the testifier recognizes the relative nature of his words—it is something he knows firsthand and something that he hopes to share with others. It is true that the audience can share similar beliefs, but the exact nature of how the speaker received the testimony, and to what extent the testimony affects the speaker, is relative to the individual.

The Doctrinal Exposition

However important the role of the testimony, there is no shortage of rationally based arguments within the Mormon tradition.¹ Members called to preach the gospel are taught to “seek not to declare [God's] word, but first seek to obtain [God's] word” (Doctrine and Covenants 11:21; hereafter denoted as D&C with section and verse number). Then, after obtaining a knowledge of the teachings and doctrines—what they signified, how they fit into the historical framework, whether they disproved false teachings—they were promised the following: “and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men” (D&C 11:21). Mormon speakers were taught that a knowledge and ability to expound the scriptures was invaluable; so invaluable, in fact, that teaching without it was considered virtually impossible.

An example of doctrinal exposition in the early Mormon Church is evidenced in one of Joseph Smith's speeches. In this particular sermon, given on 5 October, 1840, Smith begins by announcing that his subject is the priesthood, and that any investigation into a subject “so important as this” requires one to “trace as far as [one] possibly can from the Old and new (sic)

¹ My use of the term “rational” must be understood according to one's ability to reason and extrapolate from learned or inherent presuppositions. Here, then, rational thought is not concerned with the logic of a supreme being's existence, but, based on an already established belief or faith in the Church's tenets, extends to logical thinking within these assumptions.

Testament” (Ehat and Cook 38). Smith, then, recognizes the Bible as an authority, a logical proof, thereby refusing to stand solely on his own credibility as a prophet to support his message.

Smith’s sermon also includes the following passage:

Ephesians 1st Chap 9 & 10 verses. “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ both which are in heaven and which are on earth in him. . . .” From the above quotation we learn that Paul perfectly understood the purpose of God in relation to his connexion (sic) with man, and that glorious and perfect order which he established in himself whereby he sent forth power revelations and glory. God will not acknowledge that which he has not called, ordained, and chosen. In the beginning God called Adam by his own voice. See Genesis 3 Chap 9 & 10 verses. (Ehat and Cook 38-9)

Smith’s argument is patterned by the original opening statement, appeal to supernatural proof, explication of the proof with a further statement of belief (“God will not acknowledge that which he has not called”), followed by more scriptural proof. Interestingly, Smith’s pattern creates a doctrinal enthymeme: we know that God acknowledges His chosen servants because Paul understood (and therefore received) God’s revelations.

It should be noted that aside from merely expounding upon doctrinal belief, such expositions would help the speaker establish trust with his listeners. Whereas the speaker who merely testifies with “I know” statements is in danger of alienating himself from his audience, the speaker who expounds scripture provides himself with a measure of logical persuasion, and can build his argument on common beliefs—in this case, acceptance of the Bible. Even though the credibility of the speaker could often persuade the audience by itself—without logical

proof—doctrinal expositions allotted early Mormon speakers a theological foundation for their beliefs. In short, appeals to the scriptures presented a given audience with a supernatural authority on any doctrinal subject.

But although the possible faith-building effects of doctrinal expositions made the practice seem attractive, several Mormons, especially when speaking to those outside their faith, over-extended their efforts. Consider, for instance, a missionary sermon summarized by a local newspaper:

I will briefly quote some few of the many passages he cited to prove his position . . . first, he quoted John, chap. 5, v. 39; . . . and then enquired, "How are we to search them? and found an answer in Romans, 15, 4, 2d Peter, 1, 19, to 21; John, 17, 17; Amos 3, 7, . . . then, to show that Israel would be restored, proceeded to quote and briefly comment on the following texts: Jeremiah, 12, 14 to 17; Isaiah, 11, 11; Deut., 30, 1 to 9; Jeremiah, 16, 21; Isaiah, 40, 1 to 5; 43, 1 to 7 49, 10 to 23; Jeremiah, 30, 3 7 and 11; 31, 3 to 13; Ezekiel, 34, 22 to 31; 29, 21 to 29; 37, 21 to 28; 36 3 4 and 35, Hosea, 14, 4 to 7; Amos, 11, 15; Psalms, 144, 5 to 15; Joel, 3; Zachariah, 2, 4 to 13; 10, 6 to 12; 12, 3 to 11; 14ch.; and several other passages . . . (Times and Seasons 4: 235; my emphasis).

In stark contrast to the traditional method of designating one verse for an entire sermon or the practice of writing homilies, such speeches often failed to captivate an audience, and, as Barbara Higdon explains, outlived their usefulness. Early Mormon Apostle Parley P. Pratt later counseled, “When the elders go abroad to teach the people, let them teach what we have to do, and what is depending on us and not spend their time in quoting multitudes of scripture to prove one point” (Times and Seasons 4: 639).

Still, the need for knowledge and the ability to expound upon the scriptures was, and always will be, a vital part of Mormon sermonizing. For there is nothing more important to Mormons than God's will, along with His word, and part of God's revelations to His latter-day prophets reinforced this need: "Teach ye diligently . . . that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the Gospel, in all things that pertain unto the Kingdom of God" (D&C 80:78).

The Call for Repentance

A third part of early Mormon oratory focused on the need for repentance, the fallen state of the sinner, or difficulties within the Church. This type of sermon often used personal testimony or scriptural proofs to maximize effect, but unlike the exposition or the testimony, the call for repentance was a direct statement to a direct group. It was, simply put, a call. The guilty party was singled out and told to amend. The audience could experience guilt as the speaker sought to evoke their emotions; to cause them to feel something, not just to know it.

Brigham Young was especially adept at reaching the audience in such a way. Young began one sermon by sarcastically satirizing a group of Latter-day Saints who wanted to leave the main Church to prospect for Gold in California. He stated, "Yes! Go to the gold region, and do not come and seek my counsel about it, whether I am willing that you should go or not, for I am not only willing that you should leave, but anxious that you may as soon as possible" (JD 1:115).

Here, Young's words directly, and pathetically, work upon the audience. There is no reference to scripture, no testimony, no specific doctrine; instead, the speaker's diction implies an exhausted tone—one that implicitly places guilt upon the hearer as his or her actions contrast with the Prophet's wishes.

Then, having set the audience up, Young makes his call to repentance:

If you do not love God, and His cause, better than everything else besides, and cannot with a good heart and willing hand, build it up upon the earth; if you will not repent of your follies, and get the Spirit of truth in you, so as to love it, and feel willing to sacrifice all for it, you cannot build up the kingdom of God (JD 1:115).

With calculated effect Young rebuked his audience, telling them to amend if they were to have the “Spirit of truth.” Undoubtedly, had the speaker tried to quote scripture, or had he merely borne testimony of membership obligations, the call to repentance would not have had the same effect—the audience, perhaps, might have missed the direct connection between them and their “follies.”

Young was not alone in this rhetorical style. Joseph Smith, a proponent of “reproving betimes with sharpness” (D&C 121:43), often framed his sermons around the call to repentance:

Notwithstanding this congregation profess to be saints yet I stand in the midst of all characters and classes of men If you wish to go whare God is you must be like god or possess the principles which God possesses for if we are not drawing towards God in principle we are going from him & drawing towards the devil, yes I am standing in the midst of all kinds of people Search your hearts & see if you are like god, I have searched mine & feel to repent of all my sins, we have thieves among us Adulterers, liars, hypocritts, if God should speak from Heaven he would Command you not to steal, not to commit Adultery, not to covet, nor deceive but be faithful over a few things (Ehat and Cook 113-114; original punctuation and spelling).

“Strange Ramblings”

In addition to studying the obvious rhetorical techniques found in testifying, expounding, and rebuking, a second method of understanding Mormon oratory refutes the tradition’s eloquent nature entirely. As we have already considered, early Mormon speakers took celestial doctrines as their focus but conveyed those thoughts in ineloquent ways. In other words, when it came to real rhetorical excellence, the Church failed. In fact, the early Church refused to study or implement homiletic theory into its speeches. Church leaders preferred to let their doctrine reach their listeners more readily through coarse phrases than erudite sentencing.

Scholarship that has contributed much to our knowledge of this phenomenon comes from the recent work of LDS historian, Davis Bitton. While Barbara Higdon compliments Mormon rhetoric, Bitton more explicitly recognizes the difficulty of equating early Mormon oratory with the general practices that make a speech a rhetorical success. Bitton points out that “Mormon sermons were not models of unity or carefully contrived rhetorical devices” (8). Instead, they were often un-memorized testimonials, ad lib thoughts from poorly-educated members, or too emotionally charged for the common erudite. To illustrate, Bitton gives us a “graphic example” of a familiar sermon among the early Latter-day Saints and the frontier preachers in general:

There’s some folks, howsomever . . . what things preachers must be high larn’d, afore they kin ell sinners as how they must be saved or be ‘tarnally lost; but it ain’t so I allow—(chari thumped here and answered by a squawk below)—no, no! This apostul or ourn what spoke the text, never rubbed his back agin a collige, nor toted about no sheepskins—no, never!—(thump! Thump! Squawk and two grunts).—Oh, worldlins! How you’d a perish in your sins if the fust preachers had a stay’d till they got sheepskins! NO! no! no! I say, give me the sperit. (6; original punctuation and spelling)

Bitton's quote from a backwoods preacher portrays what the general population might have expected from the Mormon missionaries—a personal exhortation that denounces the need for rhetoric and learning both in explicit content and implicit structure. And, despite the fact that this quote comes from a preacher who only represents the general population of the times, it is more than possible to fuse the image of this minister with a Mormon preacher based on the descriptions of outsiders who had come in contact with the Church. Donald Q. Cannon's article on the Reverend George Moore's 1842 visit to Nauvoo points this out perfectly:

When I entered, one of their number was speaking about the Elder and younger Son in the parable of the Prodigal Son. He made wretched work as a Speaker—he hesitated—and what he said amounted to nothing at all—he did not seem to know himself what he was talking about. But he soon gave way to another—a man of about 50 years of age—who spoke for nearly an hour at the top of his voice. There was but little connexion in what he said. He would run from one subject to another—just as an old Sailor will tell a long yarn, in which the great essential is to keep talking (5-7).

Other visitors were even more explicit in their disapproval. Mormon historian B. H. Roberts wrote of Horace Greely's experience with the early Mormon oratory that he experienced nearly thirty years after the Church's establishment in 1830:

When a preacher is to address a congregation of one to three thousands persons, like that which assembles twice each Sunday in the Salt Lake City tabernacle, I insist that a due regard for the economy of time requires that he should prepare himself, by study and reflection, if not by writing, to speak directly to the point. This life is too short and precious to be wasted in listening to rambling, loose-jointed harangues, or even to those which severally consume an hour in the utterance, when they might be boiled down and

clarified until they were brought within the compass of half an hour each. A thousand half hours, Reverend Sir!—have you ever pondered their value? Suppose your time to be worth ten times that of an average hearer; still, to take an extra half hour from a thousand hearers in order to save yourself ten of fifteen hour's labor in the due and careful preparation of a sermon is a scandalous waste, which I see not how to justify. Be entreated to repent and amend! (4:524).

Obviously, Greely believed that the speaker's role should be one of direction and coherence, of unity between sentence, clause, and meaning. In his opinion, the speaker was more than obligated to pre-write an organized message structured around the essential problem or teaching of that time. It was not so much a question of the speaker's ethical appeal, or his credibility as a leader among the audience as it was his respect for those listening. Had Greely the opportunity to listen to the previously-mentioned backwoods preacher, he would have vehemently disagreed with the latter's proposal: "No! no! no! I say give me the sperit" (Bitton 6). And it was the attainment of "the sperit" that Mormon orators valued most.

In the early Church period, Joseph Smith summed up the duties of the preacher: "After all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel" (Burton, A. 73). More directly, he urged the elders and missionaries to "tell those things you are sent to tell; preach and cry aloud, 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Dahl 432). He then reiterated the need to "declare the first principles . . . preach those things the Lord has told you to preach about—repentance and baptism for the remission of sins" (Dahl 432). Clearly, the Prophet was more concerned about content than delivery. For him, the missionary or preacher who spent time practicing rhetorical technique neglected the chance to preach the fundamental principles and tenets of the Church—namely, faith, repentance, baptism and the bestowal and

acceptance of the Holy Ghost. Unlike the rambler that Greely observed, Smith often made sure others were practicing what he preached. His personal journal, for instance, records that one of the Church's first meetings included the following program: "Oliver Cowdery preached, and others of us bore testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon, the doctrine of repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, and laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, etc" (Smith, The Journal of Joseph, 31). Several other entries note the same thing—preachers should focus on Mormonism's major tenets.

But were this always the case, Greely would have had little reason to complain, because however poor the speaker's grammar, or meek his delivery, his sermons would nonetheless have constituted a simple, straightforward structure—not "rambling" or "loose-jointed harangues." So what, then, caused the awkward nature of some Mormon oratory? Why and how did some early preachers stray from their Prophet's counsel to preach only the first principles? The best answer lies in Mormonism's belief that proper teaching (and sermonizing) only comes from the proper authority, and such authority only comes from God. It was the "sperit" that gave Mormons their authority, and it was their reliance on the spirit that led to their unique, albeit "loose-jointed" style.

Preaching by the Spirit

Mormons consider themselves to be Christians, accept the Bible, and recognize the Godhead as the supreme ruling authority, an authority that consists of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost, all as separate personages. In addition, they also accept doctrines that give them the power to recognize or utilize the Holy Ghost in their personal lives: ". . . when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your

Father which speaketh in you” (Matt. 10:19-20). Accordingly, rhetorical success is an attribute of divine intervention; it is the blessed ability to use the influence of the Holy Ghost while preaching.

But the Mormon belief that one can speak by the power of God does not come only from the Bible. In fact, because Mormons value additional scripture (one of the major differences between them and the more mainstream Christian churches), they accept the privilege to speak by the spirit from other, similar passages. The Book of Mormon—a collection of records first written upon by ancient American prophets and translated by Joseph Smith—states that religious meetings should only be conducted by the power of the Holy Ghost, “for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done” (Moroni 9:6).

The Doctrine and Covenants—a modern collection of revelations—teaches missionaries that the “Power of God unto the convincing of men” is nothing more than the ability to speak by the spirit (D&C 11:21). During the early nineteenth century, when the Church was first learning to self-govern, Joseph received a similar revelation: “And if thou art led at any time by the Comforter to speak or teach, or at all times by the way of commandment unto the church, thou mayest do it” (D&C 28:4). Perhaps the most telling of such verses comes later in the Doctrine and Covenants: “Verily I say unto you, he that is ordained of me and sent forth to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the Spirit of truth, doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way? And if it be by some other way it is not of God” (D&C 50:17-18).

Mormons, then, view preaching as a privilege and a responsibility to speak according to God’s will, or by God’s power, and firmly believe that truth without the accompanying power of the Holy Ghost cannot be conveyed. It is, simply put, “not of God.”

But does this mean that Mormonism and rhetorical learning are mutually exclusive? Is the Holy Ghost ineloquent? Is it harder to speak by the power of God if one fuses rhetorical proofs into his sermon to teach the first principles of God's doctrine? The answer, according to early Church leaders, would be yes.

In Aristotle's words, the practice of rhetoric is to find the best available means of persuasion (see Rhetoric 74), whether that be through logic, emotion, authority, style, word choice, or humor. The rhetorician understands that the audience before him holds certain presuppositions, and that to help them overcome their doubts, he must help change their perspective by aligning it with his own. He accomplishes this by refuting their possible objections or building upon common beliefs. He might also attempt to upset them, or cause them to experience guilt or shock at an action or position, construction or stereotype. Or, he may recognize that they merely need direction, and he can move them to action, demand respect, or simply reaffirm what they might already know. Whatever he ends up doing, he does it largely according to his own skills and knowledge, and therefore relies on his own talents to achieve results. In early Mormon oratory, however, the preacher readily accepted an incapacity to persuade others and learned to rely mostly, if not solely, on the power of God to influence the audience.

For instance, a nineteenth-century Mormon publication called The Contributor recorded Brigham Young's stance on homiletics:²

If I could command the language and eloquence of the angels of God, I would tell you why, but the eloquence of angels never can convince any person that God lives, and makes truth the habitation of his throne, independent of that eloquence being clothed with

² It should be noted that Young was the Prophet at this time, and was therefore considered to speak God's will inasmuch as he was God's mouthpiece.

the power of the Holy Ghost; in the absence of this, it would be a combination of useless sounds . . . Sermonizing, dividing, and sub-dividing subjects, and building up a fine superstructure, a fanciful and aerial building, calculated to fascinate the mind, coupled with the choicest eloquence of the world, will produce no good to them; the sentiments of my mind, and the manner of my life are to obtain knowledge by the power of the Holy Ghost (10:121)

Young taught that sermonizing without God's power was empty, superfluous, even if it was the rhetoric of angels. For Young, any speech that is performed or meant to "fascinate" held no greater significance than that of a collection of flowery words. Such speeches were pleasing, but they lacked the power to convert the soul unless they spoke eternal truths first. As the Lord told Joseph Smith in the Doctrine and Covenants, truth is something that "I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart" (8:2). Thus, truth is truth, no matter how it is adorned or spoken, and can only conveyed properly if it is accompanied by the spirit. "As for sermonizing," Young would later say, "I have but seldom attempted it, but I have borne my testimony of the truth to the people" (JD 5: 327).

So how does this philosophy contribute to Horace Greely's frustration and to our general understanding of early Mormon oratory? Simply put, when one attempts to preach the gospel by the spirit, the need for a clear, concise thesis, "a fine superstructure," and any other type of rhetorical knowledge is unnecessary. As Young taught, a personal confession of divine belief is more than adequate, which subsequently allows a member with little oratorical experience to profess his or her firm beliefs before a congregation.

Furthermore, when speakers such as Young sought the spirit in their preaching, they often did so willing to change subjects without much transition because they felt prompted by the

Holy Ghost to address a different subject. Thus, the loose-jointedness of early Mormon oratory can, in part, be attributed to a speaker's authority to preach before an audience without the authority of eloquence granted those who study rhetoric and homiletics. It mattered little if they rambled, because the power of truth would still be conveyed to the audience by the Holy Ghost.

Mormon Oratory as Historical Artifact

A third way to understand Mormon oratory is to take a quasi-historical, quasi-rhetorical approach. This involves the practice of looking at a speech to see what the motivations are, to see whether the speaker truly meant what was said, and whether the audience understood correctly by its subsequent approval or disapproval, actions or reactions. We can also understand the driving force behind certain rhetoric by analyzing its technical use of various schemes and tropes. In short, we can look at history through language.

In my research, I have become fascinated with a certain type of Mormon discourse—the persecution speeches of the nineteenth century. Even though I grew up in the Church, I had never been privy to the persecution speeches, and as I delved deeper into the Church's past I came upon Sidney Rigdon's Fourth of July sermon, given at Far West Missouri, 1838. It was in this speech that the Church (or, at least, the speaker) showed a decided military fervor—not a militant fervor, but an extreme urgency to retaliate against mobocratic persecution. Arguably the most controversial speech in early Mormon history, and certainly one of the most criticized ones, Rigdon spoke with an eloquence unfamiliar to most Mormons, and a fire just as zealous. Under an epigraph that claimed, "It is far better to sleep among the dead than be oppressed among the living," Rigdon's oration touched upon the past persecutions endured by the Saints, and made the following promise: "We take God and all the holy angels to witness this day, that we warn all men in the name of Jesus Christ, to come on us no more forever," stating that the "mob that

comes on us to disturb us; it shall be between us and them a war of extermination . . .” (Crawley 527)

Later, in the August 1838 publication of the Elder’s Journal, the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote an editorial recommending the oration “to all the saints” (Durham 58), promising, as Rigdon did, “for to be mobed (sic) any more without taking vengeance, we will not” (Durham 58). Yet, interestingly, the oration’s text was purposefully excluded in the official History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and only the following footnote remained to discuss its significance:

The oration . . . appeared in *The Far West*, a periodical published at Liberty, Clay County, Missouri . . . This oration by Sidney Rigdon has always been severely criticized as containing passages that were ill-advised and vehemently bitter. Especially those passages which threatened a war of extermination upon mobs should they again arise to plague the Saints (Smith, History 3:42).

While it is true that Rigdon’s oration was mostly controversial because of its purported declaration of war, this was not my main interest in the speech. I became interested in it as a prototype of Mormon persecution rhetoric, or the rhetoric relating to and inspired by persecution and anti-Mormon events within the Church’s history. As the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints notes, “But when such criticism is made, the rank injustice, the destruction of property and the outrages committed upon the persons of many of the members of the Church, by the Jackson County mob, should also be remembered” (Smith, History 3:42). Indeed, Rigdon’s recitation of the Saints’ suffering came to be a common practice for Mormon leaders when addressing the Church immediately following tragedy and trials, and subsequent rhetorical devices such as the cause and effect argument created a paradigm for directing remarks

in a time of persecution. Joseph Smith, for example, followed Rigdon's pattern of defining the irony of religious persecution within a free country, and John Taylor was known to have made statements such as, "You are free brethren, you are free; and you may prove yourselves before God and man that you are willing to defend yourselves against tyrants and oppressors" (as quoted in Brooks 23).

But we cannot assume that Rigdon's oration served as *the* rhetorical standard for Mormon persecution speeches. For example, did his speech contain rhetorical elements that were used long before 1838? Did Smith, in fact, view Rigdon as rhetorically capable as today's historians might, and therefore imitate his practice? Did he even respect Rigdon's rhetorical abilities?³ The answer to these questions are, at best, speculative and somewhat polemic. Still, Rigdon's oration may be categorized as the archetypal model for persecution rhetoric, for his intention was to "outline the sufferings and persecutions of the Church from its rise" (Durham 58).

Furthermore, I soon came to find that the rhetorical qualities of Rigdon's oration were duplicated in other persecution speeches, and that a favorite method of sermonizing dwelt upon the Church's trials and tribulations, and worked on the Saints' faith and obedience by reminding them of their heritage. Besides Rigdon, Joseph Smith gave similar speeches—whether in whole or in part—several times before he died, as did Brigham Young, John Taylor, Heber C. Kimball, and many others. They strayed away from gospel fundamentals, or the simple things considered necessary to grow and foster faith, repentance, and a lifetime of god-like living.

It is here, in these Mormon jeremiads, that we will focus our study, because it is here that

³ We should also acknowledge the fact that Smith, Rigdon, Young, and others often used a pacifistic rhetoric to address tragic circumstances in the Church's history if and when the occasion allowed. Smith was known for making statements such as the following: "We want to live in peace with all men; and equal rights [are] all we ask" (Smith 2:122).

we can find speeches worthy of a part-rhetorical, part-historical analysis—worthy of a title much more complimentary than “Strange Ramblings.” Why did the prophets speak about topics more controversial than faith and repentance, and why are these speeches unknown to the general population? Are they evidence of a militant society, or do they work as a paradigm of context-based (kairos) oratory? Were they uniquely hyperbolic? Or did they fit into the American oral tradition? By looking at Mormon oratory as a historical artifact, and by drawing a thread between Rigdon’s speech and other discourses given at or during tragic events in Mormon history, I hope to define the nature of persecution rhetoric according to its conventions, and to answer these questions, at least in part. I further hope to place it within one general category—a category that ultimately transcended personal rhetorical style and remained constant throughout much of the nineteenth century.

Sidney Rigdon and the Irony of Persecution

Chapter Two

Our discussion on Mormon Persecution Rhetoric must commence with Sidney Rigdon and his Fourth of July oration inasmuch as this speech marks one of Mormonism's first attempts to define persecution rhetorically.

Sidney Rigdon was born in Saint Claire, Pennsylvania in 1793. His religious views placed him among a group called the “Regular Baptists” (Smith, J.F., Church History, 146-47), where he later became a licensed minister in Pittsburg, practicing his ministry with an eloquence that made him particularly popular. Later, “because he could not harmonize the current teachings of the clergy with the doctrine in the Bible” (Smith, J.F., Church History, 146-47), Rigdon left the Baptists to join Alexander Campbell and his organization of “disciples.” Rigdon was a “Campbellite” preacher when he first came in contact with Mormonism.

Sidney Rigdon's membership in the Church began when he met a young Mormon missionary—Parley P. Pratt—and read the Book of Mormon, a curious new scripture said to have been revealed to and translated by a New Yorker named Joseph Smith. As history reveals, Rigdon's conversion was certainly not one of little consequence. He spent several years in positions of authority among the Saints as a member of the First Presidency, which gave him a right-hand position beside the Prophet. He was present at many of the Church's major events, was privileged to take part in some of Joseph Smith's key revelations (see D&C 76), and unfortunate enough to be a recipient of serious persecution.

His tenure with Mormonism was one that included service to the Church and faith in Joseph Smith as a prophet, but much of his legacy was tarnished because of his struggle with polygamy, his fall into inactivity, and his desire to replace the martyred prophet in 1844 even

though he had “apostatized” and forsaken the Church. Perhaps most of all, though, Rigdon was known for his speaking abilities.

Contemporaries viewed Rigdon as a powerful minister and orator. One described him as a speaker of unique ability, whose “personal influence with an audience was considerable” (Hayden 5). George Albert Smith recalled Rigdon as “our great preacher, (the perfect comber of all the sects), a man that could bring to bear all the big, jaw-cracking words of the English language, and who could fill up the interstices with quotations from other languages” (JD 3:24).

Historian Mark McKiernan wrote that Rigdon “enjoyed a reputation among his fellow ministers as a great orator” (18), and illustrated this sentiment with examples such as Alexander Doniphan’s personal account of one of Rigdon’s Speeches. “Such a burst of eloquence,” Doniphan wrote, “was never my fortune to listen to, at its close there was not a dry eye in the room, all were moved to tears” (98). Doniphan’s impression is striking as it is, but the circumstances surrounding this particular occasion make it even more so:

At Rigdon’s hearing, the courtroom was crowded with about a hundred excited anti-Mormons who were veterans of the Mormon War. Rigdon, who was ill and emaciated from his months of incarceration, asked that a cot be placed in the courtroom because he was too weak to sit up in a chair. He pleaded innocent to the crimes charged against him but enumerated the privations, persecutions, sufferings he had received in his relentless pursuit for religious truth (McKiernan 99).

Rigdon’s “burst of eloquence” came in a courtroom trial following months of imprisonment. That he gave his testimony before a “hundred excited *anti-Mormons*” and caused a tremendous pathetic response says much for his rhetorical ability to evoke pity from his enemies. And the fact that this record comes from a non-Mormon source implies that the

observer most likely leaned towards an objective, unbiased interpretation of the audience's response. But even more important may be the fact that this event was not anomalous:

The Quincy Whig described a mass meeting in which Rigdon retold his narrative of the "cold blooded murder by the mob of Missouri, of Mormon men and children, the violation of females, the destroying of property, the burning of houses etc." According to the reporters, "We saw the tears standing in the eyes of many of his people while he was recounting their history of woe and sorrow." They reported that Rigdon "was so agitated at different periods of his address that his feelings would hardly allow him to proceed" (McKiernan 102).

Such would be the message that Rigdon would deliver on 4 July, 1838, and such would be the passion of the messenger.

Entering the Rhetorical Moment

Sidney Rigdon's Fourth of July oration came during a time of considerable church persecution, a time when the Church had only recently removed itself from one state to another. Historian Douglas Larche points out that in 1837, Mormonism in Ohio prospered until two major events: internal apostasy that "eventually led to the departure of several of the Twelve Apostles and all the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon," and the "failure of the Kirtland bank" (8). Concerning the Church's internal problems, Joseph Smith told the Saints that "from the apostates the faithful have received the severest persecutions" (Smith, The Teachings of Joseph Smith, 66), which would later be evidenced by several attempts on the Prophet's life. In December of 1837, apostate persecutors burned the Kirtland printing office, and formed a mob which promised to "overthrow the Church" (Jenson 14). On December 22nd, they forced Brigham Young to flee the

city, threatening “to kill him because he would proclaim publicly and privately that he knew . . . that Joseph Smith jun. was a Prophet of . . . God” (Jenson 14).

The Kirtland Bank, also known as the Kirtland Safety Society, was set up in 1836-37 to combat a country-wide recession where “financial institutions throughout [America] were forced to close their doors” (Evans, R. L., 10-11). In the wake of increasing petitions for financial aid, Smith and other Church leaders opted to start the Kirtland Bank as a monetary safety-net for the Church’s headquarters. But a disenchanted clerk misappropriated most of the bank’s funds, leading to another financial catastrophe that hit too close to home for many of the Saints and gave investors another reason to defame the Prophet. Francis Gibbons explained the tenuous situation as follows:

Almost overnight, the beloved Prophet became the hated banker among many of those who had lost money. The speed of the change and the depth of the hatred were apparent in a meeting held soon after in the temple where disappointed investors bitterly attacked Joseph. “This order of things increased during the winter,” wrote Heber C. Kimball, “to such an extent that a man's life was in danger the moment he spoke in defense of the Prophet of God.” In these circumstances, Joseph left Kirtland in mid-January 1838 and traveled to Missouri in order to “escape mob violence, which was about to burst upon us” (12-13).

After Rigdon and Smith arrived in Far West, Missouri, they spent the next several months trying to reestablish an already fragile Church in another region, while simultaneously fighting off an ever-growing tide of apostasy.

Of course, the final months of 1837 and the removal from Kirtland did not mark the beginning of anti-Mormon persecution, and it is not improbable that earlier persecutions were

still heavy upon Church leaders' minds. The Kirtland affair was not the Church's first unwarranted removal from a city or state. In 1834, several Mormons faced expulsion from Jackson County, a situation severe enough that the Church organized an armed force called Zion's Camp and marched nearly a thousand miles to protect their persecuted friends and fellow Latter-day Saints. Several anti-Mormons drafted a "manifesto" which, curiously paralleling the rhetorical style of the Declaration of Independence, illustrates the perilous nature of the time:

We, the undersigned, citizens of Jackson county . . . in consequence of a pretended religious sect of people that have settled, and are still settling in our county, styling themselves "Mormons;" and intending, as we do, to rid our society, peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must, and believing as we do, that the arm of the civil law does not afford us a guarantee, or at least a sufficient one, against the evils which are now inflicted upon us, and seem to be increasing, by the said religious sect, deem it expedient, and of the highest importance, to form ourselves into a company for the better and easier accomplishment of our purpose—a purpose which we deem it almost superfluous to say, is justified as well by the law of nature, as by the law of self-preservation (Smith 1:374-375).

Thus, Rigdon's oration came at a time when the Church had already witnessed considerable hardships—internally as well as externally—and the opportune occasion for addressing a battered congregation about the need to defend itself climaxed on America's Independence Day: 4 July, 1838.

Understanding the Rhetoric

By way of summary, Rigdon's speech might be split up into thirds. In the first third, Rigdon denotes the occasion, which leads him into a discussion of the government, the constitution, and the concept of religious freedom. Rigdon then segues into the difficulties of the Saints, stating that since the very beginning of the Church (which Rigdon recalls as "eight years, two months, and twenty-eight days since"), persecutors have found cause to supersede the law and strip the Saints of their religious freedoms. Rigdon stated, "Being determined to put an end to the church forever, they added to all the rest of the means used, stealing the property of the saints, also burning houses and charging it on their [the saints] heads, in order to raise public indignation against them. . . . During these scenes of persecution, a number of the saints have lost their lives, and others are missing." (6-7).

In the second section, Rigdon moves from describing their persecutions to discussing the Saints' need for education and spiritual progression, saying, "What is religion without intelligence!—a sound without meaning. . . . Piety without intelligence is fanaticism and devotion without understanding is enthusiasm" (8-9). Rigdon also notes the difference between religious and scientific intelligence, reminding the Saints that it is "wisdom which brings salvation" (10).

Finally, Rigdon concludes his speech by returning to the rhetorical fervor that surely accompanied his oratorical style. Quoting scriptures about the second coming of Jesus Christ, Rigdon reminds his audience that "the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and ALL the proud, and ALL that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up . . . that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (11; original emphases). Rigdon then ties it all together, telling the Saints that the time had come to defend themselves: "God has promised us a

reward of eternal inheritance, and we have believed his promise, and though we wade through great tribulation, we are in nothing discouraged, for we know he that has promised is faithful. . . . We have proved the world with kindness . . . and still their persecutions and violence does not cease. But from this day and this hour, we will suffer it no more” (12).

Reading Rigdon’s oration, one is likely to be overwhelmed by its rhetorical qualities, the most obvious being repetitious sentences and strong diction. Throughout the speech, Rigdon’s smooth buildup, climaxing sentences, ethos and pathos-rich statements, and rhythmic prose form a structure that rhetoricians can hardly ignore. Whether historians disagree or sympathize with Rigdon’s message, they cannot disregard the speaker’s power, eloquence, and oratorical presence. Consider, for instance, Rigdon’s exploitation of ethos, logos and pathos—the Aristotelian proofs.

Rigdon first establishes his role as the speaker and his relationship to the audience. He begins his address by tying himself to his audience and bringing them to his level, calling them both “friends and fellow citizens” (see Crawley 518). He then places himself at their service, saying, “By your request, I am called to address you this day . . .” (Crawley 518). This exordium immediately defines the audience as the reason for his presence, being his requesters, and therefore justifies the words which he would subsequently speak. It also depicts a sense of humility in that Rigdon’s first comment to his “friends and fellow citizens” quickly negates any feeling of self-aggrandizement. It is true that his calling in the Church placed him among the elite, but his responsibility as this occasion’s principal speaker was by “request,” inferring that had there been no “request,” he would have been one of them—a simple spectator.

Rigdon also appeals to the Saints through a sense of unity. Immediately following the fourth clause his diction uses only plural possessives or pronouns:

For however frequently *we* may have met with *our* fellow citizens, in times past, in the places of our nativity, or of *our* choice, to mingle *our* feelings with theirs, and unite with them in grateful acknowledgments to *our* Divine Benefactor . . . (Crawley 518, my emphasis).

Such a style surely benefited him in two ways: first, it enhanced the spirit of equity between speaker and audience, setting up a perception of unity; second, it augmented that unity by referring to past facts and precedents. Rigdon's words reminded the Saints that they had previously met together with common feelings and purposes; that they had one "divine benefactor;" one divine faith. With this in mind, Rigdon's audience could easily have recognized their orator as one unified with them in the past, and, therefore, as one who would continue to be so in the future. Rigdon's exclusive use of plural possessives and pronouns remains dominant, with little exception, until the final clause.

Though *logos* represents a small part of the speech, Rigdon's logical appeals still play important roles in the oration's overall effectiveness, occurring near the end and centering around the need for the Saints to promulgate the gospel. According to Rigdon, religion "not only acquaints us with . . . eternal things, but it makes known unto us the future history of man in time, of the purposes of God, which have to be accomplished before the end of all things comes" (Crawley 525). God's purposes are then laid out repeatedly through the testimonies of scriptural witnesses and documents.

For example, Rigdon begins what would turn into a large list of scripture and explication by quoting the Savior: "As it was in the days of Noah, so should it be at the coming of the Son of man" (Crawley 525-527). He then quotes Paul and Peter from the New Testament, and Isaiah,

Malachi, and king David from the Old, showing his congregation that each of these witnesses saw the same thing—that the “earth mourneth and fadeth away” (Crawley 526).

Next, Rigdon explicates those scriptures, stating their exegesis accordingly: “Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we warn our fellow men, not only by precept, but example also. . .” (Crawley 526). Rigdon’s enthymeme indicates that the duty of the Saints was to stand as examples to the world of the power of God, warning them of God’s fury and the destruction that assuredly awaits unrepentant sinners. Though strong in language and capable of crossing the line between logos and ethos, his reasoning was logical because it appealed to the divine superiority of scripture, scripture that made as much logical sense as it stirred emotion. The Latter-day Saints had a divine mission, an unfulfilled destiny, and by using the words of ancient prophets, that destiny, whether implied or explicit, was one “contention” that Rigdon had set out to prove.

Finally, Rigdon makes a pathetic appeal to rouse the audience’s emotions, for, as Joseph would later write, “to be mobed (sic) any more” they would not (Elder’s Journal, 1:46). This appeal came in a couple of ways. Stylistically, Rigdon uses a repetitious sentence structure to build toward his climax. One passage, for example, uses both *anaphora* (repetition at the beginning of a sentence or clause) and *epistrophe* (repetition at the ending of a sentence or clause) repeatedly:

If the ancient Saints had to endure as seeming him who is invisible—so have we. If they had to suffer the contradiction of sinners against themselves—so have we. If they had to undergo fears within and fightings without—so have we. . . . If they were often in journeyings, in perils of water, in perils among robbers, in perils by their own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in

perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—so are we (Rigdon 8).

This repetition amplified Rigdon’s message, testified of his eloquence, and helped prepare the Saints for his climactic ending.

Textually, a speaker’s delivery is often difficult to determine because the text rarely denotes emphases. But from the Church’s official account of Rigdon’s speech (the Elder’s Journal), the text’s concluding statement hints at a dramatic finish: “No never! No never! NO NEVER!” (Crawley 529; original emphasis). Thus, it seems that the speech ended on a grand note.

But Rigdon’s grand conclusion only goes as far as the audience, because words, even if they are capitalized, still mean little to the reader—the pathos is shortsighted and context-specific. Perhaps, then, this is why Rigdon transcended rhetorical fervor to make a speech capable of touching readers more than a hundred years later. And he did so by utilizing a classic rhetorical technique that would become a familiar commonplace in Mormon persecution rhetoric: *ironia*, or irony.

The Irony of Persecution

In literature, irony is a powerful tool for the poet or playwright. It can afford the author a license for humorous dialogue, the wit that so often distinguishes the witty from the ignorant. It can also convey a moral purpose, for the audience or reader adept enough to recognize a statement or action as ironic becomes empowered enough to see through the limitations imposed on the character himself. Finally, irony works as a force for literary ambiguity: the interpreter can base her interpretation off the irony itself by asking whether the irony of Shakespeare’s

Hamlet changes her reading. In this play, the one character who knows the truth of his father's murder, having been visited by his father's ghost, is also the story's one source of lunacy. The irony of truth and rationale within a model of insanity compels us to question ourselves, and, perhaps, reread our interpretation.

In rhetoric, irony performs the same functions, but most often exists as a convincing tool to “establish one's case indirectly, proving one's own assertion by discrediting the contrary” (see “Irony,” Burton, G). That is to say, orators use irony as a backdoor into the heart of the argument. But irony can also be used directly, as a hammer pounding a nail augments the hole initially made when the carpenter first touches the nail to a board. In such a way irony has often been a mainstay in persecution speeches, from those arguing for American Independence in the eighteenth century, to Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement in the twentieth.

For instance, the American Revolutionaries were “born the heirs of freedom” in a land where “everything tended to produce, and to establish the spirit of freedom” (Wood 6). But, ironically, they found themselves struggling against their heritage, the original source of their freedom in order to become more independent. As this growing resentment pushed the colonies closer to a revolutionary war, their rhetoric followed suit. One example comes from the actual Declaration of Independence, a declaration that emphasizes the irony of inalienable rights—human rights that were undeniably afforded to all persons by God—being restricted by human institutions.

In the mid-1800s, abolitionists battled with soon-to-be confederates over the ethical nature of slavery and the irony of one human—the most dominant force in life—owning another. During this time, Frederick Douglass emerged as an ironic enigma. He was a man of learning, eloquence, and logic; his blood and skin color denoted his heritage as African, placing him, in

the eyes of many southerners, on the same intellectual level of the slaves. But, ironically the former slave had put himself far above them through his erudition, and quickly established himself as a leading voice in the anti-slavery movements. And in one of his more famous works, Douglass proved that he understood the power of irony and the ironic situations around him: “I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on the 4th of July” (Lucaites 60). Such was the plight of the educated Douglass. He was a former slave in a free land. He was an advocate for equal rights who cherished liberty, and would have likewise cherished America’s triumph from British rule, but found it difficult because the same country that celebrated freedom simultaneously refused to grant it. Indirectly, Douglass’ rhetoric touches upon America’s ironic love of freedom by mentioning their Independence Day, July 4 in the same breath he discusses slavery—the dark practice of refusing others personal and economic equality.

In Sidney Rigdon’s speech, and in general Mormon persecution rhetoric, the speaker uses this same technique to remind the Saints of their unfortunate circumstances, and as an instrument for rousing them to some sort of action or belief. To Rigdon, it was a principal method of evoking pathos among his audience, and of assuring himself that his pathetic appeal would last far longer than the rhetorical moment.

For example, Rigdon’s speech uses irony to achieve two purposes: one, to summarize the Church’s persecutions to that point, and thereby fulfill the duty of a persecution speech; and two, to allude to the future “emergence of a militaristic spirit” (Baugh 36).

To do this, Rigdon forms an argument similar to that given by Thomas Jefferson several years previous, and to that by given by Douglass nearly twenty years later. His pathetic appeal begins as he praises America and the freedoms it affords. Rigdon then makes a cause and effect

argument. By praising America's virtues (the "inalienable rights" of humankind), Rigdon tries to cause the Saints to acknowledge gratitude towards their country. "Having been rocked in the cradle of liberty," he notes, "and educated in the school of freedom, all our prejudices and prepossessions are deeply rooted in favor of the superlative excellence of a government, from which all our privileges and enjoyments have flown" (Crawley 519). He also states that, "protected by its laws and defended by its powers, the oppressed and persecuted saint can worship under his own vine, and under his own fig tree, and none can molest or make afraid" (Crawley 519). America is set on a pedestal as a country of hope and freedom; it is a place where one can worship unmolested from hegemonic denominations and conspiring priests. The Saints should be able to rest easy in their faith. But this is not always the case—a fact that Rigdon easily recognizes and readily exploits.

Having pointed out America's virtues, Rigdon's encomium quickly changes direction to address the ironic situation. The irony begins as Rigdon starts his vituperation, referring to past facts and consequences, or a history of the persecutions suffered by the Saints in their "cradle" of liberty: "They united to all this power, that of mobs, driving men, women, and children, from their houses, dragging them out in the dead hours of the night, out of their beds, whipping, tarring, feathering, and otherwise shamefully treating them" (Crawley 521). Rigdon then states that "no country of which we have any knowledge, has offered so fair an opportunity for determining the great hostility which exists naturally in the human heart against God and against his work, as this one" (Crawley 522).

All this is to say that America is a great hypocrite—that, ironically, there exists a cruel duality in American liberty. What should be the quintessence of human rights had taken no action to protect them. As Rigdon stated, they were in constant perils, "in the sea, in the city,"

and were put so without regard to the freedom that they cherished.

Regarding pathos, Rigdon's recitation of the Saints' suffering amid the right to practice religion peacefully put the Saints on an emotional high and set the audience up for a climactic ending: "We this day then proclaim ourselves free, with a purpose and a determination, that never can be broken, 'no never! *no never!!* NO NEVER'!!!" (Crawley 529). If the audience recognized the irony, they felt the injustice of their situation and prepared themselves to remedy it. In this case, such preparation meant that they learn to accept the Church's need to defend itself militarily in the not-so-distant future.

As time went on, the irony of a persecuted Church in a land boasting religious freedoms continued to follow the Latter-day Saints, and Church leaders were subsequently forced to address their plight in America as Rigdon did in his oration, to find ways to retaliate or benefit from it.⁴

The Reaction to the Speech

Having dissected Rigdon's rhetoric, we must conclude with a short look at what followed to see whether Rigdon spoke as an individual or as a representative. And the reaction to Rigdon's oration, overall, must be considered within various time periods.

Church historians James Allen and Glen Leonard noted that immediately following the speech, "the jubilant audience responded: 'Hosannah, hosannah, hosannah! Amen. Amen. Amen!' and repeated it three times" (133; original punctuation and spelling). Parley P. Pratt, one of the Church's twelve apostles who was present during the speech, recorded the following in his

⁴ It should be noted that the ironic situation was not unique to Rigdon's speech. During the 1860's, when the Church had removed to Utah and faced accusations of building a separate empire to compete with the United States, the American government sent an army to investigate and, if necessary, to punish the Church. At this time, Franklin D. Richards gave a persecution speech to a gathering of Mormon militia men. In it he reminded his troops that they "have appealed to Judges and Governors of those States for redress of our wrongs in vain, and when we applied to the Presidents of the United States for our rights we were told '*your cause is just but I can do nothing for you.*'" (Brooks 20; original emphasis).

autobiography: “This declaration was received with shouts of hosannah to God and the Lamb, and with many long cheers by the assembled thousands” (149).

And, as we’ve alluded to previously, Joseph Smith quickly recommended the oration in an editorial for the Elder’s Journal:

The oration delivered on the occasion is now published in pamphlet form. . . .We would recommend to all the saints to get one, to be had in their families, as it contains an outline of the suffering and persecutions of the Church from its rise. As also the fixed determination of the Saints, in relation to the persecutors who are and have been continually, not only threatening us with mobs, but actually have been putting their threats into execution, with which we are absolutely determined no longer to bear, come life or come death, for to be mobbed any more without taking vengeance we will not (1: 54)

Immediately, then, Rigdon’s speech was generally accepted and the speaker was commended, but subsequent documents on the subject show that hindsight often interprets oratory differently.

B.H. Roberts, once the Church’s preeminent historian, discussed the speech in his monumental work, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

At this distance of time from that occasion, and balancing against the heated utterances of the speaker the subsequent uses made of them to incite the public mind to that series of acts which culminated in the expulsion of the Saints from the state, we say those utterances were untimely, extreme, and unwise. So indeed they were. The speaker seems to have thrown discretion to the winds, and in the fervor of his rhetoric made threats of retaliation on behalf of the Saints, if assailed, that went beyond all bounds of reason and

humanity, and proved a very damaging as also a very potent factor against the Saints in the subsequent movements of their enemies against them (3:xliv-xlv).⁵

But Roberts' criticism is difficult for two reasons: first, Rigdon's oratory should not be considered too unusual (see the mob manifesto of 1832) for the time, for Rigdon was likely a disciple of the "us versus them" topos of early American colonial rhetoric, of the tradition that saw speeches calling Tories "wretched hirelings and execrable parricides," King George III "the tyrant of the earth," and British soldiers mercenaries intent on washing "the ground with a profusion of innocent blood" (Wood 9). Without a doubt, he was a disciple of the revivalist fervor that swept the Eastern United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁶

Second, this statement connects the overall speech to an increase in tension between Mormons and their gentile neighbors solely from the observation that persecution increased in the proceeding months. However, an analysis of events following the speech reveal other factors for the increase in anti-Mormon discrimination and show how poorly the Saints' took Rigdon's war-of-extermination statement (not necessarily the whole speech) to heart.

Following July, for example, the Saints had several opportunities to fulfill Rigdon's promise, yet stubbornly resisted. In August of 1838, during the general elections in Hancock County, the Church attempted to ameliorate its suffering through peaceful and political means. But the mob, led by William Peniston, a candidate who feared not being elected if the Mormons were allowed to vote, incited the crowd to fight and kill those who attempted to do so. Andrew Moore recalled that "the mobe (sic) commenced there abuse strictly one of the brethren, they hollowed out kill him dam kill him the Brethren ran to his relief. A fight ensued with clubs

⁵Roberts was not Rigdon's only critic. Other prominent leaders who later condemned the speech included Jedediah M. Grant, a counselor in the First Presidency. Grant's criticism was as follows: "[the oration was] the main auxiliary that fanned into a flame the burning wrath of the mobocratic portion of the Missourians" (Crawley 80).

⁶ Unfortunately, a thorough investigation into colonial rhetoric and its possible influence on Mormon oratory is outside the scope of this thesis. We will, though, touch upon Rigdon's contemporary influences in chapter five.

stones and dirks, several was knact down the Bretheren stood their grawn the mobe cried for quarters” (Moore; original punctuation and spelling). In spite of such persecution, “the Bretheren” refused to follow their attackers as they dispersed, satisfied that they had stood “their grawn” in defense. As the Church's enemies called for violent retaliation, Smith and the brethren went to Adam Black, a newly elected Justice of the Peace for protection.

Later, in what came to be known as the battle of Crooked River, a quasi-Mormon militia was temporally formed after “a number of houses were burned by the mob,” along with “many other depredations” (Smith 3:163). But the battle of Crooked River—the battle in which apostle David W. Patten became the first martyr of the restored Church—took place to “disperse the mob and retake their [the Mormon] prisoners, whom it was reported, they [the mob] intended to murder that night” (Smith 3:170). There were fatalities on both sides, but the Mormon militia disbanded after their prisoners were liberated.

So what, then, was the overall effect of Rigdon’s Fourth of July speech? In some regards, the promise for a war of extermination may indeed have been “empty rhetoric,” for such a promise was never fulfilled, and was, at best, merely a small catalyst for a growing tide of anti-Mormon sentiment. Further, as Roberts himself is quick to acknowledge, such rhetoric was entirely predictable, for “it would be asking the Saints to be more than human if we say they ought not to have indulged, much less to have expressed, such feelings of resentment” (3: xliv-xlv). But the overall speech, the general appeal to pathos and the use of irony, was much more than mere rhetoric. It was a rhetorical event that laid the groundwork for future military protection (the Nauvoo Legion) as opposed to retaliation. It was a speech that immortalized Rigdon as one of Mormonism’s spokesmen for religious rights, making him a Mormon parallel to Jefferson, Douglass, and Martin Luther King Jr. And it was, to that point, the most powerful

display of a developing rhetorical genre within the Mormon tradition—the persecution speech that reaffirmed the Latter-day Saints’ unfortunate heritage as a persecuted people in a land of liberty.

Joseph Smith and the Power of Hyperbole

Chapter Three

Having touched upon the most dramatic of Mormon persecution rhetoric, and having introduced ourselves to Sidney Rigdon, arguably the early Church's greatest orator, it is now necessary to look at Joseph Smith, Rigdon's superior in Church affairs and an oft-follower of Rigdon's fervor.

Joseph Smith was born in Sharon, Vermont on 23 December, 1805. Several years later, when the Smith family had moved to Manchester, New York, the future prophet became caught up in the religious revivals that swept the eastern United States. He described his feelings as follows: "In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself, what is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?" (Smith 1:4). His confusion led him receive what has since been termed the First Vision, wherein he professed to be visited by God the Father and Jesus Christ; subsequent angelic visions commanded him to find and translate a set of ancient records which became a book entitled The Book of Mormon. Primarily, it was these two events that established the worldwide organization now officially called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Designated the Church's first prophet, seer, and revelator, Smith was responsible for a collection of modern revelations (the Doctrine and Covenants) on how to govern the Church's affairs, and a compilation of multiple lectures in which he often revealed newer doctrines or philosophies. One famous example is his epideictic sermon at the funeral of one King Follett, a sermon in which he opened his followers' minds to an even greater promise than eternal life: the prospect of attaining a level of glory akin to God's and becoming, in essence, exactly like Him.

In spite of these lectures (and additional writings) Joseph Smith is less recognized for rhetorical talent than is his counterpart, Sidney Rigdon. In fact, historians often place Smith's sermons in Davis Bitton's "Strange Ramblings" category, and few recognize his speaking as his most influential tool.⁷ George Q. Cannon, for instance, recalls one of his speeches as follows: "the Prophet promptly addressed a sermon to the little group about him. Our numbers were constantly increased from the passers in the street, and a most attentive audience of more than a hundred persons soon hung upon every word of the speaker. The text was Mark 16:15, and the comments, *though rambling and disconnected*, were delivered with the fluency and fervor of a camp-meeting orator" (347-348; my emphasis).

Another eye witness of the Prophet's sermonizing was Mathew L. Davis, a visitor to Nauvoo from Washington, D.C. Davis's record of Smith as a speaker affirms the Prophet's plain style:

He is not an educated man: but he is a plain, sensible, strong-minded man. Everything he says is said in a manner to leave an impression that he is sincere. There is no levity, no fanaticism, no want of dignity in his deportment. . . . (Ehat and Cook xix).

Parley P. Pratt wrote that Smith's language abounded in "original eloquence [that was] peculiar to himself—not polished—not studied—not smoothed and softened by education and refined by art; but flowing forth in its own native simplicity" (45). This lack of rhetorical ability is not surprising given Smith's reputation as a "poor, rural visionary" who only occasionally attended revivals, and who seemed to some onlookers to be nothing more than "an easy going

⁷ Here we make a distinction between Joseph's expositions and revelations. The former were characterized by sermons on subjects from Church organization to self-defense and were generally accepted by the Saints; on the other hand, Joseph's revelatory speeches were usually viewed as direct quotations from the Lord and were thus commandments.

boy with little ambition.” As Church historian Richard Bushman puts it, “no one imagined him as a prophet” (127).

But a prophet he nonetheless became, assuming responsibilities that should have far exceeded his educational background. And with his developing role as God’s seer and revelator, Smith began to develop a rhetorical style that, although less persuasive than his prophetic ethos, should not be discounted as simple or ineffective. He was, in fact, an extremely capable speaker who understood the power and persuasiveness of words, and, when it came to persecution speeches, was more than a match for his contemporaries.

Entering the Rhetorical Moment

Joseph Smith’s two major persecution speeches were given well after Rigdon’s oration.⁸ The first came on the heels of a “kidnapping” when, in 1843, Sheriff Joseph Reynolds of Jackson County Missouri and his constable, Harmon T. Wilson, entered Nauvoo under the guise of “Mormon Elders” (JH: 8:23; see Journal History in works cited) looking to speak with their prophet. Upon obtaining direction to his house, they “accosted” the Prophet near his barn and cried out “God damn you, if you stir, I’ll shoot; God damn you, if you stir one inch I’ll shoot you; God damn you, be still or I’ll shoot you by God” (JH, 8:23, 1843). To this Smith responded, “I am not afraid of your shooting; I am not afraid to die.” From his account, the Prophet then “bared [his] breast” and encouraged them to follow through with their promises, stating, “I have endured so much oppression, I am weary of life; and kill me, if you please . . . but if you have any legal process to serve, I am at all times subject to law, and shall not offer resistance . . . shoot away; I am not afraid of your pistols” (Evans, J. 174).

⁸ This is not to say that Smith only mentioned persecution twice, for many of his speeches included some type of reaction against his hardships. However, these two speeches stand out as paradigms of persecution rhetoric more so than others because they were direct responses to difficult circumstances—they were speeches given at the opportune time—rather than reflections on the Saints’ persecuted past. Further, they were characterized by a style and tone common to Rigdon’s oration and other speeches—emotional fervor, hyperbole, irony, and so forth.

After his return from a week-long imprisonment and trial, he was finally reunited with the Church, upon which he immediately addressed the Saints at the Nauvoo Temple.

Joseph Smith gave his second major persecution speech only a few days before his death on 27 June, 1844. By the 18th, he had struggled with an increase of apostasy and criticism within the Church, which was later described by Mormon historian B. H. Roberts as “more serious than all external opposition” (Roberts 2:221).

Histories delineating this time period usually begin with the establishment and destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor, an anti-Mormon (and anti-Joseph Smith) newspaper that, in the Prophet’s words, was “calculated to destroy the peace of the city” (Smith 6:438). The newspapers’ founders (primarily comprised of former Church leaders William and Wilson Law, R. D. Foster and Chauncey Higbee) had become disenchanted with Smith because of a perception that he had “fallen” from his prophetic role and was, essentially, leading the Church astray.

After Smith had the Expositor demolished, citizen anger as well as the county’s general criticism against the Prophet engulfed newspapers such as The Warsaw Signal, whose editor, Thomas Sharp, a devout anti-Mormon, responded by urging his readership to rise up in lynch-law vengeance: “We have no time to comment: every man will make his own. Let it be made with powder and ball!!!” (see Sharp)

By 12 June, rumors that mobs were gathering to attack reached Nauvoo, and four days later Smith wrote a letter informing Governor Ford of the growing mob’s intent “to drive and exterminate ‘the Saints’ by force of arms” (Roberts 2:239). In this letter he also indicated his willingness to follow a judge’s advice and allow himself to be arrested and tried in court. The next day he surrendered to Daniel H. Wells, a “friendly but non-Mormon justice of the peace”

(Durham, G. 218). As the Church had hoped, the Prophet was quickly discharged and returned to Nauvoo. A mob, enraged that Smith was unlikely to face further trial from within Nauvoo, formed to carry out Sharp's sentiment that if the "law could not reach [him]," then "powder and ball could" (Smith 6:566).

In the face of such opposition, Smith empowered the Nauvoo police and the Nauvoo Legion to "see that no violent act is committed" (Smith 6:493); on 18 June, he made the following declaration:

To the Marshal or the City of Nauvoo: From the newspapers around us, and the current reports as brought in from the surrounding country, I have good reason to fear that a mob is organizing to come upon this city, and plunder and destroy said city, as well as murder the citizens; and by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor, and to preserve the city and the lives of the citizens, I do hereby declare the said city, within the limits of its incorporation, under martial law. The officers, therefore, of the Nauvoo Legion, the police as well as all others, will strictly see that no persons or property pass in or out of the city without due orders (Smith 6:497).

As was the case with the Nauvoo Expositor, the Prophet's decision to put Nauvoo under martial law further outraged an already hostile mob, for which an official charge of treason "against the government and people of the State of Illinois" (Smith 6: 561-562) was levied. In response, Smith spent some of his final days in Nauvoo preparing the city's defenses.

Understanding the Rhetoric

As with Rigdon's oration, both of Smith's speeches are presented in full in the appendixes. But a summary of these speeches will help us to understand the Prophet's rhetoric holistically.

Upon returning to Nauvoo after being arrested by Reynolds, Smith went to the temple grounds to speak before the Saints. In what was probably a twenty-minute speech, Smith opened with a short summary of his arrest, followed by a brief explanation of the habeas corpus law, and a lament over the possibility of losing this constitutional privilege.

The rest of his speech was interwoven with praise for the writ of habeas corpus and his scorn for lawyers, his anger over being persecuted and further details of his arrest, his resolve to retaliate militarily, and his love for the Saints. He then concluded with a testimonial to his position and a blessing towards his audience.

In his second speech, given on 18 June, 1844, Smith addressed the Nauvoo Legion. In a similar fashion to his previous speech, Smith spent his time considering the legal ramifications of their immediate circumstances—applying for federal protection; witnessing a loss of their constitutional rights—and the tribulations that follow “every man in whose heart dwells a single spark of the spirit of the fullness of the Gospel” (Smith 6:498). He then asked the Saints if they would “sustain [him] at the peril of [their] lives,” promising that if they would not, he would “have raised up a mightier people” (Smith 6:499). The rest of his speech includes anathemas (“may the thunders of the Almighty and the forked lightning’s of heaven and pestilence, and war and bloodshed come down on those ungodly men who seek to destroy my life and the lives of this innocent people”) and blessings (“May the Lord God of Israel bless you for ever and ever”; see Smith 6:499-500). With this statement, Smith concluded what would come to be his last major discourse.

An analysis of these speeches shows that the Prophet’s rhetorical technique partially mirrored that of Sidney Rigdon. As Rigdon stated in his oration, Smith understood and explicated the irony of a persecuted religion. He also relied heavily on his credibility as a

sustained prophet-representative of an entire people. One example of this stems from these speeches' interactive nature: "Will you all stand by me to the death, and sustain at the peril of your lives, the laws of our country, and the liberties and privileges which our fathers have transmitted unto us, sealed with their sacred blood? ("Aye!" shouted thousands)." He then said, "It is well. If you had not done it, I would have gone out there (pointing to the west) and would have raised (sic) up a mightier people" (Smith 6:499).

The Prophet's question (which could have been rhetorical in structure) elicited a response, a sustaining or supportive voice. But what was more important than the audience's willingness to show overt approval is the implicit statement or affirmation of authority that illustrates his own confidence in his calling. That is, even without the support of his followers, he was a capable leader; had he been forced to remove himself from the main body of the Church, he would still succeed in "raising" up a society of Latter-day Saints. But in addition to these similarities between Smith's and Rigdon's oratorical styles, it is Smith's eagerness and ability to mirror the latter's enthusiasm with alarmist (or even violent) hyperbole that is important for our study of Mormon persecution rhetoric.

The Power of Hyperbole and Exuscitatio

Hyperbole, simply defined, is a "fitting exaggeration of the truth in order to make something appear greater or smaller than it is" (Rowe, G. 128). When the exaggeration amplifies the seriousness of an occurrence (the arrival of ten militia men is described as "the onset of an army") it is called litotes; if the exaggerated phrase simplifies it (the onset of an army described as a "small obstacle"), it is called auxesis. If a given speech is considered to be particularly angry or inflammatory, the speaker is said to be using exuscitatio, or the practice of "stirring

others by one's own vehement feeling . . . often for the sake of exciting anger" (see Burton, Silva Rhetoricae).

Aristotle notes that hyperboles are effective when used to describe something metaphorically: "for example, of a man with a black eye [one might say], 'You would have thought him a basket of mulberries'" (253). But he also derides the trope's overall necessity because, as he puts it, "hyperboles are adolescent, for they exhibit vehemence" (Aristotle 253). Such disdain likely stems from Aristotle's preference for logical over emotional appeals. In a similar vein, Thomas Hobbes laments the use of rhetorical figures in his treatise on scientific reasoning, ascribing their use to the production of absurd arguments (see Hobbes, "Chapter 5: Of Reason and Science," para. 7-9).

In contrast to Aristotle and Hobbes, other rhetoricians recognize the pros of hyperbolic speaking in oratory. Quintilian, for instance, states that hyperbole is effective for either "augmentation or attenuation," calling it, moreover, "a virtue," so long as the subject is "abnormal" (VIII, vi: 75). By "abnormal" Quintilian means subject matter or circumstances that are too difficult or magnificent to describe without augmentation (such as religious persecution).

In the early thirteenth century, Geoffrey of Vinsnauf wrote Poetria Nova, in which he defined hyperbole as the figurative mode of exaggeration that "diminishes or heightens eulogy to a remarkable degree, and . . . is a source of pleasure when both ear and good usage commend it" (53). Recent scholars such as Edward J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors agree with Geoffrey's assertion, noting that "if we can learn to invent fresh hyperboles, we will be able to produce the right note of emphasis . . . or humor" (444).

Thus, hyperbole represents a tropistic wordplay that can heighten rhetoric insofar as it allows speakers to emphasize the good or bad of a person or maxim (epideictic), or a law or ethic

(judicial or legislative). Though hyperbole often elicits a “tongue-in-cheek” reception from audience to speaker, it nonetheless accentuates or undercuts controversial situations, ideas, or policies. In Mormon persecution speeches, hyperbole was implemented to influence the audience, but in contrast to Geoffrey’s belief, hyperbole served mostly as a dramatic exclamation—the combination of exaggeration and exuscitatio. And, though other forms of hyperbolic expression (such as litotes) are more common, it is the dramatic, alarmist hyperbole of Mormon persecution speeches that is most striking.

For example, any ignition of anti-Mormon criticism over Sidney Rigdon's Fourth of July speech stemmed from his hyperbolic exclamations. Rigdon concluded his speech with the following promise: “. . . we will follow them, till the last drop of their blood is spilled, or else they will have to exterminate us: for we will carry the seat of war to their own houses, and their own families, and one party of the other shall be utterly destroyed—Remember it then all Men” (Crawley 527; my emphasis). In this case, the words “last drop of their blood” and “exterminate” were extreme ways to describe death, or war, and by using them Rigdon created (whether inadvertent or intentional) the most dramatic effect possible. In a manner comparable to the later abolitionist rhetoric and style of Wendell Phillips, Rigdon's words “attempted to create the necessary atmosphere of crisis” (Darsey 68). It was through words like “exterminate” that Rigdon impressed the gravity of the situation, and, like Phillips, defined his thinking “in terms of the ultimate potentialities of social conflicts rather than the immediate compromises by which they are softened” (Darsey 68).

In a similar fashion, Joseph Smith’s two persecution speeches centered on the crisis of being kidnapped and of anticipating Nauvoo’s destruction. In the first speech, having recognized the implications of Sheriff Reynold’s arrest (the danger of either being killed on the spot or of

being extradited to an angry group of Missourians) Smith used a type of reactive, violent hyperbole to address the Saints: “But before I will bear this unhallowed persecution any longer—before I will be dragged away again among my enemies for trial, I will spill the last drop of blood in my veins, and will see all my enemies in hell! To bear it any longer would be a sin, and I will not bear it any longer” (Smith 5:467).⁹

As did Rigdon, Joseph Smith addressed his situation and emotional response in a dramatic fashion. Rather than use words with a milder connotation, Smith augmented his language to show exactly how far he would go to avoid being kidnapped again: to the last drop of blood, and to hell. If one were to restate his feelings differently, without the absoluteness of “last drop” and “in hell,” one would see major dissimilarities: before I will be kidnapped again, I will give my life and see my enemies dead. Likewise, a simple comparison of Smith’s rhetoric to that of Albert P. Rockwood, another Latter-day Saint and member of the Nauvoo Legion who witnessed these events, contrasts powerfully with Smith’s statement:

You may ask if the Prophet goes out with the Saints to Battle? I answer he is a Prophet to go before the people as in times of old . . . Is not this marvelous? Bro[sic] Joseph has unsheathed his sword & in the name of Jesus declares that it shall not be sheathed again until he can go into any country or state in safety and peace (see Rockwood, Letters in works cited).¹⁰

In content, Rockwood’s message is identical to the Prophet’s. Smith, having been persecuted, was now determined to defend himself and the Church, a determination that, at least in word, equated him to the biblical war prophets (Joshua, Saul, David, etc.). But Rockwood’s

⁹ It should be noted that Joseph’s use of hyperbole extended beyond defensive or retaliatory rhetoric. For example, in his first speech, Joseph used this trope to denigrate lawyers: “Don’t employ lawyers, or pay them money for their knowledge, for I have learned that they don’t know anything. *I know more than they all*” (my emphasis).

¹⁰ See the previous chapter for Rockwood’s full quote.

rhetorical structure does not hold the same exclamatory effect. Instead of one willing to spill blood, Rockwood portrayed Smith as one willing to defend himself; instead of one hoping to “see” (read “send”) his enemies to “hell,” Rockwood’s description depicts one searching for safety.

In 1844, before he was taken by a mob at Carthage, Illinois, Joseph Smith continued his use of alarmist hyperbole using almost identical wording: “I call God and angels to witness that I have unsheathed my sword with a firm and unalterable determination that this people shall have their legal rights, and be protected from mob violence, or my blood shall be spilt upon the ground like water, and my body consigned to the silent tomb” (Smith 6:499). Again, Smith’s reaction to various circumstances depicts the gravity of a perilous situation in what one might term “perilous wording.” As history would show, Smith’s rhetoric was indeed exaggerated, for, six days after unsheathing his sword in “unalterable determination,” the Prophet gave himself up, understanding that he went like “a lamb to the slaughter” (Roberts 2: 248).

The Reaction to the Speeches

Immediate reaction to Joseph Smith’s speeches was somewhat similar to that which followed Rigdon’s oration. In the first speech, Smith’s rhetoric elicited instant response from the audience. Having sworn to never submit to Sheriff Reynolds or other mobs again, Smith asked his listeners whether they “shall bear it [persecution] any longer” (Smith 5:467), to which, as Smith’s own history records, the audience answered with “one universal NO!” that “ran through all the vast assembly, like a loud peal of thunder” (Smith 5:467). In 1844, the audience interspersed ecstatic “Aye’s!” with reverent “Amen’s” (see Smith 6:498-499).

But as we analyze the circumstances beyond his speeches, our reaction to his rhetoric, and our ability to classify it as hyperbolic, depends on our exploration of a further question: what

was the purpose behind Smith's exuscitatio, his hyperbole?¹¹ Why would he (as well as Rigdon) need to heighten a speech in a way that would surely invite even more outside criticism?

One answer to this questions whether the Prophet even meant to exaggerate (however unwisely) in his speeches; whether, that is, we should read Smith literally, or whether we should see him as a speaker affecting oratory with persuasive technique. Though the scope of this study and the intention of this chapter is to understand such oratory—not defend it—any post 1844 audience's response, having the boon of historical hindsight, should look at the context surrounding these speeches, the forces—political and social—that often determine what we say and why we say it.

Regarding Mormon persecution rhetoric in general, then, the difficulty with formally reacting to Smith's and Rigdon's texts lies in the difficulty of correctly interpreting the message as well as the method. Was the Prophet speaking for a specific time and purpose, or was he speaking for all time and all purposes? Was he a man whose "moral judgments are made from the standpoint of absolute values, with which the mass of men cannot comfortably live" (Darsey 68), or was he reacting to outside pressures? Without concrete historical corroboration, the reasons for such hyperbole—indeed, whether or not it even qualifies as hyperbole—is not evident, which makes their rhetoric historically ambiguous. Therefore, one way to approach alarmist hyperbole is to look at how the Church responded as a whole. That is, did the Saints embrace his words as doctrine for all time, or as impulsive, reactive, and motivating?

The historical periods of 1838 to 1844 (and beyond) were characterized by a rise in religious intolerance towards the Church and its subsequent removal from one home (Missouri) to another (Nauvoo, Illinois). When Rigdon first gave his oration (4 July, 1838), the Church had

¹¹Here I am directing my analysis to any reader, objective or otherwise, who wasn't present during Joseph's lifetime; to the reader who has the capacity to study Joseph's speeches historically.

no affiliation with any official military body. The organization of the Nauvoo Legion did not occur until three years later when, in accordance to the common practice of establishing city-run militias, the Saints drafted the Nauvoo Charter as the legal document to establish and govern their new home in Illinois. Thus, the Legion became a vehicle to serve the city as well as the Church. Yet Rigdon's oration promised a war when the Saints were not prepared to fight one. Nor, in retrospect, did they.¹² And as this study has already noted, neither were Smith's hyperbolic promises carried out.

Another answer appears to be even simpler: the Prophet understood that the Saints needed to feel secure in their tribulations. This is, as a persecuted people, the Saints' struggled with their desire to move the Church forward and to "turn the other cheek." Sensing this, Smith, after returning from his kidnapping in Missouri, said, "I discovered what the emotions of the people were on my arrival at this city, and I have come to say 'how do you do?' to all parties . . . there has been great excitement in the country since Joseph H. Reynolds and Harmon T. Wilson took me . . ." (Smith 5:466). Smith's use of the term "excitement" is likely another form of hyperbole (auxesis), and should be understood as a reference to several larger problems stemming from a church that was afraid of losing its beloved leader and embittered by increasing difficulties with their non-Mormon neighbors. Any reaction to Smith's hyperbole should be taken according to its context and recognized as conventional, emotionally-driven but not politically-driving hyperbole. As one scholar notes, Smith's "objective in working up his audience to fever pitch may have been . . . to allow them to gain psychological release for their pent up frustrations by a process Aristotle terms 'Katharsis,'" the rhetorical moment when the

¹² A history of the events following Rigdon's speech is mentioned in the previous chapter. For more information, see Baugh, Alexander. A Call to Arms: the 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri. Provo, UT: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History, 2000; Durham, Reed C. "The Election Day Battle at Gallatin." BYU Studies 13:1 (Autumn, 1972): 36-61; Smith, Joseph. The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Vol. III. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980; Roberts, Brigham H. A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Vol. II. Provo, UT: Brigham Young U. P., 1965

speaker's (or audience's) emotions are "roused and 'are at the same time purged'" (Smith, C. 138-139).

At the very least, the Prophet understood that the Saints needed courage, a courage that he had been developing within his people since the depredations of Missouri. This, perhaps, is the major contribution of Rockwood's previous statement, a statement that could be classified as the prototypical response to Smith's speeches: "You may ask if the Prophet goes out with the Saints to Battle? I answer he is a Prophet to go before the people as in times of old . . . Is not this marvelous?" (Rockwood, Letters). To the embattled Latter-day Saints, it was.

Brigham Young and Mormon Persecution Rhetoric Beyond 1844

Chapter Four

Pinpointing a quintessential Mormon persecution speech in the post-Nauvoo era is difficult. Unlike Rigdon's oration and Smith's 1843 and 1844 speeches, historians tend to pass over persecution speeches given by Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Heber C. Kimball, mentioning them superficially or losing them alongside hundreds of other speeches (see the Journal of Discourses).¹³ Possible reasons for this could include the fact that Rigdon's oration was likely the first and most dramatic persecution speech witnessed by such a large audience; that Joseph Smith's words, whether revelatory or practical, carry an enormous ethos because of his standing as the Church's first Prophet; that by the time the Saints arrived in Utah, passages or whole speeches concerning the Church's trials were becoming conventional; and that the Church's removal to a territory unclaimed by the United States put distance between them and their enemies, mitigating possible consequences of fiery oratory. It seems probable, then, that any historical account of a Brigham Young sermon recounting the past and condemning the Church's enemies would go largely unnoticed.

However, the waves of persecution that hit the Latter-day Saints in both Missouri and Illinois did not stop when they left Nauvoo—and neither did persecution rhetoric. This chapter will look specifically at Brigham Young and the dynamics of his persecution speeches—the past fact, cause and effect, and argument by comparison topoi. Hopefully, by not designating a specific speech as quintessential to the time period, this discussion of Brigham Young will illustrate how pervasive persecution rhetoric had become—that the use of irony and hyperbole

¹³ The Journal of Discourses lists eighteen speeches for Brigham Young alone under the topic heading "Persecution." Clearly, the persecution speech was becoming normal oratorical fare for Mormon speakers after 1844.

did not constitute persecution rhetoric alone, and that the genre itself did not begin, or end, with Smith and Rigdon.

Background History

Brigham Young was born on 1 June, 1801 in Whitingham, Vermont. Preston Nibley's biography of the Church's second prophet notes that "like most American's who have achieved greatness and fame, [Young] was born in poor and humble circumstances" (1). He spent a great deal of his life in such circumstances in spite of the "greatness" and "fame" that his tenure as Joseph Smith's successor brought him.

Young first came in contact with the Church through the missionary efforts of Samuel Smith, younger brother to the Prophet Joseph. Smith had left a copy of the Book of Mormon with Young's older brother, Phineas. Later, Young was impressed by the sermons of Elders Alpheus Gifford and Elial Strong—two missionaries who visited his town of Mendon, New York. Additionally, he made a three week visit to one of the Church's organized branches in Colombia, Pennsylvania (Roberts 1:290). Finally, having shared his newfound religion (Young had previously joined the Methodists after having rejected organized religion until he was twenty-two years old) with his older brother Joseph, Young was baptized on 14 April, 1832, completing the conversion to Mormonism of a man who would later become known as the "American Moses" (see Arrington, American Moses).

Brigham Young as a Public Speaker

Like Joseph Smith, Brigham Young grew up without a solid education. During his childhood Young helped his father on the family farm; when he turned fourteen he was "apprenticed-out to learn a trade, that of carpenter and painter" (Gates and Widtsoe 3). The remainder of Young's educational background could be summarized by the following quote from

Young himself: “Brother Heber [C. Kimball] and I never went to school until we got into ‘Mormonism,’ that was the first of our schooling. We never had the opportunity of letters in our youth, but we had the privilege of picking up brush, chopping down trees, rolling logs; and working amongst the roots and getting our shins, feet and toes bruised” (JD 5: 97). Still, without the education that often followed persons of “greatness” and “fame,” Young nonetheless left a legacy that invites some historians to conclude that “few leaders of the nineteenth century match the caliber and dogged determination of [this man]” (Black and Porter 1).

Recent LDS historians who have written about Young as an administrator and public speaker paint a picture of one willing to speak on any subject at any time. In Lion of the Lord: Essays on the Life and Service of Brigham Young, John Welch puts Young’s experience as a speaker into perspective. “During his lengthy service as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” Welch begins, “Brigham Young delivered hundreds, if not thousands, of messages of a religious nature. About 400 of these talks have been published in the Journal of Discourses; others were reported in the Deseret News or are contained in other publications or collections. The total number of known speeches by Brigham Young exceeds one thousand” (372). Welch also comments on Young’s speaking style, one that was extemporaneous and idiosyncratic:

Much can be said about Brigham Young's doctrinal teaching style. His oratory was pragmatic, eclectic, and dynamic. His wisdom was aphoristic, proverbial, clear, and commonsensical. His sentences were short. His tone was candid, blunt, and forthright. His humor was witty. He wryly recognized the shortcomings of communication: “The English language is better adapted than any other in existence to the using of thousands of words without conveying an idea” (372).

Though Young succeeded as an orator, there is no doubt that he sought to influence his audience through means other than language and artifice. For Young, preaching by the spirit was a Mormon speaker's ultimate goal:

I had Brother [Heber C.] Kimball ask me if his mode of communication pleased me. Yes; for I know what he means. I read his spirit when he preaches; and if he preaches by the power of God, I can understand it, if he speaks it back end forward, as well as if he spoke it straightforward and in picked and choice language. The Spirit of revelation is the best grammar you ever studied (JD 9: 141).

Young's anti-homiletic, pro-spirit attitude even took him so far as to pine for a day when "a point of the finger, or motion of the hand, will express every idea without utterance" (JD 1: 70).

As was the case with Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, Young's calling as a special messenger and prophet for the Church forced him to address the Saints on, according to Welch's research, thousands of occasions. And, though Young would have enjoyed an oratorical culture that allowed him to preach solely by the spirit, he could not speak without doing so rhetorically. Further, internal and external circumstances forced Young to engage in the type of persecution speaking of Smith and Rigdon—pointing out and exploiting ironic situations, and making pathetic appeals through rash or hyperbolic language. For this study, though, we will look at Young's specific appeals to rhetorical topoi, topoi that both coincide with and add to the rhetorical structures and benefits of appeals to irony and hyperbole.

Rhetorical Commonplaces

In classical rhetoric, the topos, or "commonplace," represented a method (or topic) of invention, of finding something to say. Aristotle wrote that all speakers use commonplaces, particularly the "possible and impossible," for they must "try to show in some cases that

something will happen and in others that it has” (185). Cicero noted that in forensic speech “there are a number of ‘seats’ for arguments, that is, many commonplaces” such as “connected terms, genus, species, similarities, differences, opposites, attendant circumstances, consistencies, so-called antecedents and contradictions . . . causes, and what results from causes, and . . . things that are greater, equal, and lesser” (167). In utilizing the various ways to construct arguments, one could rely on these general frameworks to appeal to his or her audience’s rationale, to form a basis for an argument.

In early Mormon oratory, the logical appeal was constructed in several ways, the most prevalent of which involved authorities—appeals to the testimony of supreme beings and sacred documents. As discussed in Chapter One, the early Mormon sermonizer relied heavily on the scriptures as both an ethical and rational appeal. In Mormon persecution rhetoric, however, the logical structure of a given speech usually centered on the copious use of three basic topoi: past and future facts, the cause and effect argument, and the argument by comparison. Brigham Young’s speeches were no exception to this structure.

Referring to Consequences and the Past: Past/Future fact and Cause and Effect

The past fact/future fact topos is a “topic of invention in which one refers back to general events in the past or to what we can safely suppose will occur in the future based on the record of the past” (see “Past Fact/Future Fact,” Burton, *Silva Rhetoricae*). The cause and effect topos allows speakers to define means and ends—to gauge why something happened (cause), and what its implications would be (effect). Much like the past fact/future fact topos, arguments based on causes often cited the past to predict future effects. In this study, the general efficacy of these topoi, and the probable reason for their use, centers on this very belief—on their capacity to define past events as harbingers of future suffering. In Rigdon's oration, for example, he and

other Church leaders understood that their enemies persecuted them without fear of government intervention, and, if left unchecked, would eventually have the power to overcome the “Kingdom of God” and render the Saints physically and spiritually inept. In hope of precluding their destruction, Rigdon’s speech and Joseph Smith’s editorial and publication of it signify their attempts to define the meaning behind the situation, and to prevent its continuance.

In 1843, Smith, using past fact/future fact and cause and effect, justified the use of the Nauvoo Legion by speaking of his own personal trials. He stated, “[my captors] took me unlawfully, treated me rigorously, strove to deprive me of my rights, and would have run with me into Missouri to have been murdered, if Providence had not interposed” (Smith 5:467). By referring to these past facts, the Prophet allowed his audience to come to the conclusion that his enemies—which were widely viewed as the Church’s enemies—would have killed him had God allowed them to. Smith also outlined injustices done to the Church as a whole, stating that he knew more than all the lawyers who proclaimed the Nauvoo Charter to be void of power. By so doing, he implicitly caused his audience to gauge the future of the Church if left in the hands of the mobs. Thus, when the normally pacifistic prophet turned to defensive retaliation by the sword, the Saints understood the possible effects of neglecting their enemies, and were prepared to accept Smith’s following military resolve: “I will lead you to the battle; and if you are not afraid to die, and feel disposed to spill your blood in your own defense, you will not offend me” (Smith 5:468). As the historical record confirms, Legionnaires remained faithful in their duties throughout the martyrdom and, when Brigham Young asked in 1846 for a vote to retain or disband the Legion, “they all voted unanimously to take the old officers” (Markham 14).

Although Joseph Smith’s use of hyperbole and Sidney Rigdon’s ironic situation referred to past events, effects, and causes to construct their rational and emotional appeals, the topos past

fact/future fact and cause/effect became even more prevalent for Mormon speakers following Smith's martyrdom, partly because the climactic death of their founder and leader brought all persecution to an apex. That is, the threats of extermination that would haunt the Church in future years would pale in comparison to the reality of losing the Prophet, and when Brigham Young (or future prophets such as John Taylor) sought to predict or lament the future, he most likely understood that some narratives evoked a deeper sense of emotion than others.

In September of 1857, for example, Brigham Young and the Church found themselves reeling from another controversy: the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Occurring when the Church was already anticipating an invasion by the United States Army, the massacre was a tragic affair that B.H. Roberts has called "the most difficult of all the many subjects" he has written about (4:139).

The massacre represented a climax of the tension between several Mormons settled in Mountain Meadows, and emigrants from Arkansas and Missouri who were passing through Utah en route to California. Robert's History records that relative peace existed between the two parties until the emigrants reached Corn Creek, Millard County, about 150 miles south of the Salt Lake Valley. It was here that the emigrants allegedly "threatened the destruction of the town . . . and boasted of their participation in the murders and other outrages that were 'inflicted' upon the Mormons in Missouri and Illinois" (4:142). The emigrants were also accused of poisoning the "springs and the body of an ox that died," an act that eventually led to the deaths of ten Indians and of one "Mr. Robinson, of Fillmore" (4:149). This enraged both the Saints as well as the Indians, who subsequently formed a plan to rid themselves of this newfound enemy.

The events which followed are, at best, subject to misinterpretation and bias. Robert's horrific summation of the massacre included the following:

In . . . three to five minutes the Mountain Meadows Massacre was made a horrible fact of history. Only three men escaped the first deadly assault, and these were followed to the desert and killed. Seventeen young children were all that were saved from the slaughter. From one hundred and fifteen to one hundred and twenty men, women and older children were slain, and then given but an imperfect burial (4:157; original emphasis).

Rumors of the massacre soon spread across the United States, and anti-Mormons reiterated their desire to destroy the Saints. Yet while the Church, as a whole, suffered from the violent despondency of a few disgruntled Mormons on the Utah frontier, the situation was extremely perilous for Brigham Young, who was quickly indicted in the crime. John Cradelbaugh, a federal judge who worked out of Provo (about 40 miles south of Salt Lake City) urged Young's arrest and told his jury the following: "The very fact of such a case as that of the Mountain Meadows shows that there was some person high in the estimation of the people, and it was done by that authority" (Smith, J.F. Essentials, 428).

During this time Brigham Young saw several opportune occasions to address the Saints' persecutions. In October of 1857, Young gave a speech at the Salt Lake Tabernacle that has since been titled "Present and Former Persecutions of the Saints, etc." In this speech, Young opened by addressing the Saints' present affairs—the massacre had taken place just one month before—with a promise to "read . . . some of the communications that have passed between our enemies and ourselves, for the people are anxious to know the feeling of the two parties; they are very anxious to learn the news" (JD 5: 336). But rather than use the moment to alleviate (if possible) his audience's fear of future consequences, and having recognized the emotional and logical power of the persecution speech—of the recitation of the Church's trials and tribulations, whether past or present—Young instead exculpated the Church's general body by recalling how

the federal government refused to protect them after they had previously appealed for help. He said,

There are a good many here who have not witnessed the scenes of persecution that some of us have. I was asking father [Isaac] Morley, this morning, whether he thought the enemy could now ride into our corn-fields and through our gardens and shoot down our cattle, and plunder and burn our houses, as they did in Missouri. When the mob in Missouri commenced burning our habitations, we frequently sent to the Governor, petitioning him to stop mobbings; but, instead of doing that, he rendered them assistance, by ordering about 3,500 men to go and lay waste the city of Far West, and destroy men, women, and children. Those orders General Clark had, though at their close the Governor said to him, "I shall leave it discretionary with you whether you kill all the Mormons or not." We saw them coming, and some thought they were sent to disperse the mob, in answer to our petition; but the mob were expecting them and seemed to understand the movement. (JD 5: 337-338)

In a speech given during 1863, more than five years after the massacre, Young again explained the Saints' position and circumstances, in relation to the tragedy itself, by recalling the past:

The people said: "Give us redress for our wrongs." Government: "Did you say anything? Hard of hearing; can't hear a single word you say." "Mr. President, Mr. Senator, Messrs. Everybody else, can you hear the cries of the widow and fatherless?" Government: "Did you speak? Can't hear you gentlemen; mark what I say, I can't hear you." (JD 10: 107).

In these two instances, Young's use of the past fact/future fact and cause/effect topoi is curious. In the first place, both examples illustrate Young's criticism of the federal government—an expected response in connection to the looming threat of military invasion—but

one unassociated with the Church's immediate circumstances. Although the speaker's rhetorical need to explain and condemn the brutal affair was evident—a need that Young himself referenced—Young understood that his role as the Prophet, leader, and civil governor required him to go beyond a simple recitation of the massacre. Young knew the massacre held implications that, put together with the past, meant more for the Church as a whole than a singular crime committed by a few disgruntled frontiersmen might indicate.

By reciting past injustices done to the Church, then, Young implicitly made two arguments: first, that there was something expected from the Mountain Meadows Massacre; and second, that the Church, overall, was still a victim of mobocracy. That is, while the Church would never justify or organize murder, several members, including the beloved Prophet Joseph Smith, had *been* murdered. Thus, any need to discuss the immediate implications of the massacre has to consider similar events during the Church's stay in Missouri and Illinois. Implicitly, Young's rhetoric argues that the massacre should never have happened, but added a likely question for all to consider: who can blame the Saints for duplicating that which had been done to them so many times before?

In Young's 1857 rhetoric, it is safe to conclude that the speaker deeply understood how rumors of a government invasion already underway, coupled with an unwise attack on non-Mormon emigrants, distressed his audience. To help allay his audience's concerns, Young argued that the government's decision to send its military to the Utah territory represented a *cause* that would produce, for the soldiers, a tragic *effect*. Much as Joseph Smith might have responded, Young spoke directly: "As the Lord God lives, we will waste our enemies by millions if they send them here to destroy us, and not a man of us be hurt. . . . As soon as they start to

come into our settlements, let sleep depart from their eyes and slumber from their eyelids until they sleep in death” (JD 5: 338).

In addition to the Mountain Meadows Massacre, Young used past fact/future fact and cause/effect arguments in his speeches to make or justify Church policies. In 1866, after the murder of one Dr. Robinson, Young referred to past facts, causes, and effects to convince the Saints to cease trading goods with the “enemies” (JD 11: 277). First, he recalled the recent events and the “lying dispatches . . . to get an army sent out here as quickly as possible,” reminding the Saints that such traders were part of the cause for the 1857 invasion of Utah. Second, Young defined those enemies according to their desires to “destroy the influence of Brigham Young and his counselors, and the apostles and the elders of this Church” (JD 11: 277), thereby illustrating the possible effect of losing their religious leaders. The Saints revered God's prophets and viewed the Church as a vital component to God's kingdom, and the prospect of contributing to the Church's persecution was incomprehensible—a fact that made Young's rhetoric successful.

When, for instance, the Church was undergoing constant criticism for polygamy, a custom that some politicians equated with slavery, Young and the Church were more “indignant at such corrupt fellows as Judge Brocchus coming here to lecture us on morality and virtue” (Gibbons 170), than they were at the federal government's attempts to make their marital practices illegal. When rumors of rebellion and anger over the Church's refusal to quit practicing plural marriage caused the government to send out what some of the Latter-day Saints described as the “best outfitted army in the world” (Butler, *Journal of John L.*, 3), Young sought to exculpate the Saints of any wrongdoing by recalling their willingness to help the government despite the United States' unwillingness to help them:

[In 1844] not less than two United States' senators came to receive a pledge from us that we would leave the United States; and then, while we were doing our best to leave their borders, the poor, low, degraded curses sent a requisition for five hundred of our men to go and fight their battles! That was President Polk; and he is now weltering in hell with old Zachary Taylor, where the present administrators will soon be, if they do not repent (Nibley H. Brigham Young as Statesman, 157).

Because the United States had officially exiled the Saints, and because the territory of Utah was not an official part of the United States, the Church justified its practice of plural marriage. The Church quietly continued the practice in spite of political fears over the “Mormon question.”

Argument by Comparison

Inherent in many of the previous examples is the basic argumentative structure of comparison and contrast. As a topos, speakers arguing by comparison invite their audiences to look at the similarities or differences of a situation, idea, or law in order to better understand its immediate and foreseeable impact. In Young's speeches, (as well as in all Mormon persecution rhetoric), comparison arguments allowed him to further illustrate just how pervasive the Mormon principle of living *in* the world, but not becoming part *of* it, was.

For instance, Young's recollection of past events explicitly compared the persecutors to the persecuted, thereby portraying the virtuous and peaceful nature of the Saints while decrying the habits, attitudes, and misdeeds of their enemies.

One example of this comes from a speech given on 21 May, 1871. During this period the Church had been ordered to stop solemnizing polygamous marriages. In response to this situation, Young gave one of his many persecution speeches. “The inquiry among many, and especially among our political friends,” he stated, “is ‘What are you going to do? Are you going

to observe the law against plurality of wives, or are you going to obey the revelation?” (JD 14: 120). Because the Saints were officially separated from the United States, they continued to practice according to their “revelation” (JD 14: 120). Still, although the Saints could literally say that they were Americans without an America, Young nonetheless seized the moment to recall past persecutions to argue by comparison—to compare and contrast the differences between the Kingdom of God and its enemies:

When we were in Missouri the order was issued, “You ‘Mormons’ must leave the State. . . .” They took Joseph, or rather they sent for him and Hyrum [Smith], and they went down to their camp, and General [John B.] Clark called the brethren together, and, said he . . . “Forsake your religion and abandon your Prophet! We have him, and you will never see him again; forsake this banding together and being one, and live with us and become as we are. You are the very mechanics and farmers we want. You have shown us how to build mills, set out orchards, raise wheat, rear comfortable habitations, school the children, build meeting houses, and, in short, you have done more to make the country in three years than we have in fifteen. You are good citizens, but you must not clan together, you must disperse among the people; if you do not, remember the militia will be upon you.” We bid them good bye and left our property; we would not forsake our prophets then, and we are of the same mind yet (JD 14: 121).

In this passage the comparison and contrast argument is particularly vivid. By recalling the near execution of the Prophet at Far West, Missouri (1838), Young implicitly describes what Rigdon called the “fair . . . opportunity for determining the great hostility which exists naturally in the human heart against God and against his work” (Crawley 522). However, Young’s

persecution speech goes beyond the usual practice of denigrating the mobs by recalling General Clark's monologue.

Having noted Clark's willingness to destroy the Saints—a sure contrast of good and evil, “us versus them” rhetoric—Young uses Clark's monologue to set up several binaries. By noting how Clark ordered them to “forsake this banding together and being one,” Young portrays the Church as a unified community—in short, a Zionistic society—one far different than their neighbors. Through the phrase “live with us and become as we are,” Young reaffirms the Church's mission to be separate from the world (they were, of course, physically living “with” Clark and his people), not “as [they] are,” but superior in industry, virtue, and spirituality. And this idea is further corroborated by Clark's (alleged) next phrase: “You are the very mechanics and farmers we want.” Young knew that Clark realized that the Saints weren't merely a community of delusional religionists; rather, they were people capable of functioning successfully in a society. In fact, as Young points out, they were much more than adapters to the strictures of societal living—they were shapers: “you have done more to make the country in three years than we have in fifteen.”

By quoting such dialogue, Young's rhetoric compares and contrasts the differences between Clark's people (not unified, not superior) and God's (communal, industrious, successful). For those listening to the speech, fearful that the persecutions of the past would continue to haunt them, such binary contrasts served as a reassurance of their actions. As Young himself said, they would not “forsake” their prophets (read “lifestyle”) then, and they were certainly not about to surrender that which set them apart to become part *of* the world.

Conclusion

Young's general use of rhetorical commonplaces in his sermons is nothing extraordinary, for commonplaces are the topics of invention "that apply to any speech, on whatever subject, in whatever genre, before whatever kind of audience and with whatever emotional content" (Aristotle 183). Unlike irony and hyperbole, the *topoi* more directly represent patterns of how we normally speak rather than stylistic choices or oratorical artifice.

But what is extraordinary about Young's (as well as Rigdon and Smith's) use of these particular topics is the subsequent genre that spawned out of common techniques. Associated with the significance of a religion's leaders using rhetoric in spite of their general aversion to it is the significance of an emerging oratorical tradition, a rhetorical genre that ultimately served two overarching purposes: first, to remind the Saints of their heritage, and second, to define them as separate from the world around them. Referring to past persecutions was, again, nothing unusual—the Declaration of Independence and the anti-British colonial rhetoric of the late 1700's followed the same pattern. But for Smith, Rigdon, and especially the exiled Young, the rhetoric of persecution symbolized their own narrative—it was their lot as followers of Jesus Christ. While the Church and Joseph Smith's calling as a Prophet in the latter days were significant symbols to Mormons of God's grace on the earth, the trials that followed them, and the subsequent stories (such as Young's facetious dialogue with the American Government) that permeated their sermons, came to represent equally important symbols of their place as a peculiar people *in* but not *of* the world, and their desire to remain so. In short, it was their persecuted heritage that defined them as true Christian disciples.

Finally, Chapters Two and Three have portrayed how both Smith's and Rigdon's audiences reacted to their rhetoric. The difficulty of following this pattern with Young coincides

with the fact that his speeches are part of the Church's compilation of general conference or funeral sermons, the Journal of Discourses. Whereas Smith's persecution speeches are included in a chronological history, Young's persecution speeches tend to get lost in a sea of sermons on topics relating to a wide range of subjects—from farming techniques to the restoration of the gospel. Thus, primary reactions to Young's speeches are scarcely found and indirectly related to the speech itself.

Therefore, the best way to categorize reactions to Young's speeches comes from the following statement by Leonard J. Arrington, author of American Moses: “Brigham's messages were well thought out, suggest remarkable mental power, and were well adapted to his audiences . . . Brigham was able to keep his audiences enthralled, amused, [and] in tears” (196). Surely, this statement is indicative of the Saints' reactions to his fervent use of past facts, consequences, and comparisons in his memorable persecution speeches.

Pathetic Appeals and Religious Revivalism: Contextualizing Early Mormon Oratory

Chapter Five

The preceding chapters have focused on specific schemes, tropes, or topoi in some of the early Church's more famous speeches (such as irony and cause and effect) in order to show how persecution speeches used rhetoric—whether deliberately or not—to influence an audience. Inseparable from each of these techniques is the fervor of a persecuted prophet, the pathos of a people bent on protecting themselves. Indeed, the very idea of crisis rhetoric cannot, and should not, be considered without considering the emotions of those creating it—the vehemence of Sidney Rigdon's promise for a war of extermination, for example. But it has partly been this consideration that has led some historians, such as Richard Van Wagoner, to designate Rigdon as a man of religious excess, enthusiasm, and ideological fervor (viii).

Of Joseph Smith's public speaking, Calvin Smith admits that “objective impressions are difficult to come by,” for the Prophet's personality, style, and delivery were such that they generally divided his listeners into two camps: “those whose admiration and devotion was almost unbounded and those who hated and feared him” (197).

Fawn Brodie, for instance, wrote that Joseph was a dramatic artist whose talent, “like that of many dramatic artists, was emotional rather than intellectual,” and that while Joseph's sermonizing had, to some extent, a “magnetic sway over his people, there was an equally significant reverse influence” (86).

Such persecution rhetoric, and therefore the rhetor, has even been criticized by those most sympathetic to the speaker. Rigdon's oration has since been called unwise and bitter, and though it was quickly accepted by Joseph Smith after it was given, it was later criticized by some of Rigdon's contemporaries—Church leaders such as Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, Orson

Hyde, and Jedediah Grant, who, “with the benefit of hindsight, condemned Rigdon’s speech as overly aggressive and violent” (Van Wagoner 221). At the very least it was enthusiastic.

But does this mean that the enthusiasm of Mormon persecution rhetoric was its own creature? Were Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, and Brigham Young regular proponents of their own hyperbolic tradition, one in which their statements mirrored Mormon doctrines and practices? Or were they influenced by a larger oratorical culture, a frontier rhetoric? If we compare Mormon persecution speeches to the oratorical traditions that surrounded them, we will be much more capable of recognizing whether Mormon speakers were appealing to the rhetoric of their own religion, or whether their fondness for particular schemes and tropes, or general rhetorical enthusiasm, was similar to the larger oratorical culture.

This chapter reviews the work of Sacvan Bercovitch, in particular the sermonizing practices among the Puritans, one of America’s first religions, and one that significantly influenced the New World’s politics and society. A brief overview of rhetoric among Joseph Smith’s contemporaries in evangelical New York and on the expanding frontier will then follow.

Bercovitch’s Jeremiad

Arguing that “rhetoric functions within a culture,” and thus “it reflects and affects a set of particular psychic, social, and historical needs,” Sacvan Bercovitch’s study on the early Puritan Jeremiads (speeches that served both a political and religious purpose; the familiar “lament”) defines their “role in fashioning the myth of America” (xi).

From the first emigrants landing in the New World to the late nineteenth century, Puritans viewed themselves as part of an errand—a Winthropian city that would be set on a hill to exalt God’s elect, to show His kindnesses to those blessed enough to escape the depravity of Old England and thereby serve as a light and example to those that would follow. But inherent

in this errand was the explicit fear of failure, a fear that led early Puritans to continue an oratorical tradition that scholars have called “the European jeremiad,” or the sermonic “lament over the ways of the world . . . and [a warning] of God’s wrath to follow” (7). According to Bercovitch, this fear of God’s wrath was quickly revised to form a new, “American” jeremiad, a homiletic tradition that was congenial with the idea of a city set on a hill, or a “model to the world of Reformed Christianity”: “[The Puritans] qualified [their jeremiads] in a way that turned threat into celebration. In their case, they believed God’s punishments were corrective, not destructive” (8).

The development of the American jeremiad, coupled with this religious errand, led Puritans to “fuse sacred and profane” (29), God and politics, church and society. Viewing themselves as adherents to a “covenant that was at once provisional and absolute, temporal and sacred” (33), they adapted their sermons to satisfy both realms. To illustrate this, Bercovitch quotes extensively from orations such as one given by William Evans Arthur: “The American is the ark of safety, the anointed civilizer, the only visible source of light and head and repose to the dark and discordant and troubled world. . . . He is Liberty’s chosen apostle; he is a master workman. . . .” In this instance Bercovitch notes that “secular and sacred blend . . . with formulaic ease: *ark* and *safety*, *anointed* and *civilizer*, *Liberty* and *apostle*” (151; original emphasis). In the typical American jeremiad, then, the rhetoric of repentance, or faith, charity, virtue and sacrifice synergizes with the rhetoric of social constructs, or reform, or law, or community. This, in turn, created in America an “ideological consensus—in moral, religious, economic, social, and intellectual matters—unmatched in any other modern culture” (176). “Only America,” Bercovitch claims, had managed to “circumvent the paradoxes inherent” in searching out the divine from the profane, or the worldly from the celestial (176).

In Mormon oratory, this tradition of fusing the secular and sacred often typified a religion that was nearly as practical as it was metaphysical. For example, Joseph Smith was said to have made “no concerted effort to separate his secular and spiritual speaking, and occasionally invoked the authority he held in both areas if by doing so it would strengthen the point he was making” (Smith 224).

John Taylor, the Church’s third prophet, opened his remarks in the Church’s October, 1878 General Conference with the following: “We talk sometimes of earthly things: at other times we speak of heavenly things. Sometimes we speak of things pertaining to time, and at other times of things pertaining to eternity. We have to do with both or we could not have been here” (JD 21:30). Being “here” likely refers to the Saints’ survival in the Utah wilderness, a survival that may not have existed had the Church refused to function as a social community.

This secular/sacred parallel between early Mormon speaking practices and the Puritan Jeremiad is further illustrated in one of Brigham Young’s more famous speeches, “The Comprehensiveness of True Religion.” In this rhetorical moment, Young defined Mormonism as truth that permeates all subjects. “If, on the Sabbath day,” Young stated, “when we are assembled here to worship the Lord, one of the Elders should be prompted to give us a lecture on any branch of education . . . is it outside the pale of our religion? I think not” (JD 1: 335). Young then went on to define Mormonism as any truth found circumscribed within any subject or field, whether it be astronomy, chemistry, agriculture, philosophy, or geology—as long as it “tends to improve the mind, exalt the feelings, and enlarge the capacity” (JD 1:335). In this case, improving and exalting the individual did not necessarily follow religious exhortations, but the type of discussion that would help him or her function better within the Mormon community, as long as the secular sermon focused on true principles.

The similarities between the two oratorical traditions go beyond secular subject matter. As was discussed in the previous chapters, early Mormon leaders often used rhetorical situations to lament either the present or the past, and discussed these tragic events in the Church's history with a type of urgency and drama that led some observers to question the various speakers' religious motivations or beliefs. Yet the enthusiasm shining forth from Rigdon or Smith was not unique to the Mormon culture, for the oratorical fervor that often permeated Mormon sermons in the nineteenth century likely paralleled the Puritan tradition.

For example, Bercovitch notes that the original jeremiads focused their messages on "'the badness of times,' because the times were always bad," (see Brigham Young's past fact speeches) for, "now as always, many were called but few chosen; and for the many who willfully strayed from God . . . there would be wailing and gnashing of teeth." As one preacher taught, "God writes his *severe truths* with the *blood* of his disobedient servants" (7; original emphasis). And while this sermon form, originating in Europe, was nonetheless adapted by New World Puritans to celebrate their trials or tribulations as God's corrective measures, the new jeremiads did not minimize "the threat of divine retribution," but rather reasserted it "with a ferocity unparalleled in the European pulpit" (8).

To illustrate, one may look to the oratory of Jonathan Mitchel, a pastor in the "covenanted church of Cambridge" in 1650. Mitchel remembered many of the Puritan sermons he heard as a student to be both "terrible and excellent," focusing on themes that admonished the audience to come unto Christ yet declared that many who had seemingly done so would still "perish." Such sermons, Mitchel recalled, "left him 'terrified . . . lest [he] should only seem to belong to Christ'" (Stout and Hart 51).

In short, these jeremiads, these “terrible and excellent” speeches that were structured to lament the present and exacerbate God’s punishing powers, were early examples of enthusiastic sermonizing, and would only become more emphatic as the many voices of American Christianity would develop in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, possibly climaxing with the great revivalists.

American Religious Oratory

Perhaps Bower Aly and Grafton Tanquary best described the study of American oratory when they wrote their introduction to a section in William Briggance’s A History and Criticism of American Public Address:

The history of public speaking in America is not simply the biography of great orators. It is also the experience of the plain citizens who, unhonored in song and story, have nevertheless had their talk embedded into the warp and woof of American culture. The pettifogger securing the release of a farmer imprisoned for debt; *the circuit rider whose zeal for preaching the gospel led into a frontier settlement where his scalp was lifted by hostile Indians*; the people’s candidate for sheriff of Atchison County, talking to voters; the auctioneer persuading an assembled crowd to buy a Negro slave—all these and many more, as well as the orators of the Senate chamber, belong to the history of speechmaking in America (55; my emphasis).

Here we quote Bower and Tanquary extensively because their conclusion is both comprehensive and profound, and because it touches the heart of an oratorical culture by attributing its motivation to those who matter most—the common people. It is true that the history of rhetoric can be traced through the schools and teachers who passed on their knowledge of reading and writing, and that a history of eloquence can be delineated from John Winthrop to Alexander

Hamilton to Daniel Webster, but it is also true that these sources are representative of a higher level of oratory and are limited to an educated sample size. If we are to understand whether Mormon oratory had ties to general frontier rhetoric, we must analyze the oratory of the frontiersman, or common preacher, or newspaper man, as well as the politician or professor. This helps us to see how Joseph Smith's contemporaries discussed God and His glories, and, therefore, helps us contextualize the *influences* surrounding Joseph Smith as he came into his own as a preacher. Further, it should be noted that here, with the zealous circuit-rider and evangelical revivalist that the spirit of the American jeremiad continued.

American Evangelicalism

Historically, much has been written of the fiery street preachers and the great revivals. "After the [American] revolution," writes historian Charles Hambrick-Stowe, "American society was freer than in colonial days as states ended the practice of favoring an established church with tax support" (xiii). This meant that "at the same time politics and commerce became arenas of competitive endeavor, religion became competitive," thus fostering revivalism, which, Stowe carefully reminds us, was "rooted in seventeenth-century Puritanism" (xiii).

In 1820, when a young Joseph Smith was given the vision that would actuate his role in the Church's founding, various competitive sermonizers would "emphasize the hope of heaven and the dangers of hell-fire" (Bower and Aly 84). Often, this emphasis was not restricted merely to a sermon's content, but included the speaker's physical delivery and verbal structure as well. One preacher, for example, was described as a man who was "absolutely fearless," and who, "upon entering a community would in his first sermon scorch the people for their sins, particularizing the vices of that neighborhood." His sermon would include such phrases as "You are hair-hung and breeze-shaken over hell," and "when you get there your ribs will only be a

gridiron for the devil to roast your souls in” (Stevens 169). As historian W.B. Stevens wrote, he would deliver these messages “with indescribable force and emphasis, shaking his great fist at his congregation” (169).

Another example comes from Charles Finney’s first experience with the Great Awakening. Finney, arguably the most important revivalist in this time period, remembered watching a “Baptist-Congregational union prayer meeting” where the prayer leader “started in a low tone, ‘but soon began to wax warm and to raise his voice, which became tremulous with emotion’”(Hambrick-Stowe 9). Finney also told how the “New England Deacon . . . rocked on his toes and heels with increasing force, and then raised and banged his chair in rhythm with his prayer” (9).

Historian Francis McCurdy tells of the revivals on the Missouri frontier. “The real power of the preacher,” McCurdy wrote, “lay in his ability to exhort. . . . Admirers told how the Methodist minister William Caples, with tears flowing down his cheeks, decried man’s guilt, envisioned the day of judgment, and showed the heavenly throne and the horrors of hell” (172). McCurdy’s record of Caples’ fervor is written as follows:

Come! Sinners, come! It is *not* too late. You are not dead yet, thank God! Come! God calls you! Fly! Death is on your track. Your steps take hold on hell. The pointed lightning shaft quivers at your breast. COME TO CHRIST! COME NOW! (172; all emphases original).

Whitney Cross and the Burned-over District

Among the many reasons for the dramatic enthusiasm of this frontier-like rhetoric is the expected reactions and nature of a church rebelling against established norms, which began, essentially, with the purifying exodus from England to the New World, continuing to the

propagation of several Protestant denominations such as the Baptist and Methodist churches, and spreading with the frontiersmen. The rise of Mormonism in New York, then, should be “viewed collectively against a background of widespread frustration with organized religion,” as well as with tension between the varying sects themselves (Rowe 411).

This rebellion or desire to secede from or reform present religion (as well as various other social institutions) led to what historian Whitney Cross termed the “Burned-over district.” Judith Wellman describes this Burned-over district as a fire of revivalism that “witnessed Charles Grandison Finney’s greatest revivals . . . spawned Mormonism,¹⁴ Millerism, and the organized women’s rights movement [as well as] welcomed the Shakers, the Oneida perfectionists, and the Fourierist groups, and . . . abolitionists” (159; my emphasis). It is here that we turn to study the contemporary influences of Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Brigham Young.

In his seminal book, The Burned-Over District: the Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1855, Cross notes that “all the spiritual experiments of Western New York were alike genuine growths,” meaning that Mormonism, like other sects, was “rooted in a heritage of moral intensity and bloss[omed] in the heat of evangelistic fervor” (144). This heritage, according to Cross, stemmed from an uprising of “fervent revivalism” that was more concentrated in Western New York than in any “other portion of the country during its pioneering era” (4).

The history of the Burned-over district derives from the American revivals and emotional homiletics of The Great Awakening, which, in the 1740s, “split the historic Congregational Church” into two branches (7). The first branch emphasized “intellectual qualities held in

¹⁴ Wellman oversimplifies the founding of Mormonism, but her point should be considered: whereas Mormonism sought to be separate from the world, it could not escape external influences. It is also interesting to note that Calvin N. Smith’s A Critical Analysis of the Public Speaking of Joseph Smith, First President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Purdue University) argues that the Prophet, as a speaker, often “followed the [rhetorical] pattern of George Whitefield and Charles G. Finney” (viii).

balance with [the] spiritual zeal [of] the original Puritans;” the second branch, led by Jonathan Edwards, adhered to “religious doctrine which would in practice stress emotionalism at the expense of reason” (7). This Edwardian tradition continued to move west with the expanding frontier, being reinforced with occasional revivals until 1790 and the Second Great Awakening. It then continued to manifest itself throughout the early to mid nineteenth century.

Although there are discrepancies between various social historians as to the implications and meanings of revivals and revivalist doctrine, it is clear that the religious fervor of Western New York in the early nineteenth century was indicative of enthusiasm and often violent or hyper-emotional sermonizing.¹⁵

In the case of Charles Finney, for instance, “strong language was the rule rather than the exception” (Cross 155). He often addressed his audience personally, in a tone that expressed the urgency of imminent hellfire and damnation, and openly admitted that sermonizing should not be wholly didactic or comforting if it was meant to persuade, but that it should affect the senses of the audience as if it were “a fire . . . a hammer . . . a sword” (Hambrick-Stowe 35, 37). In fact, Finney’s rhetorical style was so fervent that it would cause equally emotional responses—weeping, wailing, bellowing, groaning—and could put the preacher himself in perilous situations: “[there was] a husband so angry with the evangelist for upsetting his wife that he came to [a] meeting with a gun swearing that he would ‘kill Finney’” (Hambrick-Stowe 37).

Finney often gave sermons accusing other ministers of laziness, and included in these sermons metaphorical and hyperbolic outbursts such as “shake [the ministers] off their seats,” “shake them over hell,” “smite them this night,” “Lord, wake up these stupid sleeping ministers [or else] . . . they will wake up in hell” (Cross 174). Whitney Cross pointed out that Finney was

¹⁵ For an interesting take on the true origins and implications of the Second Great Awakening and religious revivals, see Donald G. Matthews’ “The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis.” *American Quarterly*. Vol. 21, No. 1 (Spring, 1969), 23-43.

also equally dramatic in one-on-one situations, often accosting passersby with statements such as the following: “There is *not* a fiend in hell, *nor* out of hell, *so bad* as you are,” or, “you are going *right* to the pit” (181; my emphases).

George Whitefield, another figure known for his revivalist preaching and a probable source of inspiration to Finney, was said to have “realized that pioneer families craved drama and excitement to break up the monotony of their lives,” and that “his audiences did not resent his blunt references to their sinful condition” (Smith 27).

Even outside the Burned-over district rhetorical tropes such as hyperbole meshed with hellfire and damnation speeches with an ease indicative of an entire oratorical culture rather than the habits of a few firebrands. In Missouri, for instance, Jacob Lanius “*frightened* the unsaved into repentance” by urging his audience to pay attention to the “terrible shrieks of the doomed whose bodies were eaten by the ‘worm that *never dies*’” (McCurdy 170; my emphases). In a similar fashion, another revivalist often retorted that “sin was all around him, slaying the people on every hand, ‘not one today and another tomorrow . . . but daily yea hourly *alas every moment*’” (McCurdy 171; my emphasis).

Ultraism and Anti-Mormon Rhetoric

Perhaps Cross’s best contribution to this subject comes from his application of the term “ultraism,” a word used to describe the “combination of activities, personalities, and attitudes creating a condition of society which could foster experimental doctrines,” or the “stage of religious emotionalism immediately preceding heterodoxy” (173). Although these definitions are vague, they are used by Cross to illustrate the frontier-like circumstances that differentiated the subject and deliveries of revivalist sermons with those originating in the more developed areas of New England.

Other applications of Cross’s “ultraism” include David Ludlum’s more concise description of revivalist rhetoric: “the adoption of radical views and the employment of extreme measures by religious men who fixed their attention on a single objective without regard for its various relationships” (as quoted in Wellman 171). Ludlum’s application, and Cross’s original idea, accurately depict a rhetorical practice that fails to look beyond the immediate circumstances of the kairos, or need to speak. This, perhaps, explains Sidney Rigdon’s 1838 speech (in which Rigdon freely promised a war of extermination) or Joseph Smith’s hyperbolic statements, statements he easily sidestepped later on.¹⁶

Still, Ludlum’s use of ultraism is not as broad in its scope as is Cross’s (at least by definition), because it is restricted to the “radical views” and “extreme measures [of] *religious men*.” Thus, it does not encompass the drama for which other vehicles of expression exuded an exsuscitatio-like rhetoric, such as the inflammatory statements of people like Thomas Sharp, the blatantly anti-Mormon editor of The Warsaw Signal.

Sharp, a former lawyer in Pennsylvania, became the editor of The Warsaw Signal in 1840, and quickly turned the newspaper into an anti-Mormon vehicle after witnessing a military display in Nauvoo as a guest at the Nauvoo Temple’s cornerstone ceremony. His most infamous editorial came in response to Dr. Charles Foster’s 10 June, 1844 letter (published in the paper), describing Joseph Smith’s removal of Foster’s own press, the Nauvoo Expositor, from the city.¹⁷

Foster’s letter was, no doubt, exsuscitatio in a way similar to Rigdon’s Fourth of July oration: “Mr Sharp—I hasten to inform you of the unparalleled (sic) outrage perpetrated upon our rights & interests, by the ruthless, lawless, ruffian band of Mormon mobocrats, at the dictum

¹⁶ Calvin Smith wrote this statement on the subject: “On a number of occasions [Smith] tended to speak out without giving the situation under consideration due regard. Such was the case when he claimed that powers granted the city of Nauvoo could override edicts handed down from higher tribunals, or when he declared the stay law of Illinois null and void within Nauvoo” (225).

¹⁷ It was this event, the destruction of the Expositor that actuated the chain of circumstances that led to Joseph and Hyrum Smith’s martyrdoms on 27 June, 1844 in Carthage, Illinois.

of that unprincipled wretch Jo Smith” (Hampshire 92). Sharp’s response to this letter was brutal both in content and form: “Citizens ARISE, **ONE** and **ALL!!!!**—Can you *stand* by, and suffer such INFERNAL DEVILS! To ROB men of their property and RIGHTS, without avenging them? We have no time for comment, every man will make his own. LET IT BE MADE WITH **POWDER** AND BALL!!!” (Sharp June 12th; all emphases original).

Although it would be impossible to argue that Sharp’s vehemence in this editorial was uncharacteristic of his personality or disposition, his editorial on 10 July, a personal response to the Prophet’s 27 June assassination, shows that he was indeed a radical (anti-religious?) whose “views” and “measures” were carried out without respect for its various “relationships” or circumstances. “This communication,” wrote Sharp, “is most *respectfully* and *with sentiments of sympathy and humanity*, addressed to all reasonable and well disposed persons, whether male or female, who are attached to the interests of Joseph Smith” (Sharp; my emphases). In an almost sympathetic voice, Sharp described the nature of law: “We hold it to be a self-evident proposition that laws are enacted for the safety and protection of the rights, lives, and property of those who are to be governed by them” (Sharp July 10th). Curiously, Sharp refused to acknowledge the consequences that followed his publications.

Sharp was not alone in his fervor. As historians Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton wrote, radical views and inflammatory rhetoric permeated other anti-Mormon documents and speeches during this time period. “Among the incitements,” Arrington and Bitton note, “were statements, delivered as speeches and published in newspapers, of ex-Mormons who chose not to leave the church quietly but continually stirred up opposition . . . the verbal atmosphere conducive to persecution was further electrified by books, pamphlets, and newspaper articles” (59). The authors also note that “oral provocation emerged in speeches and *sermons*,” and that

“*ministers* were in the forefront of much of the agitation.” They conclude that “statements from these leaders of the community conscience . . . helped to legitimize the persecutions” (60; my emphases).

Clearly, such enthusiastic rhetoric, such “ultraism,” whether expressed in newspaper editorials or from behind the religious pulpit, is indicative of the society that surrounded Joseph Smith and the fledgling Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Conclusion

In sum, all of previous fits into rhetorical critic Nan Johnson’s view of 19th century American oratory: “Nineteenth century discussions of pulpit and deliberative oratory stressed that the speaker’s major goal in these modes is to engage the emotions and thereby move the will” (161). Because of the special nature of a sermonizer’s (or deliberator’s) topic, Johnson notes, “the preacher and political speaker depend on skillful management of the emotions for success” (161). To deliberate between right and wrong, good and evil, or to incite an audience to action, the rhetor needed to master what nineteenth-century homiletics called imagination: “the ability to present familiar materials in a vivid and novel manner by creating images that affect the senses and feelings” (Johnson 165).

As Francis McCurdy wrote in Stump, Bar, and Pulpit: Speechmaking on the Missouri Frontier,

Men of the time [and place] believed in hard conversions. They thought that if a man had been regenerated and his soul cleansed from evil he should know that something extraordinary had happened to him. Moreover, they rationalized that, if revival conversions were to be substituted for a long period of preparation, the experience must

be memorable and convincing . . . Frontier congregations believed that religions should be stirring (159-60).

Rigdon, Smith, and Young all affected the senses of an audience at times by moving them emotionally, by treating their plight with a literary style that mirrored the pathos of persecution. Since the successful orator understood how to “appreciate [the audience’s] standards of life, to strike the chord of their sympathies and interests in accordance with their station, intelligence, or pursuit,” (Genung, Working Principles 649; as quoted in Johnson 163), Mormon persecution sermons succeeded because they rose from within the Mormon culture. Recognizing the immediate consequences of Joseph Smith’s kidnapping, government extermination orders, or inflammatory newspaper articles, this oratorical culture knew perfectly well how to “present familiar materials” (their tribulations) in a “vivid and novel manner” (through hyperbole, etc.).

Again, this is not to say that early Mormon sermonizing was synonymous with that of other enthusiastic evangelists. Indeed, much of this thesis has hinted at the differences between Mormon preachers and their contemporaries, and part of it has stressed the fact that many of the early Church’s sermons strayed away from emotionalism in favor of a religiously logical sermon that derived its doctrine from multiple scriptural examples. Even so, we should not quickly dismiss Smith and Young as rhetorically illiterate, and we should not dismiss the cultural circumstances surrounding the theological conception of this American-bred religion as we consider its crisis rhetoric.¹⁸

While limited in their scope and presentation, the preceding examples show that some of the rhetorical elements of the early Mormon persecution speeches were not entirely unique.

¹⁸ On an interesting side note, Frederick Davenport points out that Mormonism might never have existed “except for the extraordinary mental agitation about religious matters which pervaded Western New York in this period” (183). This is obviously a reference to the “war of words” and “tumult of opinions” that permeated New York in 1820 and that led Joseph Smith to his fateful “First Vision” (for more on the First Vision, see Smith, Joseph. History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980).

Although they were perhaps unwise instances of violent hyperbole that were both bitter and overwrought, they were nonetheless similar to the larger evangelical culture, both enthusiastic and *absolute*—similar to that of early Puritanism and the frontier tensions of living in a young country that had yet to be completely tamed.

According to Bower Aly and Grafton P. Tanquary, the period marking 1800-1860 was one fraught with uncertainty and ruggedness. Frontiersman and pioneers (or trailblazers like Joseph Smith) struggled to balance eloquence with wilderness. As Aly and Tanquary remind us, “life was neither so strenuous nor so dangerous in other areas as it was on the frontier” (57), thus creating the dramatic conditions that affected speech.¹⁹

For Smith and his peers, those inside as well as outside the Church, the hardships of settling in Missouri only to be removed to Illinois and later to an undiscovered territory (Utah), caused their rhetoric to be less similar to Henry Clay or Daniel Webster, and more akin to a culture trapped and taunted by an intimidating presence.

This does not mean that early persecution speeches were always accepted as rhetorical models for church sermonizers, but, rather, that they were dramatic reactions to their ironic situation as a persecuted faith in a land that sought independence to establish freedom for all persuasions.

As the Church’s oratorical culture continued to develop into the twentieth century, these speeches formed the beginning of a new rhetorical tradition: a tradition of using the rhetoric of persecution to remind the Saints of their heritage as followers (and therefore “dependents”) of Jesus Christ, and to assist them in becoming a Zionistic and unified community.

¹⁹ As a matter of interest, Whitney Cross is careful not to “confuse” Mormonism as a true frontier religion. Cross bases his conclusions on the emigrations of Latter-day Saints from areas such as England and Wales. He does, though, admit that “the church existed generally on the frontier and kept moving westward with the tide of settlement” (150).

Conclusion: Mormon Persecution Rhetoric Today

And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers, and the sentence of death be passed upon thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou [Joseph] that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good (D&C 122: 7-8).

During the October 1955 General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—future prophet, seer, and revelator and former United States Secretary of Agriculture—stood before the Saints and made the following jeremiadic statement: “I would like to raise this warning, my brothers and sisters. In this period of apparent goodwill—good feeling toward the Church—when it seems as if we have no great obstacles any more as we once had, there should be deep concern” (Conference Report, Oct. 1955; see Conference Reports in Works Cited). Benson continued:

In the hour of our success is our greatest danger. And apparently this is an hour of great success. No more persecution—persecution which once tended to drive us together and make us united! Now we seem to be accepted by the world. Will it mean disunity? Will it mean that we will rest on our laurels and sit back, as it were, and think that all is well in Zion? I think there is real danger in this period, this period of praise and commendation (Conference Report, Oct. 1955)

Benson’s words echoed those of Brigham Young, who in a conference talk nearly 100 years earlier told the Church the following: “Let any people enjoy peace and quietness, unmolested, undisturbed—never to be persecuted for their religion, and they are very likely to neglect their duty, to become cold and indifferent, and lose their faith” (JD 7:42).

By Benson's time the Church had been left alone, causing him to worry that their efforts to bring the Church out of obscurity and to cultivate a religious tolerance might work against them. Both Benson and Young viewed persecution as ultimately a positive experience insofar as it humbled the Saints and forced them to rely more on God and His will, thus helping them become His disciples. By the mid-nineteenth century, though, the Saints no longer feared being silenced with "powder and ball" (Sharp), creating fewer rhetorical situations for speeches such as Rigdon's July 4th oration. But even with the general passing of the dramatic trials and tribulations that left Joseph Smith martyred and Brigham Young exiled from Illinois, there was no shortage of basic persecution speeches throughout Mormon discourse. In fact, the practice of reciting past persecutions became a rhetorical commonplace for Mormon sermonizers who sought to instill faith and humility in the people, and to remember their heritage as Christians separate from the world.

Persecution as "Corrective Principle"

The distinguishing characteristic between the two jeremiadic traditions—the European and the American—is the former's lament of trials and tribulations as Godly punishments, and the latter's interpretation of them as bearers of hope. Bercovitch wrote that the New England Puritans were on "a peculiar mission . . . for they were a peculiar people, a company of Christians not only called but chosen" (8). "To this end," Bercovitch notes, "they qualified [the jeremiad] in a way that turned threat into celebration," for "in their case, they believed, God's punishments were *corrective*, not destructive" (8; original emphasis).

The essence of this tradition has continued with the Latter-day Saints. For instance, several verses in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants justify God permitting His people to be "smitten." One of the Book of Mormon's prophets noted that "except the Lord

doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him”

(Helaman 12:3). Another, Lehi, told his son the following: “Thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain” (2 Nephi 2:2).

In the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith was told that his “adversity” and “afflictions” (read “persecution”) “shall be but a small moment,” and that if he would endure it with faith on the Lord, he would eventually be exalted “on high” (D&C 121:7-8). A later revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants told Smith—and thus the Church—that “if thou art called to pass through tribulation . . . know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:5,7). The same book of scripture states that “by the tribulation well endured by numerous of our progenitors, a desert blossomed as a rose, a tried and persecuted people provided a heritage of faith, and Zion put on her beautiful garments for all to see” (D&C 82:14).

Before Ezra T. Benson decried the lack of persecution towards the Church in his 1955 General Conference sermon, he reminded his audience of the trials of WWII, where several Latter-day Saint meetinghouses were destroyed and where the Church lost “twenty-six members of the priesthood” (Conference Report, October 1955). As trials were given to the Saints to remind them of their responsibilities towards God, and inasmuch as God wanted a unified and Zionistic people, Benson remembered that “there followed one of the best demonstrations of the spirit of the welfare program that . . . this Church affords” (Conference Report, October 1955).

Thus, for modern Latter-day Saints the early Church’s heritage was one of corrective chastisements or opportunities for unification, of trials set to prove the Saints in their faith and to assist them in becoming a purified, or sanctified, people. And, as Benson has correctly pointed

out, anti-Mormon persecution has been largely nonexistent since (at least) the mid-1900s. Thus Mormon persecution rhetoric today has taken on a different role than one meant solely to recall injustices done to the Church.

For example, a 1901 sermon given by Thomas Hull, the General Secretary of the Church's Youth Committee, informed his audience that persecution was to be the heritage of the Saints, for such was the life of Jesus Christ: "The decree is still in force, 'Yea all who will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution,' and the lull is but an indication that the godliness of Jesus is not known on the earth" (Improvement Era, 1901). The "lull" that Hull refers to is likely the same lack of persecution that Benson lamented 54 years later, and thereby necessitates Hull's conclusion that persecution "has ever had a purifying effect upon the righteous" (Improvement Era, 1901). In this case the "purifying effect" had to come from either personal trials or a sermonic reminder that the Prophet had been martyred and the Church had been exiled many years previously.

A 1947 general conference sermon given by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, an apostle who later became the Church's prophet, chastised the Saints for not keeping the Sabbath day holy in their worship. He first recalled several instances in which God punished His followers for not keeping His commandments, and then concluded with a statement that was saturated with traces of the American jeremiad tradition: "This [persecution] is also a sign to us. If we don't keep the Sabbath day holy, he may still be our God, but we may not be his people, for all the people of the earth are his, but we are a *peculiar* people, and by that we mean that we are different and should be different from the rest of the world because we are not of the world" (April 1947; my emphasis). Undoubtedly, Smith's message was not a celebration of any possible threat of external persecution; rather, it was a simple reminder that God's followers have been persecuted

in the past. Smith recognized that his audience needed to hear this message to be motivated to continue their quest for Zion—to remain unified and separate from the world, to remain a “peculiar” people.

President Henry D. Moyle, then a counselor in the Church’s highest governing body, began his 1962 conference sermon with the following: “how often in the history of the world has a people been brought to its spiritual inheritance through the endurance of bitter experiences?” (Conference Report, April 1962). In 1980, Apostle Howard W. Hunter answered that question: as long as “God will have a tried people!” (26). “Suffering,” Hunter concluded, “can make saints of people as they learn patience, long-suffering, and self-mastery” (28).

But if persecution had generally ceased, how were the modern Saints to learn from it? One way, declared President Thomas S. Monson, a current counselor in the First Presidency, is to “learn from the past.” He continued: “Each of us has a heritage, whether from pioneer forebears, later converts, or others who helped to shape our lives. This heritage provides a foundation built of sacrifice and faith. Ours is the privilege and responsibility to build on such firm and stable footings” (19). But learning from this heritage is only part of the rationale for Mormon persecution rhetoric today.

In an article published in July of 1977, President Spencer W. Kimball called for “someone to do justice in recording in song and story and painting and sculpture the story of the Restoration.” Kimball then listed the narratives that he felt needed to be recreated through these artistic media: “the struggles and frustrations; the apostasies and inner revolutions and counter-revolutions of those first decades; of the exodus; of the counter-reactions; of the transitions; of the persecution days; of the miracle man, Joseph Smith, of whom we sing, ‘Oh what rapture filled his bosom/ For he saw the living God’” (5). In this sense, Kimball hoped to “do justice” to

those times through artistic expression, through a pathetic appeal that would help the Saints identify with their forebears—to remember and actuate the unifying effects of persecution without actually being persecuted. Hence in contemporary Mormon persecution rhetoric, it is the recreation of these moments that often forms the impetus behind any modern-day recitation of past facts and consequences. This idea is perhaps best illustrated in what may be the most complete persecution speech in recent Latter-day Saint history.

In the 1994 April General Conference President Gordon B. Hinckley recited the martyrdoms of Joseph and Hyrum Smith and expressed his belief that God allows persecution to befall His people to prove and to unify them. But, Hinckley reminds us, even if the Saints were fortunate enough to avoid such trials, they could still receive the same blessings by reliving the past. That is, if the testimony of the Book of Mormon was not enough for the Church to know of God and His glories, “there is the testimony of a prophet, whose name was Joseph, *who sealed with his blood* the testimony of his Lord” (73; my emphasis). Even though today’s Latter-day Saints generally do not need to prove their obedience through mobocratic suffering, or to become a unified, Zionistic people through persecution, they can look to the past, to their heritage, for strength. They can, in short, look to Joseph Smith to find their persecuted identity in their quest for discipleship. And, rhetorically, they can recreate Smith’s experiences to consubstantiate them with their own.

Each of the preceding examples shows how the Church’s leaders continue the American jeremiadic tradition in their sermonizing, and how, in spite of a general lack of persecution such as that experienced by Smith, Rigdon, and Young, the Saints continue to rely on the irony of a persecuted religion in a land of religious tolerance, the past facts and consequences of “the badness of the times” (Bercovitch 7) as rhetorical commonplaces.

It should be noted that the scope of this thesis does not allow for a thorough investigation into where and how the revivalist fervor of the Mormon Church's frontier rhetoric evolved and transformed during the twentieth century, for much could be written on the Church's rise from an obscure entity of New York's Burned-over district into an international denomination has forced speakers to abandon overly-specific discourses for more general (and scriptural) extrapolations.

There is also much to say about the development of technology—the microphone, radio, television, teleprompter—and its effect on homiletic delivery and style. And we cannot hope to find and document every modern persecution speech, such as the epideictic sermon given by a mission president at the funeral of a missionary run over by a drunk driver or stabbed in the streets, inasmuch as these sermons, unlike those given in the Church's general conferences, are not recorded for public consumption. But a survey of several speeches given by the Church's General Authorities throughout the last 100 years shows that the rhetoric of persecution continues today, even if the outward passion of Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith, or the wars, extermination orders, and prophet martyrdoms of the early to mid-1800s do not. Since “God will have a tried people,” and inasmuch as the Church's past persecutions symbolize a heritage of discipleship, the narrative of persecution continues to remind the Saints that, much like the early Puritans, they are in themselves a city upon a hill.

Conclusion

In the seventeenth century, an Anglican poet named Samuel Butler wrote “Hudibras,” a poem satirizing the Presbyterian Church. In the first Canto, Butler gives his interesting take on rhetorical studies: “For all a rhetorician's rules teach nothing but to name his tools” (see Butler, Samuel). In other words, rhetoricians approach literary or historical analysis with only the ability to look at a text or speech and describe its structure, or to note how authors have engaged

in a sort of clever wordplay. Although Butler's criticism is unfair to rhetorical studies, the sentiment behind his words is likely one of reasons for the general lack of rhetorical criticism in Mormon studies. Since Mormons are taught to preach by the spirit, and therefore to preach only God's words, and inasmuch as the Church is controlled by a lay clergy, the study of rhetoric within Mormon oratory has been limited—Mormons rarely teach anything resembling homiletic theory, and thus have scattered and underdeveloped ideas of the nature and philosophy of rhetoric. But, even so, there is much to learn about rhetoric's relationship to Mormonism and early Mormon thought.

By studying the rhetoric of Mormon persecution, we have seen that Mormon speaking practices are dynamic and influential. To Latter-day Saints struggling through the difficulties of raising a church in an era of evangelical revivalism and ultra religious conservatism, opportune occasions to address an audience were frequent and necessary. To a church facing promises of war, martyrdoms, and mass evacuations, speech played a vital role for leaders trying to sustain their listeners' faith in God and His restored gospel. As a result, speeches such as Sidney Ridgon's oration in 1838 give us answers to the following questions: how did the Saints verbalize their persecutions? What role did language have in building Joseph Smith's and Brigham Young's political ethos? How did language sustain the Saints during these times? Without being a rhetorician, was Joseph Smith nonetheless a rhetor? And, lastly, what oratorical traditions have evolved and emerged from these speaking practices?

In contrast to Samuel Butler's statement, the study of rhetoric is much more than naming figures of speech. It is seeing and understanding a culture through its language. As Kenneth Burke philosophized, rhetoric is at least two things: our deliberate attempts to persuade (to use hyperbole and irony because we anticipate a given effect), and our subconscious processes for

establishing and maintaining a *sensus communis*, a person to person or intra-group identification. With early Mormon oratory, this *sensus communis* was often formed by reciting injustices done to the Church, and by recreating the past facts and consequences of living in a land that, however indirectly, allowed for religious inequality and discrimination.

Thus, the study of rhetoric should hold a more important position in Mormon studies. Along with the continual narration of historical events and circumstances in Joseph Smith's life, along with the commentaries and explications of his revelations and doctrinal teachings, there should be analyses of the *kairos* and the rhetorical qualities of his speeches. Because Mormon oratory is a field rarely plowed, Mormon historiography should expand to include the sermons of modern as well as past prophets and apostles, scholars and lay members.

As any Latter-day Saint will admit, religious sermons are paramount to the development of the Church, because it is orally that Mormon missionaries spread the gospel. Every Sabbath day the Church is theologically moved as lay members give multiple sermons both generally and within separate groups, or classes. Every Monday night families gather together and orally teach one another, and every six months the Church's General Authorities practice what they preach by preaching what they practice. Thus, whether this expansion includes more on Mormon persecution rhetoric and its subgenres, Mormon commitment practices, the rhetoric of exhortation, or the patterns of General Conference sermons, the field is ready to be harvested. Indeed, such an expansion may be obvious to scholars of Mormon theology and history, for as part of their scriptural canon says, "yea, [the word] had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword" (Alma 31:5). Without a doubt, so does the preaching.

Appendix I: Sidney Rigdon's Oration

The following is a full account of Sidney Rigdon's 1838, 4th of July speech:

“Friends and Fellow Citizens:

By your request, I am called upon to address you this day, under circumstances novel to myself, and I presume as much so to the most of you; for however frequently we may have met with our fellow-citizens, in times past, in the places of our nativity, or of our choice, to mingle our feelings with theirs, and unite with them in grateful acknowledgements to our Divine Benefactor, on the anniversary of our national existence; but not before have we been assembled by reason of our holy religion; for which cause alone, a very large majority of us is here this day. But through our residence here, is far from the sepulchers (sic) of our fathers, and from the lands of our nativity and former choice; and our association here, as novel, and as strange to ourselves, as it could be, to any portion of our fellow-men; still, we hail the return of the birth day of our liberties, with no less feelings of joy and gratitude: nor no less desire, for the prosperity and continuance, of the fabric of our national government, inspires our breasts this day, than when met in the mixed assemblies of all religions, as in times past, in the lands of our nativity.

Nor indeed could it otherwise be; from our infancy, we have been traditionated to believe ours, to be the best government in the world. Our fathers, our neighbors, and our associates in life have extolled its excellence to the highest pinnacle of fame in our ears, even before we were capable of judging of its merits for ourselves, or were able to form an estimate of its worth. As we advanced in life, we heard nothing else from our statesmen and heroes, but the perfection and excellence of our political institutions, and the superiority of our government, over all the governments of the world; whether they existed in former or latter times. It is the government under which we were born and educated, or else we exchanged another for it, with whose form we were not satisfied, and in our hearts gave this the preference, and sought by removal to enjoy its benefits.

We have been taught from our cradles, to reverence the fathers of the Revolution, and venerate the very urns which contain the ashes of those who sleep; and every feeling of our hearts responds in perfect unison to the precept. Our country and its institutions are written on the tablet of our hearts, as with the blood of the heroes who offered their lives in sacrifice, to redeem us from oppression. On its towers, the flag of freedom waves, and invites the oppressed to enter, and find an asylum. Under the safeguard of the constitution, the tyrant's grasp is unfastened, and equal rights and privileges flow to every part of the grand whole. Protected by its laws and defended by its powers, the oppressed and persecuted saint can worship under his own vine, and under his own fig tree, and none can molest or make afraid. We have always contemplated it, and do now, as the only true fabric of freedom, and bulwark of liberty, in the world.

Its very existence, has taught the civilized world, lessons of freedom, far surpassing those of a Pitt, a Wilberforce, a Canning, or a Grey, and has cast all their efforts in the shade forever. It has stood, and now stands, as the arbiter of the world, the judger of the nations, and the rebuker of tyrants.

Throughout the world, it is the standard of freedom, both civil and religious. By its existence, the fears of the superstitious have been removed, and the pretext of tyrants have been

swept away as a refuge of lies, and the rights of man have been restored, and freedom, both political and religious, have been made to triumph.

Our government is known throughout the civilized world, as the standard of freedom, civil, religious, and political; by it are the acts of all nations tried, and it serves to expose the frauds, the deceptions, and the crafts, of the old world, in attempting to pawn upon the people, monarchy and aristocracy, for republicanism and freedom. So powerful has been its influence, that the hand of the oppressor, even in the old world, has been lightened, tyrants have been made to tremble, and oppressors of mankind, have been filled with fear. Thrones, if they have not been cast down, have been striped of their terror, and the oppressed subject has been, measurably, delivered from his bondage.

Having been rocked in the cradle of liberty, and educated in the school of freedom, all our prejudices and prepossessions are deeply rooted in favor of the superlative excellence of a government, from which all our privileges and enjoyments have flown. We are wedded in it by the strongest ties; bound to it by cords as strong as death. To preserve it, ought to be our aim in all our pursuits, to maintain its constitution unviolable (sic), its institutions uncorrupted, its laws unviolated, and its order underanged.

There is one thing, in the midst of our political differences, which ought to create feelings of joy and gratitude in every heart, and in the bosom of every well-wisher to mankind; that, all parties in poli[tics] express the strongest desire to preserve both the union and the constitution unimpaired and unbroken, and only differ about the means to accomplish this object; so desirable, as expressed by all parties. And while this, indeed, is the object of parties in this republic, there is nothing to fear. The prospects for the future, will be as flattering as the past.

In celebrating this, the anniversary of our independence, all party distinctions should be forgotten, all religious differences should be laid aside. We are members of one common republic, equally dependent on a faithful execution of its laws, for our protection, in the enjoyment of our civil, political, and religious privileges. All have a common interest in the preservation of the Union, and in defence (sic) and support of the constitution. Northern, southern, and western interests, ought to be forgotten, or lost for the time being, in the more noble desire to preserve the nation, as one whole; for on this depends the security of all local and sectional interest; for if we cannot preserve them by supporting the Union, we cannot by rending it in pieces. In the former there is hope, in the latter fear, in one peace, in the other war.

In times of peace, it ought to be our aim and our object, to strengthen the bonds of the Union by cultivating peace and good will among ourselves. And in times of war, to meet our foes sword in hand, and defend our rights, at the expense of life. For what is life when freedom has fled? It is a name, a bubble; better far sleep with the dead, than be oppressed among the living.

All attempts, on the part of religious aspirants, to unite church and state, ought to be repealed with indignation, and every religious society supported in its rights, and in the exercise of its conscientious devotions. The Mohameden, the Pagan, and the Idolater, not excepted, and be partakers equally, in the benefits of the government. For if the Union is preserved, it will be by endearing the people to it; and this can only be done by securing to all their most sacred rights. The least deviation, from the strictest rule of right, on the part of any portion of the people, or their public servants, will create dissatisfaction, that dissatisfaction will end in strife, strife in war, and war, in the dissolution of the Union.

It is on the virtue of the people, that depends the existence of the government, and not on the wisdom of legislators. Wherefore serveth laws, (it matters not how righteous in themselves,)

when the people in violation of them, tear those rights from one another, which they [the laws] were designed to protect? If we preserve the nation from ruin, and the people from war, it will be by securing to others, what we claim to ourselves, and being as zealous to defend another's rights, as to secure our own. If on this day, the fathers of our nation, pledged their fortunes, their lives, and their sacred honors, to one another, and to the colonies which they represented, to be free, or to loose all earthly inheritance, not life, and honor excepted. So ought we to follow their example, and pledge our fortunes, our lives, and our sacred honors, as their children and successors, in maintaining inviolable, what they obtained by their treasure, and their blood.

With holy feelings, sacred desires, and grateful hearts to our Divine Benefactor, ought we to perform the duties of this day, and enjoy the privileges, which, as saints of the living God, we enjoy in this land of liberty and freedom, where our most sacred rights, even that of worshipping our God according to his will, is secured unto us by law, and our religious rights so identified with the existence of the nation, that to deprive us of them, will be to doom the nation to ruin, and the Union to dissolution.

It is now three score and two years, since the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, caused the proclamation to go forth among the people of the continents, that the people of this nation should be free, and that over them, 'kings should not rule, and princes decree authority;' and all this, preparatory to the great work which he had designed to accomplish in the last days, in the face of all people, in order, that the Son of God, the Savior of the world, should come down from heaven, and reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously; according to the testimony of all the holy prophets, since the world began. And it is eight years, two months, and twenty eight days, since this church of the last days was organized, by the revelations of that same Jesus, who is coming to reign before his ancients gloriously: then consisting of six members only.

At its first appearance, excitement began to prevail among the people where it made its appearance, and as it increased in numbers, the excitement increased. The first attack made upon it, by its enemies, was by false representation and foul slander. By this engine it was assailed from every quarter, and by all classes of men, religious and unreligious: misrepresentation followed misrepresentation, falsehood after falsehood, followed each other in rapid succession, until there must have been multitudes of them created in a minute, by those employed in it, or else they could not have gotten so many put in circulation. This scheme not succeeding, the enemies had recourse to prosecutions, which were multiplied continually, apparently with determination, to destroy every person who united to aid and assist in bringing forth the work of the Lord. But all this not succeeding, according to the expectations of the persecutors; they united to all this power, that of mobs, driving men, women, and children, from their houses, dragging them out in the dead hours of the night, out of their beds, whipping, tarring and feathering, and otherwise shamefully treating them.

Nor were those means the only ones resorted to in this work of persecution, but being determined to put an end to the church forever; they added to all the rest of the means used, stealing the property of the saints, also burning houses and charging it on their [the saints] heads, in order to raise public indignation against them; as also false swearing, and indeed we may add, all other means which the adversary had in his power to use, nothing seems to be left undone, that could be done, by men and demons, in order that the purposes of God might fail; but still the object, so much desired by many, has not as yet been obtained. Under all this fire of persecution, the cause has rolled on with a steady course; the increase has been gradual, but constant, and the

church, at this time, numbers many thousands: some in the old world have become obedient to the faith, multitudes in the Canadas, as well as in most parts of the United States.

During these scenes of persecution, a number of the saints have lost their lives, and others are missing, and it is unknown what has become of them; but the presumption is that they have been secretly murdered.

No country, of which we have any knowledge, has offered so fair an opportunity for determining the great hostility which exists, naturally in the human heart against God and against his work, as this one. In other countries, persecutions were carried on under pretext of law; but in this country, where the constitution of the United States, and the constitution of every State in the Union, guarantees unto every person, the rights of conscience, and the liberty of worshipping as he pleases, to witness such scenes of persecution, as those which have followed this church from the beginning, in despite of law, justice, equity, and truth, and at war with the very genius of our republican institutions, and contrary to the spirit and design of our government; surely evinces the depravity of the human heart, and the great hostility there exists in the hearts of the human family, against the work and purposes of God; and most fully confirms the apostle's saying; that, "the carnal mind is enmity against God."

But notwithstanding all this violence, we can say as did Paul to the Corinthians: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." We have until this time, endured this great fight of affliction, and kept the faith. If the ancient saints had to endure as seeing him who is invisible -- so have we. If they had to suffer the contradiction of sinners against themselves -- so have we. If they had to undergo fears within, and fightings without -- so have we. If they had to suffer stripes and imprisonments, for their religion's sake -- so have we. If they were often in journeyings, in perils of water, in perils among robbers, in perils by their own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness -- so are we. If they had to commend themselves to God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown and yet well known; as dying and, behold, they lived; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things—so have we. If they went up through much tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—so have we to go up through as great tribulations; and we trust in so doing, we will also wash our robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.

One cause of our heavy persecutions is the influence which those have in the world, whom we have separated from the fellowship of the church for their wickedness; who attempted to gratify their vengeance on us, and also to hide their own shame, by foul slanders and base calumny. We were at one time represented by them, as having all things common: at another as being enemies to the government: and in other places we were reported to be abolitionists, and indeed any thing, they thought best calculated to stir up the public mind, and to excite popular indignation; and if possible, put an end to the work, by sacrificing some of those who were considered as most active in supporting and defending the cause. But through the mercy of God,

we are still in existence, and have the opportunity of joining with you in the privileges of this day.

In assembling on this occasion, our object is, not only to comply with the custom of our nation in celebrating the birth day of our liberties; but also to lay the corner stones of the edifice, about to be built in this place in honor of our God, to whom we ascribe the glory of our national freedom, as well as our eternal salvation; and whose worship we esteem of more consequence, than we do the treasures of Missouri; ready at all times, to offer unto him the sacrifice of our first fruits, and by untiring perseverance, patient industry, and faithful devotion to the cause of our God, rear this building to his name, designed, for the double purpose, of a house of worship and an institution of learning. The first floor will be for sacred devotion, and the two others, for the purpose of education. The building to be one hundred and ten feet by eighty, with three floors and not far from thirty feet between the floors: all to be finished, according to the best stile of such buildings in our country. The entire expense, calculated at not far from one hundred thousand dollars: all when finished, to stand as a monument, of the power of union of effort and concert of action.

Next to the worship of our God, we esteem the education of our children and of the rising generation. For what is wealth without society, or society without intelligence. And how is intelligence to be obtained? -- by education. It is that which forms the youthful mind: it is that alone, which renders society agreeable, and adds interest and importance, to the worship of God. What is religion without intelligence! -- an empty sound. Intelligence is the root, from which all true enjoyments flow. Intelligence is religion, and religion is intelligence, if it is any thing. Take intelligence from it, and what is left? a name -- a sound without meaning. If a person desires to be truly pious in the sight of God, he must be purely intelligent. Piety without intelligence, is fanaticism, and devotion without understanding, is enthusiasm.

The object of our religion, is to make us more intelligent, than we could be without it, not so much, to make us acquainted with what we do see, as with what we do not see. It is designed to evolve the faculties, to enlighten the understanding, and through this medium, purify the heart. It is calculated to make men better, by making them wiser; more useful, by making them more intelligent; not intelligent on some subjects only, but on all subjects, on which intelligence can be obtained: and when science fails, revelation supplies its place, and unfolds the secrets and mysteries of the unseen world, leads the mind into the knowledge of the future existence of men, makes it acquainted with angels, principalities, and powers, in the eternal world; carries it into heaven and heavenly places, makes it acquainted with God, its Redeemer, and its associates in the eternal mansions; so that when science fails, and philosophy vanishes away, revelation, more extensive in its operations begins where they [science and philosophy] ends, and feasts the mind with intelligence, pure and holy, from the presence of God. -- Tells of eternal mansions, of immortal glories, of everlasting dominions, of angelic throngs, of heavenly hosts, of flaming seraphs, of crowns of glory, of palms of victory, of the saint's eternal triumph through a glorious resurrection, of songs of everlasting joy, of God the father of all, of Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and of the blood of the sprinkling, which speaketh better things, than that of righteous Abel.

It not only acquaints us with these eternal things, but it makes known unto us the future history of man in time, of the purposes of God, which have to be accomplished before the end of all things comes. It warns and forewarns, of the wars, the pestilences, the famines, the earthquakes, and the desolations, which are coming on the earth. The rising and falling of nations: and also the desolation of the earth itself: the falling of the mountains, the rising of the

vallies, the melting of the rocks, the purifying of the elements by fire: of the sun's veiling his face, the moon's turning to blood, the stars of heaven falling: of the heavens rolling away as a scroll; and of Christ's descending from heaven in a cloud, with the shout of the arch angel, and the trump of God. And of the wicked's fearing and trembling, of their faces gathering blackness, and of their seeking a refuge under the mountains, and of their calling upon the rocks to hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; "For the great day of his wrath has come, and who shall be able to stand?"

All this mass of important intelligence, together with the final end of all thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers, and governments, which nothing else but revelation could make known, (for science, with all her powers, could never declare it, neither could philosophy, with her utmost stretch, reach it,) we obtain by our holy religion; for this is her province; it is the theatre where she acts; it is the business we have for her; it is to tell us things which nothing else could tell; it is to fill us with that kind of wisdom, which cometh down from above, and which is alone obtained by revelation, and by the powers which our holy religion confers, and by nothing else. In view then, of what we have already obtained, and of what there is to be obtained, we have assembled ourselves together in this remote land, to prepare for that which is coming on earth, and we have this day laid the corner stones of this temple of God, and design, with as little delay as possible, to complete it, and to rear up to the name of our God in this city, "Far West," a house, which shall be a house of prayer, a house of learning, a house of order, and a house of God; where all the sciences, languages &c., which are taught in our country, in schools of the highest order, shall be taught. And the object is, to have it on a plan accessible to all classes, the poor, as well as the rich, that all persons in our midst, may have an opportunity to educate their children, both male and female, to any extent they please. So that all the talents in our midst, may be called forth, in order that we may avail ourselves, of all the means God puts into our hands, and put it into the power of all, to deliver themselves, from the impositions, and frauds, which are practicing upon the more illiterate part of the community, by those who have had superior advantages, or as far, at least, as learning can go to obtain this object.

One part of the house, shall be set apart for a place of worship, where we shall invoke our God for revelations, when we have gone as far as human learning can carry us, that by revelations, visions &c. we may fill the vacuum still left, after science and philosophy have done all they can do. So that we may have the understanding, and that wisdom which brings salvation, and that knowledge which is unto eternal life.

That whether there are wars, or famines, or pestilences, or earthquakes, or distress of nations, or whatever may come according to the purposes of our God, that we may know it before hand, and be prepared for it, so that none of these things shall overtake us as a thief in the night, and while we are crying peace and safety, sudden destruction come upon us.

The Savior of the world himself, while he was here with the disciples, said, 'As it was in the days of Noah, so should it be at the coming of the Son of man. They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, and giving in marriage, and knew not, till the flood came and swept them all away—So shall it be, at the coming of the Son of man.' And Paul declared to the saints of his day, "That the day of the Lord so cometh, as a thief in the night. That when the people are crying peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape. And that wicked men and seducers, would wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." They will, says Peter, say, 'where is the promise of his coming; for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.'

Such is to be the state of the world, at the most important period in the existence of man's earthly residence. The description given by Isaiah, is tremendous in the extreme. 'Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it up side down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.

And it shall be, as with the people so with the priest; as with the servant so with his master, as with the maid so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him; the land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth, and fadeth away; the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth is also defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.'

The prophet Malachi describing the same scene and the same period of calumny says, 'For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and ALL the proud, and ALL that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.'

The psalmist David, in the majesty of his prophetic power, has left us a warning also, when he says, 'The mighty God, even the Lord hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before, him and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above and to the earth (that he may judge his people). Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness; for God is Judge himself.'

Having then knowledge of these things, and the voice of God being unto us, to gather together, and make a covenant with our God by sacrifice. We have given heed hereunto, and, are here this day as witnesses for God, that he has not spoken in vain, neither has he said in vain. But the day and the hour of his judgements sleepeth not, neither do they slumber: and whether men believe or do not believe, it alters not the word which God has caused to be spoken, but come it must, and come it will, and that to the astonishment, the confusion, and the dismay, of thousands who believe not, neither will they regard, until overtaken by it as a thief in the night, and sudden destruction come upon them, and there be none to deliver.

Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we warn our fellow men, not only by precept, but example also, by leaving our former homes, to which we were bound by the strongest ties, suffering a sacrifice of the greatest share of our earthly possessions. Many of us, in times past, were rich, but for Jesus' sake, and at the command of our God we have become poor, because he [Christ] became poor for our sakes; so in like manner, we follow his example, and become poor for his sake.

And as Moses left Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king, and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, having respect to the recompense of reward. So do we, we choose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the flatteries of the world for a season.

It is not because we cannot, if we were so disposed, enjoy both the honors and flatteries of the world, but we have voluntarily offered them in sacrifice and the riches of the world also, for a more durable substance. Our God has promised us a reward of eternal inheritance, and we

have believed his promise, and though we wade through great tribulation, we are in nothing discouraged, for we know he that has promised is faithful. The promise is sure, and the reward is certain. It is because of this, that we have taken the spoiling of our goods. Our cheeks have been given to the smiters, and our heads to those who have plucked off the hair. We have not only when smitten on one cheek turned the other, but we have done it, again and again, until we are wearied of being smitten, and tired of being trampled upon. We have proved the world with kindness; we have suffered their abuse without cause, with patience, and have endured without resentment, until this day, and still their persecutions and violence does not cease. But from this day and this hour, we will suffer it no more.

We take God and all the holy angels to witness this day, that we warn all men in the name of Jesus Christ, to come on us no more forever, for from this hour, we will bear it no more, our rights shall no more be trampled on with impunity. The man or the set of men, who attempts it, does it at the expense of their lives. And that mob that comes on us to disturb us; it shall be between us and them a war of extermination, for we will follow them, till the last drop of their blood is spilled, or else they will have to exterminate us: for we will carry the seat of war to their own houses, and their own families, and one party or the other shall be utterly destroyed—Remember it then all MEN.

We will never be the aggressors, we will infringe on the rights of no people; but shall stand for our own until death. We claim our own rights, and are willing that all others shall enjoy theirs.

No man shall be at liberty to come into our streets, to threaten us with mobs, for if he does, he shall atone for it before he leaves the place, neither shall he be at liberty, to villify and slander any of us, for suffer it we will not in this place.

We therefore, take all men to record this day, that we proclaim our liberty on this day, as did our fathers. And we pledge this day to one another, our fortunes, our lives, and our sacred honors, to be delivered from the persecutions which we have had to endure, for the last nine years, or nearly that. Neither will we indulge any man, or set of men, in instituting vexatious law suits against us, to cheat us out of our just rights, if they attempt it we say we be unto them.

We this day then proclaim ourselves free, with a purpose and a determination that never can be broken, ‘no never! no never!! NO NEVER’!!!” (see Rigdon in Works Cited)

Appendix II: Joseph Smith's 1843 and 1844 Speeches

Here, in full, is Joseph's June, 1843 speech, given after returning from a difficult arrest by Sheriff Joseph B. Reynolds and Constable Harmon T. Wilson:

The congregation is large. I shall require attention. I discovered what the emotions of the people were on my arrival at this city, and I have come here to say 'How do you do?' to all parties; and I do now at this time say to all 'How do you do?' I meet you with a heart full of gratitude to Almighty God, and I presume you all feel the same. I am well—I am hearty. I hardly know how to express my feelings. I feel as strong as a giant. I pulled sticks with the men coming along, and I pulled up with one hand the strongest man that could be found. Then two men tried, but they could not pull me up, and I continued to pull, mentally, until I pulled Missouri to Nauvoo. But I will pass from that subject.

There has been great excitement in the country since Joseph H. Reynolds and Harmon T. Wilson took me; but I have been cool and dispassionate through the whole. Thank God, I am now a prisoner in the hands of the municipal court of Nauvoo, and not in the hands of Missourians.

It is not so much my object to tell of my afflictions, trials and troubles as to speak of the writ of habeas corpus, so that the minds of all may be corrected. It has been asserted by the great and wise men, lawyers and others, that our municipal powers and legal tribunals are not to be sanctioned by the authorities of the state; and accordingly they want to make it lawful to drag away innocent men from their families and friends, and have them put to death by ungodly men for their religion!

Relative to our city charter, courts, right of habeas corpus, etc., I wish you to know and publish that we have all power; and if any man from this time forth says anything to the contrary, cast it into his teeth.

There is a secret in this. If there is not power in our charter and courts, then there is not power in the state of Illinois, nor in the congress or constitution of the United States; for the United States gave unto Illinois her constitution or charter, and Illinois gave unto Nauvoo her charters, ceding unto us our vested rights, which she has no right or power to take from us. All the power there was in Illinois she gave to Nauvoo; and any man that says to the contrary is a fool.

The municipal court has all the power to issue and determine writs of habeas corpus within the limits of this city that the legislature can confer. This city has all the power that the state courts have, and was given by the same authority—the legislature.

I want you to hear and learn, O Israel, this day, what is for the happiness and peace of this city and people. If our enemies are determined to oppress us and deprive us of our constitutional rights and privileges as they have done, and if the authorities that are on the earth will not sustain us in our rights, nor give us that protection which the laws and constitution of the United States and of this state guarantee unto us, then we will claim them from a higher power—from heaven—yea, from God Almighty.

I have dragged these men here by my hand, and I will do it again; but I swear I will not deal so mildly with them again, for the time has come when forbearance is no longer a virtue; and if you or I are again taken unlawfully, you are at liberty to give loose to blood and thunder. But be cool, be deliberate, be wise, act with almighty power; and when you pull, do it effectually—make a sweep-stakes for once!

My lot has always been cast among the warmest hearted people. In every time of trouble, friends, even among strangers, have been raised up unto me and assisted me.

The time is come when the veil is torn off from the state of Illinois, and its citizens have delivered me from the state of Missouri. Friends that were raised up unto me would have spilt their life's blood to have torn me from the hands of Reynolds and Wilson, if I had asked them; but I told them no, I would be delivered by the power of God and generalship; and I have brought these men to Nauvoo, and committed them to her from whom I was torn, not as prisoners in chains, but as prisoners of kindness. I have treated them kindly. I have had the privilege of rewarding them good for evil. They took me unlawfully, treated me rigorously, strove to deprive me of my rights, and would have run with me into Missouri to have been murdered, if Providence had not interposed. But now they are in my hands; and I have taken them into my house, set them at the head of my table, and placed before them the best which my house afforded; and they were waited upon by my wife, whom they deprived of seeing me when I was taken.

I have no doubt but I shall be discharged by the municipal court. Were I before any good tribunal, I should be discharged, as the Missouri writs are illegal and good for nothing—they are 'without form and void.'

But before I will bear this unhallowed persecution any longer—before I will be dragged away again among my enemies for trial, I will spill the last drop of blood in my veins, and will see all my enemies in hell! To bear it any longer would be a sin, and I will not bear it any longer. Shall we bear it any longer? [One universal 'No!' ran through all the vast assembly, like a loud peal of thunder.]

I wish the lawyer who says we have no powers in Nauvoo may be choked to death with his own words. Don't employ lawyers, or pay them money for their knowledge, for I have learned that they don't know anything. I know more than they all.

Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel. He that believeth in our chartered rights may come here and be saved; and he that does not shall remain in ignorance. If any lawyer shall say there is more power in other places and charters with respect to habeas corpus than in Nauvoo, believe it not. I have converted this candidate for congress [pointing to Cyrus Walker, Esq.,] that the right of habeas corpus is included in our charter. If he continues converted, I will vote for him.

I have been with these lawyers and they have treated me well; but I am here in Nauvoo, and the Missourians too. I got here by a lawful writ of habeas corpus issued by the Master-in-Chancery of Lee county, and made returnable to the nearest tribunal in the fifth judicial district having jurisdiction to try and determine such writs: and here is that tribunal, just as it should be.

However indignant you may feel about the high handed oppression which has been raised against me by these men, use not the hand of violence against them, for they could not be prevailed upon to come here till I pledged my honor and my life that a hair of their heads should not be hurt. Will you all support my pledge, and thus preserve my honor? [One universal 'Yes!' burst from the assembled thousands.] This is another proof of your attachment to me. I know how ready you are to do right. You have done great things, and manifested your love towards me in flying to my assistance on this occasion. I bless you, in the name of the Lord, with all the blessings of heaven and earth you are capable of enjoying.

I have learned that we have no need to suffer as we have heretofore: we can call others to our aid. I know the Almighty will bless all good men: he will bless you; and the time has

come when there will be such a flocking to the standard of liberty as never has been or shall be hereafter. What an era has commenced! Our enemies have prophesied that we would establish our religion by sword. Is it true? No. But if Missouri will not stay her cruel hand in her unhallowed persecutions against us, I restrain you not any longer. I say in the name of Jesus Christ, by the authority of the holy priesthood, I this day turn the key that opens the heavens to restrain you no longer from this time forth. I will lead you to the battle; and if you are not afraid to die, and feel disposed to spill your blood in your own defense, you will not offend me. Be not the aggressor: bear until they strike you on the one cheek; then offer the other, and they will be sure to strike that; then defend yourselves, and God will bear you off, and you shall stand forth clear before his tribunal.

If any citizens of Illinois say we shall not have our rights, treat them as strangers and not friends, and let them go to hell and be damned! Some say they will mob us. Let them mob and be damned! If we have to give up our chartered rights, privileges, and freedom, which our fathers fought, bled, and died for, and which the constitution of the United States and of this state guarantee unto us, we will do it only at the point of the sword and bayonet.

Many lawyers contend for those things which are against the rights of men, and I can only excuse them because of their ignorance. Go forth and advocate the laws and rights of the people, ye lawyers. If not, don't get into my hands, or under the lash of my tongue.

Lawyers say the powers of the Nauvoo charter are dangerous: but I ask, is the constitution of the United States or of this state dangerous? No. Neither are the charters granted to Nauvoo by the legislature of Illinois dangerous, and those who say they are fools. We have not enjoyed unmolested those rights which the constitution of the United States of America and our charters grant.

Missouri and all wicked men raise the hue-and-cry against us, and are not satisfied. Some political aspirants of this state also are raising the hue-and-cry that the powers in the charters granted unto the city of Nauvoo are dangerous; and although the general assembly have conferred them upon our city, yet the whine is raised—'Repeal them—take them away.' Like the boy who swapped off his jack-knife, and then cried, 'Daddy, daddy, I have sold my jack-knife and got sick of my bargain, and I want to get it back again.'

But how are they going to help themselves? Raise mobs? And what can mobocrats do in the midst of Kirkpatrickites? No better than a hunter in the claws of a bear. If mobs come upon you any more here, dung your gardens with them. We don't want any excitement; but after we have done all, we will rise up, Washington-like, and break off the hellish yoke that oppresses us, and we will not be mobbed.

The day before I was taken at Inlet Grove, I rode with my wife through Dixon to visit my friends, and I said to her, 'here is a good people.' I felt this by the Spirit of God. The next day I was a prisoner in their midst, in the hands of Reynolds, of Missouri, and Wilson, of Carthage. As the latter drove up, he exclaimed, 'ha, ha, ha! By G—, we have got the Prophet now!' He gloried much in it, but he is now our prisoner. When they came to take me, they held two cocked pistols to my head, and saluted me with—'G—d—you, I'll shoot you! I'll shoot you, G—d—you,'—repeating these threats nearly fifty times, from first to last. I asked them what they wanted to shoot me for. They said they would do it, if I made any resistance.

'Oh, very well,' I replied; 'I have no resistance to make.' They then dragged me away, and I asked them by what authority they did these things. They said, 'By a writ from the governors of Missouri and Illinois.' I then told them I wanted a writ of habeas corpus. Their

reply was, 'G—d—you, you shan't have it,' I told a man to go to Dixon, and get me a writ of habeas corpus. Wilson then repeated, 'G—d—you, you shan't have it: I'll shoot you.'

When we arrived at Dixon, I sent for a lawyer, who came; and Reynolds shut the door in his face, and would not let me speak to him, repeating, 'G—d—you, I'll shoot you.' I turned to him, opened my bosom, and told him to 'shoot away. I have endured so much persecution and oppression that I am sick of life. Why, then, don't you shoot and have done with it, instead of talking so much about it?'

This somewhat checked his insolence. I then told him that I would have counsel to consult, and eventually I obtained my wish. The lawyers came to me, and I got a writ of habeas corpus for myself, and also a writ against Reynolds and Wilson for unlawful proceedings and cruel treatment towards me. Thanks to the good citizens of Dixon, who nobly took their stand against such unwarrantable and unlawful oppression, my persecutors could not get out of the town that night, although, when they first arrived, they swore I should not remain in Dixon five minutes, and I found they had ordered horses accordingly to proceed to Rock Island. I pledged my honor to my counsel that the Nauvoo city charter conferred jurisdiction to investigate the subject; so we came to Nauvoo, where I am now a prisoner in the custody of a higher tribunal than the circuit court.

The charter says that 'the city council shall have power and authority to make, ordain, establish, and execute such ordinances not repugnant to the constitution of the United States, or of this state, as they may deem necessary, for the peace, benefit, and safety of the inhabitants of said city.' And also that 'the municipal court shall have power to grant writs of habeas corpus in all cases arising under the ordinances of the city council.'

The city council have passed an ordinance 'that no citizen of this city shall be taken out of this city by any writ, without the privilege of a writ of habeas corpus.' There is nothing but what we have power over, except where restricted by the constitution of the United States. 'But,' says the mob, 'What dangerous powers!' Yes—dangerous, because they will protect the innocent and put down mobocrats. The constitution of the United States declares that the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus shall not be denied. Deny me the writ of habeas corpus, and I will fight with gun, sword, cannon, whirlwind, and thunder, until they are used up like the Kilkenny cats. We have more power than most charters confer, because we have power to go behind the writ and try the merits of the case.

If these powers are dangerous, then the constitution of the United States and of this state are dangerous; but they are not dangerous to good men: they are only so to bad men who are breakers of the laws. So with the laws of the country, and so with the ordinances of Nauvoo: they are dangerous to mobs, but not to good men who wish to keep the laws.

We do not go out of Nauvoo to disturb anybody, or any city, town, or place. Why, then, need they be troubled about us? Let them not meddle with our affairs, but let us alone. After we have been deprived of our rights and privileges of citizenship, driven from town to town, place to place, and state to state, with the sacrifice of our homes and lands, our blood has been shed, many having been murdered, and all this because of our religion—because we worship Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, shall we longer bear these cruelties which have been heaped upon us for the last ten years in the face of heaven, and in open violation of the constitution and law of these United States and of this state? God forbid! I will not bear it. If they take away my rights, I will fight for them manfully and righteously until I am used up. We have done nothing against the rights of others.

You speak of lawyers. I am a lawyer too; but the Almighty God has taught me the principle of law; and the true meaning and intent of the writ of habeas corpus is to defend the innocent and investigate the subject. Go behind the writ and if the form of one that is issued against an innocent man is right, he should [nevertheless] not be dragged to another state, and there be put to death, or be in jeopardy of life and limb, because of prejudice, when he is innocent. The benefits of the constitution and laws are alike for all; and the great Eloheim has given me the privilege of having the benefits of the constitution and the writ of habeas corpus; and I am bold to ask for that privilege this day, and I ask in the name of Jesus Christ, and all that is sacred, that I may have your lives and all your energies to carry out the freedom which is chartered to us. Will you all help me? If so make it manifest by raising the right hand (There was a unanimous response, a perfect sea of hands being elevated). Here is truly a committee of the whole.

When at Dixon, a lawyer came to me as counsel. Reynolds and Wilson said I should not speak to any man, and they would shoot any man who should dare to speak to me. An old, gray-headed man came up and said I should have counsel, and he was not afraid of their pistols.

The people of Dixon were ready to take me from my persecutors, and I could have killed them, notwithstanding their pistols; but I had no disposition to kill any man, though my worst enemy,—not even Boggs. In fact, he would have more hell to live in the reflection of his past crimes than to die. After this, I had lawyers enough, and I obtained a writ for Joseph H. Reynolds and Harmon T. Wilson, for damages, assault and battery, as well as the writ of habeas corpus.

We started for Ottawa, and arrived at Pawpaw Grove, 32 miles, where we stopped for the night. Esquire Walker sent Mr. Campbell, sheriff of Lee county, to my assistance, and he came and slept by me. In the morning, certain men wished to see me, but I was not allowed to see them. The news of my arrival had hastily circulated about the neighborhood, and very early in the morning the largest room in the hotel was filled with citizens, who were anxious to hear me preach, and requested me to address them.

Sheriff Reynolds entered the room and said, pointing to me, 'I wish you to understand (his man is my prisoner, and I want you should disperse. You must not gather round here in this way.' Upon which, an aged gentleman, who was lame and carried a large hickory walking-stick, advanced towards Reynolds, bringing his hickory upon the floor and said, 'You damned infernal puke! we'll learn you to come here and interrupt gentlemen. Sit down there [pointing to a very low chair] and sit still. Don't open your head till General Smith gets through talking. If you never learned manners in Missouri, we'll teach you that gentlemen are not to be imposed upon by a nigger-driver. You cannot kidnap men here, if you do in Missouri; and if you attempt it here, there is a committee in this grove that will sit on your case. And, sir, it is the highest tribunal in the United States, as from its decision there is no appeal.'

Reynolds, no doubt, aware that the person addressing him was at the head of a committee who had prevented the settlers on the public domain from being imposed upon by land speculators, sat down in silence, while I addressed the assembly for an hour and a half on the subject of marriage, my visitors having requested me to give them my views of the law of God respecting marriage.

My freedom commenced from that hour. We came direct from Pawpaw Grove to Nauvoo, having got our writ directed to the nearest court having authority to try the case, which was the municipal court of this city.

It did my soul good to see your feelings and love manifested towards me. I thank God that I have the honor to lead so virtuous and honest a people—to be your leader and lawyer, as was Moses to the children of Israel. Hosannah! Hosannah! Hosannah! to Almighty God, who has delivered us thus from out of the seven troubles. I commend you to His grace; and may the blessings of heaven rest upon you, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen” (Smith 4:465-472).

Joseph Smith’s 1844 speech:

“It is thought by some that our enemies would be satisfied with my destruction; but I tell you that as soon as they have shed my blood they will thirst for the blood of every man in whose heart dwells a single spark of the spirit of the fullness of the Gospel. The opposition of these men is moved by the spirit of the adversary of all righteousness. It is not only to destroy me, but every man and woman who dares believe the doctrines that God hath inspired me to teach to this generation.

We have never violated the laws of our country. We have every right to live under their protection, and are entitled to all the privileges guaranteed by our state and national constitutions. We have turned the barren, bleak prairies and swamps of this state into beautiful towns, farms and cities by our industry; and the men who seek our destruction and cry thief, treason, riot, &c., are those who themselves violate the laws, steal and plunder from their neighbors, and seek to destroy the innocent, heralding forth lies to screen themselves from the just punishment of their crimes by bringing destruction upon this innocent people. I call God, angels and all men to witness that we are innocent of the charges which are heralded forth through the public prints against us by our enemies; and while they assemble together in unlawful mobs to take away our rights and destroy our lives, they think to shield themselves under the refuge of lies which they have thus wickedly fabricated.

We have forwarded a particular account of all our doings to the Governor. We are ready to obey his commands, and we expect that protection at his hands which we know to be our just due.

We have taken the counsel of Judge Thomas, and have been tried before a civil magistrate on the charge of riot—not that the law required it, but because the Judge advised it as a precautionary measure, to allay all possible pretext for excitement. We were legally acquitted by Esq. Wells, who is a good judge of law. Had we been before the Circuit, the Supreme, or any other court of law in the state or nation, we would have been acquitted, for we have broken no law.

Constable Bettisworth came here with a writ requiring us to go before Mr. Morrison, ‘or some other justice of the peace of the county,’ to answer to the charge of riot. We acknowledged ourselves his prisoners, and were ready to go before any magistrate in any precinct in this part of the county, or anywhere else where our lives could be protected from the mob who have published the resolutions for our extermination which you have just heard read. This is a privilege the law guarantees to us, and which the writ itself allows. He broke the law and refused us this privilege, declaring that we should go before Morrison in

Carthage, and no one else, when he knew that a numerous mob was collected there who are publicly pledged to destroy our lives.

It was under these circumstances that we availed ourselves of the legal right of the ancient, high, and constitutional privilege of the writ of *habeas corpus*, and were brought before the Municipal Court of this city and discharged from the illegal detention under which we were held by Constable Bettisworth. All mob-men, priests, thieves, and bogus makers, apostates and adulterers, who combine to destroy this people, now raise the hue and cry throughout the state that we resist the law, in order to raise a pretext for calling together thousands more of infuriated mob-men to murder, destroy, plunder and ravish the innocent.

We are American citizens. We live upon a soil for the liberties of which our fathers periled their lives and spilt their blood upon the battlefield. Those rights so dearly purchased, shall not be disgracefully trodden under foot by lawless marauders without at least a noble effort on our part to sustain our liberties.

Will you all stand by me to the death, and sustain at the peril of your lives, the laws of our country, and the liberties and privileges which our fathers have transmitted unto us, sealed with their sacred blood? ('Aye!' shouted thousands.) He then said, 'It is well. If you had not done it, I would have gone out there (pointing to the west) and would have raised up a mightier people.'

I call upon all men, from Maine to the Rocky Mountains, and from Mexico to British America, whose hearts thrill with horror to behold the rights of freemen trampled under foot, to come to the deliverance of this people from the hand of oppression, cruelty, anarchy and misrule to which they have long been made subject. Come, all ye lovers of liberty, break the oppressor's rod, loose the iron grasp of mobocracy, and bring to condign punishment all those who trample under foot the glorious Constitution and the people's rights. [Drawing his sword, and presenting it to heaven, he said] I call God and angels to witness that I have unsheathed my sword with a firm and unalterable determination that this people shall have their legal rights, and be protected from mob violence, or my blood shall be spilt upon the ground like water, and my body consigned to the silent tomb. While I live, I will never tamely submit to the dominion of cursed mobocracy. I would welcome death rather than submit to this oppression; and it would be sweet, oh, sweet, to rest in the grave rather than submit to this oppression, agitation, annoyance, confusion, and alarm upon alarm, any longer.

I call upon all friends of truth and liberty to come to our assistance; and may the thunders of the Almighty and the forked lightnings of heaven and pestilence, and war and bloodshed come down on those ungodly men who seek to destroy my life and the lives of this innocent people.

I do not regard my own life. I am ready to be offered a sacrifice for this people; for what can our enemies do? Only kill the body, and their power is then at an end. Stand firm, my friends; never flinch. Do not seek to save your lives, for he that is afraid to die for the truth, will lose eternal life. Hold out to the end, and we shall be resurrected and become like Gods, and reign in celestial kingdoms, principalities, and eternal dominions, while this cursed mob will sink to hell, the portion of all those who shed innocent blood.

God has tried you. You are a good people; therefore I love you with all my heart. Greater love hath no man than that he should lay down his life for his friends. You have stood by me in the hour of trouble, and I am willing to sacrifice my life for your preservation.

May the Lord God of Israel bless you for ever and ever. I say it in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and in the authority of the Holy Priesthood, which He hath conferred upon me” (Smith 6:498-500).

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