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MORMON RHETORIC AND THE THEORY OF ORGANIC EVOLUTION

By

Kurt W. Laird

A thesis submitted to the faculty
of Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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of a thesis submitted by

Kurt W. Laird

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

_____	_____
Date	Danette Paul, Chair
_____	_____
Date	Kristine Hansen, Reader
_____	_____
Date	Grant Boswell, Reader
_____	_____
Date	Gary L. Hatch, Graduate Advisor
_____	_____
Date	Nicholas A. Mason, Associate Chair for Graduate Studies

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Kurt W. Laird its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including tables, figures, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

Date

Danette Paul
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department

Phillip Snyder
Graduate Coordinator

Accepted for the College

Joseph Parry
Associate Dean, College of Humanities

ABSTRACT

MORMON RHETORIC AND THE THEORY OF ORGANIC EVOLUTION

Kurt W. Laird

Department of English

Master of Arts

Most rhetorical studies of evolution/religion debates have addressed the “media version” of the debates that pits fundamentalist religion against science. Yet, most of the rhetorical studies in this area have not been nuanced enough to appreciate the complexity of the rhetoric resulting from this rich area of discourse. This study provides a rhetorical analysis of the evolution rhetoric in one particular religion, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), and focuses on the discourse of two prominent leaders in the LDS Church, B.H. Roberts and Joseph Fielding Smith. In the LDS Church there is a clear distinction among members (Mormons) between official and unofficial discourse, and discerning the distinction between official and unofficial discourse revolves around the rhetorical concept of ethos. The ethos of a Mormon rhetor in intra-Mormon evolution discourse depends on an audience’s perception of the concordance between written or canonized revelation, the words of living oracles, and priesthood position.

However, citing more scriptures and prophets, or possessing a higher priesthood position does not automatically make a rhetor’s argument supreme in the LDS Church. A rhetorical analysis of the Roberts/Smith debate demonstrates that rhetoric in the LDS

Church is not judged solely by the rhetor's position of authority or by the rhetor's citation of authority (e.g., canonized scripture or modern prophets); rather, the rhetor's rhetoric is judged, at least to a degree, on its own merits. Ethos provides one approach or window into the rhetoric of evolution discourse, but uncovers many other possible approaches. More rhetorical studies of the evolution debates taking place in the LDS Church and in other specific religious settings will likely reveal much more about the way that ethos and other elements of rhetoric inform the seemingly endless evolution/religion discussion.

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INTRODUCTION

The debates surrounding the “Darwinian revolution” have been going on for many years (Bowler 1). Since the early nineteenth century scholars, politicians, and religious leaders have debated evolution’s relationship to religion, and those debates continue through today (Wallis; Bowler 177–178). At stake in the evolution debates are questions of philosophical, social, political, and moral significance. These debates are primarily represented as debates between religious dogma and scientific fact, but for the most part academia does not discuss the possibility of diverse opinions between religious communities or within a religious community. When focusing on this dogma versus fact debate, scholars are left with three options: support for evolution; opposition to evolution; or a way to combine the two. Scientists do not adhere to one view of evolution. For example, Richard Dawkins, voted one of the “top three intellectuals” in England, published *The God Delusion*, a five-week *New York Times* bestseller in 2006, in which he relies heavily on evolutionary theory to rule out the existence of God (“Public Intellectuals Poll,” *Prospect*; see also Dennett, Harris, Stenger, Wolpert). Professor of biochemistry Michael J. Behe points to discoveries in his field that apparently contradict Darwin’s theory and support other versions of evolutionary theory such as intelligent design, but his explanation is widely disregarded by other scientists (see also Agassiz, Denton, Lovtrup, Kauffman, Goodwin, Eldredge, Raff, Arthur, Schwartz). Other well respected scientists, such as Stephen J. Gould, acknowledge both the apparent contradictions as well as the possibility of other factors at play. Some religious leaders/academics even say that the theory of organic evolution is evil and inspired by the devil. For example, Dr. Henry Morris, considered by some to be the father of modern

creationist science, argues that “Satan himself is the originator of the concept of evolution” (Morris 74–75, see also Hodge, Johnson, Russett, and Smith). Also, early on in the debate and today, scholars and religionists have tried to reconcile the theory of organic evolution with religion and vice versa. For example, Asa Gray, a scientist and an orthodox religionist, wrote the first review of Darwin’s *Origin* in America. In his first review of Darwin’s work, and in several subsequent essays, Gray argued for the reconciliation of religion and science (see also Stephens, Jeffrey, Roughgarden, and Collins). The varied responses of individuals from religious and non-religious perspectives show that the evolution debates are more complicated than merely religious dogma versus scientific fact.

Each opinion about the theory of evolution is based on a different set of convictions—religious, scientific, or political or a mixture of all three. Some people believe that the convictions of the two parties in evolution debates—between religion and science—are incompatible. Religion is often equated with dogma, and science is often equated with fact. When dogma and fact collide, the resulting rhetoric reveals the strategies both sides use to negotiate between two seemingly incompatible epistemologies. Because there generally is not a settled “truth” about evolution and religion, or because each group lays claim to truth based on different sources, both scientists and religionists have used rhetoric to persuade audiences to accept what they view as the most probable position. The resulting rhetoric is a ripe area for rhetorical study.

Rhetorical studies have been done on the evolution/religion debates, yet most of the rhetorical studies in this area have not been nuanced enough to appreciate the

complexity of the rhetoric resulting from this rich area of discourse. Rather, the rhetoric studies to date have generally focused primarily on one religious position: fanatical opposition to evolution. This focus implies that all religious people hold one uniform position on evolution and that they always stand in opposition to scientists in determining public policy (e.g., the Scopes Trial or current intelligent design cases). When distinctions are made between religious peoples, they are still labeled under generic terms—such as liberal, conservative/fundamentalist and moderate—with little or no regard for the specific religious rhetoric of various denominations.

Rhetorical studies on the evolution/religion subject, beginning with Richard M. Weaver's 1953 study of the Scopes Trial down to the most recent studies conducted by John A. Campbell in 2005, have several similar characteristics. First, they seek to establish the rhetorical nature of the arguments used by both science and religion in the evolution/religion debates. Second, they focus on debates between the religious and the secular. Third, they primarily focus on religiously based theories, such as creationism, which appear to contradict the theory of organic evolution, or on attempts, such as intelligent design (ID), to combine some of the theory of organic evolution with some religiously inspired ideas. These two alternative theories of creation are usually associated with fundamentalist Christian groups. For example, Weaver, in an article entitled "Dialectic and Rhetoric at Dayton, TN," examines the rhetoric used in the Scopes "Monkey" Trial. Weaver argues that both parties (i.e., the Creationists and the Darwinists) involved in the dispute about teaching evolution in public schools believed that their arguments were based on scientific or spiritual "facts," but they both used rhetorical strategies when trying to define and defend the practical application of their

beliefs. More recently, Thomas M. Lessl argues, in “Heresy, Orthodoxy, and the Politics of Science,” that in response to creationists, modern Darwinists are in some ways becoming religious or dogmatic in their rhetoric rather than scientific. On the other hand, Charles Taylor in “Of Audience, Expertise, and Authority: The Evolving Creationism Debate,” analyzes the arguments of the “Creationists” and the responses of scientists to show how both parties have created through their rhetoric a perception that creationism is a scientific theory akin to the theory of organic evolution.

Perhaps the scholar most involved in rhetorical studies of the relationship between evolution and religion is John A. Campbell. His work is based in Darwin’s *Origin* and its “constitutive emergence and intervention in a specific historical/cultural/textual milieu” (Gaonkar 50). Part of this “milieu” is the interaction of evolution with religion. Like Weaver, Taylor, and Lessl, Campbell is primarily concerned with the discourse generated between evolutionists, creationists, and ID theorists. But Campbell recognizes that creationism and ID theory, which are mostly promoted by the religious right, were not part of the “rhetorical legacy” or rhetorical situation that Darwin’s theory of evolution emerged from. In fact, in “Darwin and *The Origin of Species*: The Rhetorical Ancestry of an Idea,” Campbell argues that the religious right (and their “pseudo-scientific theories”) played no major part in creating a rhetorical legacy for Darwin, but rather it was the moderate religionists whose very position depended upon agreement with science that Darwin addressed with the “pious” and “theological citations” that are included in the *Origin* (12). So Campbell suggests that the rhetorical devices utilized by Darwin were aimed at moderate religionists, but neither Campbell, nor any other rhetorician has analyzed thoroughly the reaction to evolution of any particular religionists through the

lenses of rhetoric. As a result, most rhetorical studies, including Campbell's, focus on religionists' opposition to evolution en masse, without distinguishing much between one group of religionists or another, and these studies have primarily analyzed the opposition to evolutionary theory formed by the religious right (Aldrich 214–215).

The focus of rhetorical studies on the views of the religious right does not do justice to the myriad views extant in the religious world. Speaking of the discourse between religion and evolution, philosopher of religion Warren A. Nord says: "Too often the media version of this conversation reduces it to a polarized battle over evolution between fundamentalists and all the rest of us reasonable folk. But there are at least ten or twenty, not just two, religious positions on evolution" (51). For example, one particular denomination, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the LDS Church), has a vigorous and ongoing evolution/religion discussion among its members. Certainly, the generic terms usually applied to religious peoples could be used to describe certain aspects of the rhetoric used by members of the LDS Church (Mormons) concerning evolution. However, a rhetorical analysis of the rhetoric on evolution in the LDS Church shows a body of discourse that escapes the usual generic terms used to categorize and pigeonhole religious positions in general.¹ The Mormons are ideally suited for a rhetorical analysis because they form a distinct community and they have a distinct body

¹ There have been some relatively recent historical works on the subject of science and Mormonism, though they treat the subject of evolution and Mormonism only briefly in their attempt to cover all of the scientific and modernist challenges facing the Church. See Erich Robert Paul, *Science, Religion, and Mormon Cosmology* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Richard T. Wooten, *Saints and Scientists* (Mesa, AZ: EduTech Corporation, 1992); James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992); Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992); Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Richard Cowan, *The Church in the Twentieth Century: The Impressive Story of the Advancing Kingdom* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985); Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

of official and unofficial rhetoric concerning evolution. Unofficial and official rhetoric within the Mormon community can be identified as such because the LDS Church has a clear centralized line of authority through which instructions and doctrines are received and disseminated among members (see *The Doctrine & Covenants* 107:91, 102:23, 124:126; a more detailed discussion of the organization of the LDS Church takes place in Chapter 2). (Hereafter, *The Doctrine and Covenants* will be *D&C*.)

To many, Mormons may appear to be aligned with the religious right in the controversy between scientists and religionists. Mormons and the religious right do share some common ground. For example, Mormons believe the Bible to be the word of God—including the creation account in Genesis. Mormons also believe in other books of scripture that contain similar versions of the creation story recorded in Genesis.² Furthermore, Mormons often align themselves politically with the religious right, because of their shared stance on abortion and other social issues. Yet, the official stance of the LDS Church differs from the religious right in the evolution debate. Official LDS Church statements maintain a consistently neutral stance towards evolution (see Evenson). This official neutrality has been maintained despite clear differences of opinion about evolution expressed by leaders and academics within the Mormon community (see Stephens). In addition, LDS theology values education, knowledge and learning, and therefore members have great respect for scientific authority. This respect is encouraged by LDS scripture (*D&C* 88:77–79) and is demonstrated in the Church’s sponsorship of science programs (including evolutionary biology) in their educational institutions (see

² There are many references to the creation account in the canon or standard works of the LDS Church (Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, the Bible). The Book of Moses, contained in the Pearl of Great Price, is Joseph Smith’s inspired translation of Genesis, and it contains a creation account similar to the Genesis account in chapters 2–3.

BYU biology courses). LDS Church leaders have taken a stance that allows their followers to remain faithful to their religion and to decide what they will think about evolution for themselves.

The official neutrality of the LDS Church combined with the freedom and encouragement given to members and leaders to educate and think for themselves has created a community where various positions on evolution coexist within the Church. Yet, with the freedom to think, there has also come some debate over the promotion of opinions within the LDS Church. A review of the rhetorical situation of the evolution discourse within the LDS Church reveals the effects of the particular circumstances surrounding this specific intra-faith discourse; furthermore, a rhetorical analysis of a particular LDS evolution discourse demonstrates the nuances within a specific religious discourse that many might otherwise miss in light of the general representation of the evolution discourse as religious right versus science. Hopefully, this analysis will encourage more rhetorical studies of the evolution/religion debates within Mormon and other specific religious communities.

Rhetorical Analysis

In the following chapters, I analyze the “constitutive emergence and intervention in a specific historical/cultural/textual milieu” of specific Mormon discourse related to evolution (Gaonkar 50). This kind of rhetorical analysis assumes that rhetoric “never escapes the influence of culture” and that culture is based on sometimes several histories that are reflected in specific texts (Hart 305). The Mormon text or discourse chosen for this review and analysis is the discourse between two prominent leaders in the LDS Church in 1931, B.H. Roberts and Joseph Fielding Smith. I analyze the discourse of

Roberts and Smith under the assumption that the rhetorical critic must “serve his society and himself by revealing and evaluating the public speaker’s interpretation of the world around him and the peculiar means of expressing that interpretation to his generation” (Nichols 78). My intent is not to evaluate the truth or value of any particular discourse. Rather, I analyze the historical, cultural and textual milieu that surrounds and includes Mormon discourse on evolution—proposing answers for questions such as what factors influenced the discourse of Roberts and Smith? When and where did the discourse take place and what was the background of the discourse? Who participated in the discourse? How was the discourse presented or performed or what means were utilized? Why did the discourse occur and what was the reason for the discourse or the intent of the speakers?³ A brief preview of the rest of my chapters will help illustrate my method and intent. The first chapter examines the rhetorical history of evolution in England and America. The second chapter is a review of the story of the American-born LDS Church and an explanation of several elements of ethos built into the organization of the LDS Church. The final chapter is an analysis of the Roberts/Smith discourse in the LDS Church, and the conclusion reviews the implications of my analysis of evolution discourse in the Mormon community and suggests some implications of my study for the broader field of rhetorical studies.

³ The proposed questions follow somewhat from the questions suggested in Kenneth Burke’s “pentad” (*Grammar* xvii). However, this discussion does not fully subscribe to the Burkean assumption that life is a stage in which performances are inherently rhetorical, because to approach discourse (particularly a Mormon discourse) in this way would separate the speakers too far from their assumptions of truth and reality.

CHAPTER ONE

EVOLUTION RHETORIC IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA

In order to understand the Mormon discourse on evolution, it is helpful to have a basic understanding of the general rhetorical history of evolution. The rhetorical history of evolution in England shows how Darwin borrowed from the religious and scientific rhetoric of his day to mold a persuasive rhetoric for his varied audiences. Religion and science were bound together in Darwin's time for they sought answers to many of the same questions and were often based on similar if not identical assumptions. (e.g., God is the first and final cause.) In large part, because of this close tie between religion and science, Darwin naturally borrowed from the rhetoric of both religious and scientific sources to write the *Origin*. For instance, nineteenth century ideas of natural theology, catastrophism,⁴ and uniformitarianism⁵ all contributed to his rhetoric in the *Origin*. Also, Darwin was forced to overcome some rhetorical hurdles, but his capacity to navigate those hurdles and successfully incorporate the rhetoric of more helpful rhetorical traditions such as catastrophism and uniformitarianism qualify the *Origin* as a masterful rhetorical work. However, in terms of rhetorical success, if such success is measured by persuasion, Darwin's rhetorical feat was certainly not complete in England or America.⁶

⁴ "Catastrophism assumes the principle that conditions on the earth during the past were so different from those existing in the present that no comparison is possible, that earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and the elevation of mountains and floods occurred during the past on a scale many times greater than that of any similar events observable in the modern world, and that geological events in the past were often so violent and catastrophic, that they sometimes destroyed all the species living in particular districts" (Wilson 418).

⁵ "Uniformitarianism assumes the principle that the past history of the earth is uniform with the present in terms of the physical laws governing the natural order, the physical processes occurring both within the earth and on its surface, and the general scale and intensity of these processes. It asserts further that our only means of interpreting the history of the earth is to do so by analogy with events and processes in the present" (Wilson 418).

⁶ And not particularly strong according to traditional views, which see Huxley as the real rhetorical force behind Darwin—not a view Campbell shares.

The response to Darwin's *Origin* in 1859 was quite different in America than it was in England. For years England had been prepared for Darwin's theory because at least a general idea of evolution (or something like it) had "acquired a modicum of respectability" by the time that Darwin's *Origin* was published, though evolution was still attributed to a divine intelligence (Russett 5; see also Bowler 48–50, 178; Pfeifer *Reception* 1). Thus, though Darwin's theory was certainly not embraced by everyone in England, there was a widespread, quick, and sharp reaction to Darwin's theory (Bowler 177). The response in America was neither as "immediate [n]or clear-cut" as in England, in part because of the Civil War and because of other factors such as a general preoccupation with westward expansion (Russett 8).

In America and England, religious and scientific people have been selective in their acceptance of Darwin's theory, and so the responses to the *Origin* have been many and varied. A review of Darwin's rhetorical situation shows that he and his contemporaries were dealing with a much broader spectrum of ideas and beliefs than is portrayed by the media in the current fundamentalist religion versus science debates. Indeed, Darwin's primary audience was not, as some today might incorrectly assume, the religious right or fundamentalists. Fundamentalists, or those who rejected Darwin's evolution based on a strictly literalist interpretation of the Bible (e.g., Samuel Wilberforce or William Jennings Bryan) were only a small and insignificant part of Darwin's audience, and so the subsequent focus of historians and rhetoricians on their responses to evolution is unbalanced, though understandable, because fundamentalists provide the greatest contrast to Darwin's ideas. Yet, a review of evolution's rhetorical history demonstrates that there are many complex responses to evolution within the fields

of science and religion. Thus, there is a need for rhetorical studies of specific responses to evolution rather than just the reductive “media version” focused on in most such studies.

Rhetorical Debts of Darwin

The most fundamental question in the organic evolution debate is the question of origins—i.e., when and how did life begin? This question has been posed at least 2,000 years prior to Darwin’s *Origin*, which was published in 1859, and many times since. Plato, Cicero, the Jew Maimonides, and the Christian Thomas Aquinas⁷ all asked the question “How did life arise?” These men based their conclusions on their observations of the natural world, and they all concluded that there must be a designer involved in the origin of life (Himma; Ruse *Design* 12–16, 19–23). Theories of origin that include an intelligent designer (i.e., for Christians—God), are now referred to as design theories, or intelligent design theories (ID).

Various versions of ID theory were generally acknowledged up through the modern scientific revolution that is considered to have occurred from 1500–1700 (Gillespie “Natural” 1; Bowler 27–28). Yet, developments in the seventeenth century began to cast doubt on the tenets of design theory in the Christian world. According to professor of history John C. Greene, the new physics and cosmology of the seventeenth century combined with the scientific, technological and economic progress of the eighteenth century and gave rise to natural religion, or deism, as a competitor to revealed religion (716; see Ruse *Design* 23–29). For example, Newton’s theories describing the natural world as a law-bound system problematized a belief in miracles that had served as the external evidences of Christianity. Also, the Enlightenment emphasis on knowledge that was based on observation and reason did not go well with the idea of revealed

⁷ Aquinas used the argument from design as one of his proofs for the existence of God (See Hick 1)

religion.⁸ According to Oxford University history of theology scholar Alister E. McGrath, Enlightenment rationalism presumed that “human reason [was] perfectly capable of telling us everything we need[ed] to know about the world, ourselves, and God (if there [was] one)” (143).

Despite the objections of Enlightenment philosophers, design arguments continued to be promoted in religious and scientific settings well into the early nineteenth century, and at least one such argument provided rhetorical resources for Darwin’s *Origin*. For example, William Paley’s *Natural Theology*, published in 1803 (several years after Hume’s criticism of design theory), concludes that God exists and that He played an active role in the creation of the world. In *Natural Theology*, Paley makes the “watchmaker argument,” in which he argues that the complexity and adaptations of organisms could not have resulted from chance any more than a complex machine, like a pocket watch, could have existed without a creator (1). Paley’s argument that observations of organisms were proof of God’s existence and intervention is an example of the basis for what is called natural theology—or a belief in a divine being based on observations in nature. Natural theology flourished during the early to mid-nineteenth century, but in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, intelligent design/natural theology arguments began to give way to increasingly powerful materialistic explanations, the most effective of which was Darwin’s 1859 theory of evolution by natural selection (Himmelfarb 232; see also Gillespie *Problem*). However, natural theology was not diametrically opposed to Darwin’s evolution. Indeed, because natural theology combined science and religion, it actually helped prepare Darwin’s audience for his theory by

⁸ Design theories were also challenged directly by enlightenment philosophers such as David Hume (1711–1776; see Hume’s *Dialogues*).

preparing the minds of Darwin's audience for a kairos or a moment in time in which his theory, or at least parts of it, became scientifically, philosophically, socially, and religiously acceptable (Miller 312).

In some cases, natural theology tied religion and science so closely together that it was difficult to tell the two apart (Bowler 317–322; Campbell “Ancestry” 7). The idea that religion was not the enemy to science, but almost identical to it, has not often been acknowledged in rhetorical studies of evolution. When rhetorical studies have acknowledged this connection, they have done so in a broad, general way. However, as noted before, Paley and other natural theologians were rhetorically important for Darwin and his theory, because they established a rhetoric that Darwin used to frame his argument and construct his ethos. Campbell explains the connection between natural theology and Darwin:

The rhetorical legacy of natural theology to Darwin was perhaps the most vital legacy of all [for Darwin] because it firmly established and legitimized certain theological expectations of science in the larger public. Indeed, natural theologizing was such an accepted convention that it would have been remarkable had *The Origin* been free of it. The polemics surrounding Darwin's book and the decidedly anti-religious turn which the controversy took have obscured a very important rhetorical debt which Darwin owed to Paley and the natural theologians. (“Ancestry” 9)

Evidence of Darwin's rhetorical debt to the scientific/religious natural theology is found in the *Origin*. For example, Darwin used natural theology to bolster his ethos as a believer, citing in various versions of the *Origin* the *Bridgewater Treatise*, Bishop

Butler's *Analogy*, and Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*—all of which promote natural theology. He also used natural theology's concept of an intelligent force in nature to make his materialistic arguments more amenable to his religious audiences.⁹

Furthermore, after Darwin published the *Origin*, an American scientist named Asa Gray wrote a pamphlet in which he called for the reconciliation of natural science (i.e., Darwin's *Origin*) and natural theology, and even though Darwin refused to accept Gray's argument, he published Gray's pamphlet at his own expense in England and had copies sent to several prominent scientists and clerics (Dupree 298–301; Ruse *Design* 147).¹⁰ Darwin's rhetorical use of natural theology showed that he recognized that not all religion and science were as diametrically opposed nor in favor of each other as the current “media version” of the evolution/religion debate might suggest to us now.

Along with a general theory of natural theology, Darwin inherited an important “rhetorical legacy” (Campbell's term) from at least two other systems of ideas that were perhaps more strictly scientific than natural theology at least in name—catastrophism and uniformitarianism. Prior to the publication of Darwin's *Origins*, the “preponderant majority” of scientists and laymen in England had already begun to see the world as evolutionary with a divine being in control (Campbell “Ancestry” 3; see also Whewell 573–77 and Bowler 48–50). This belief in an evolutionary world gained popularity and respectability based on a theory called geological catastrophism that was introduced into

⁹ Darwin makes an obvious attempt to make the vitally important concept of natural selection into an intelligent being—making the controversial concept persuasive to natural theologians who were accustomed to seeing nature as proof of an intelligent being. For example, in *Origins*, Darwin wrote: “It may be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinizing, throughout the world, every variation, even the slightest; rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up all that is good; silently and insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life” (603).

¹⁰ The third and fourth editions of *The Origin* contained a special postscript in the opening pages which specifically recommended Gray's *Atlantic Monthly* articles and the booklet *Natural Selection Not Incompatible with Natural Theology* to the readers.

England during the early nineteenth century (Wilson 418). Catastrophism was an idea derived from the discovery of fossils that had no living counterparts. According to the theory of geological catastrophism, there had been several distinct periods of organic life, and corresponding catastrophes that ended these periods of life (e.g., Noah's flood). With each successive period of destruction and creation, organisms developed from more simple organisms to more complex organisms, and this development or evolution of organisms was attributed to an intelligent being (Bowler 111–117). The rhetoric of geological catastrophism helped prepare people for Darwin's more materialistic theory by introducing the idea that organisms became more complex over long periods of time (Campbell, "Ancestry" 4). Catastrophism successfully prepared the minds of Darwin's audience for his theory because it made the idea of long periods of change from simple organisms to more complex organisms a respectable idea by attributing the changes to an intelligent being.

Catastrophism was challenged by Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, published in 1833. Lyell's *Principles* also served as one of Darwin's rhetorical forerunners even though it was definitely anti-evolutionary (Campbell "Ancestry" 6). In *Principles*, Lyell articulated an argument for a theory called uniformitarianism. Uniformitarianism posited that nature worked according to a strict set of laws, and that it was impossible for a scientist to predict the effect of those laws except by present day examples of their effects. So, according to this theory, the laws which are now observed¹¹ had over a very long time developed the natural world that people observe in the present day (Wilson 420; Bowler 129–134). Lyell's rhetoric helped prepare people for Darwin in two ways. First, Lyell helped prepare Darwin's audience for the concepts of gradual

¹¹ For example, the wearing down and rising up of mountains by erosion and volcanic activity.

change over a long period of time and the definite rule of law in nature. Darwin subsequently applied these concepts to the biological world. Second, Lyell left a “rhetorical legacy to Darwin” in his “manner of making this minuscule and prolonged accumulation convincing” (Campbell, “Ancestry” 6). Lyell used little time and space in his *Principles* to explain the concept of gradual, law-governed change in nature. He used most of *Principles* to illustrate his argument with one example after another to “wear down” the reader to the point where the reader, even the “most skeptical of readers...produce[d] the illusion of having witnessed mountains worn down and continents submerged beneath the sea” (Campbell, “Ancestry” 7). Lyell’s use of many or “heaps” of examples to persuade his audience fits Richard Lanham’s definition of a rhetorical technique called “congeries” (39). Darwin used congeries in his own work, utilizing multiple examples to wear down even the most resistant reader. So even though Darwin opposed Lyell’s argument, he was able to successfully incorporate part of it into his own argument (i.e., gradual change governed by natural laws) and he was able to successfully imitate one of Lyell’s rhetorical figures (i.e., congeries).

Darwin's Rhetorical Hurdles

Not all of Darwin's rhetorical predecessors helped prepare his English audience to accept his evolutionary theory. Among the factors that affected the rhetorical scene for Darwin were two groups on opposite sides of the religious spectrum. Campbell called these two groups the "popular scientific-religious left" and the "fundamentalists" ("Ancestry" 11). One example of the popular scientific-religious left was Robert Chambers. Chambers' *The Origin, Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, was published in 1844 in England and 1845 in New York. In his book, Chambers developed many of the same ideas about organic development that Darwin would later propose, but as Campbell has observed, Chambers' book was a good example of "sense impregnated with nonsense" ("Ancestry" 11; see Bowler 138–139). Chambers would propose a profound idea and then support it with ridiculous examples. For example, in his book, Chambers supported the somewhat outdated, but still plausible explanation of spontaneous generation to explain the origin of life. This claim, by itself, was not a major mistake in Chambers' time, but he cited evidence based on a farmer's superstition that clover "will spring up of itself in unseeded ground" and claimed that this had happened "in an authentic case under my notice" (qtd. in Millhauser 93). Such "incautious" consideration of evidence left the ideas associated with organic evolutionary development with a poor scientific reputation.

Chambers' bungled attempt to articulate a theory of organic evolution left Darwin with significant rhetorical hurdles (Pfeifer 172). Darwin's genius, in contrast with Chambers', lay in his ability to avoid the touchy issues that Chambers tried unsuccessfully to tackle (e.g., the question of human origins), while still achieving his

objective of providing a persuasive argument for his theory of evolution (see Egerton). For example, in the *Origin*, Darwin avoided the inflammatory issue of mankind's origins, sidestepping the "undesirable inflammations" that would have inevitably come about with such an attempt (Campbell "Ancestry" 12). In Campbell's opinion, Darwin's brilliant control of his rhetoric, or his ability to steer it away from unnecessary side-issues and distracting arguments, is as "eloquent [a] testimony to Darwin's rhetorical mastery as the positive skill [Darwin] manifested in his reconciliation of conflicting legacies [i.e., natural science and natural theology]" ("Ancestry" 12; see also Pfeifer "United" 196).

While the religious left or popular science played a negative role in terms of the rhetorical legacy it left for Darwin, the religious right played no major part in creating a rhetorical legacy for Darwin (Bowler 202). According to Campbell, Darwin's "pious citations on the fly leaf of the *Origin* and the theological citations within the work were not directed at the literalists who regarded the reigning religion-science synthesis as far too heavily weighted in favor of science, but at the religious moderates whose very position depended upon agreement with science" ("Ancestry" 12). Not until the moderates in England began to accept some form of Darwinism in the years between about 1870–1880, did the right-wing religionists become and remain the major opponents of evolutionary science (Bowler 322–324). Darwin recognized that he was proposing a theory in the *Origins* that touched on a subject bound up in a wide spectrum of beliefs—political, scientific, and religious—and the reactions to his work have not surprisingly spanned that same wide spectrum.

Darwinism in America

The reaction to Darwin in the United States first took place in academia, but since science and religion were closely related in America (as they were in England), the discussion was not just academic, but also religious in nature (see Pfeifer 181).

Commenting on the reaction to Darwin's theory, historian Peter Bowler said: "From the start, [Darwin's] theory was a religious, philosophical, and ideological battleground, and the scientific debates can be understood only in this context" (177).¹² The initial reception of the *Origin* in America does not fit the mold that many people associate with America's most celebrated evolution debate (i.e., The Scopes Trial). Actually, the initial reception of the *Origin* in America reversed the stereotypical roles of the primary responders to Darwin's theory of evolution. For example, in England, the first major public evolution debate took place between the "champion of the Church of England" (Samuel Wilberforce) and the "bulldog" of Darwin (Thomas Huxley) (*Ruse Wars* 59–60). However, in America, the first public debate took place between two scientists, but the one that defended Darwin was an orthodox religionist, while the opponent was the target of criticism from orthodox religionists – already bucking the usual perception of the ethos of proponents and opponents to the theory of evolution in America.

Asa Gray, a well-respected botanist at Harvard and devout adherent to an orthodox Christian religion, "began the process of reception [of Darwin's *Origin*] in America" (Russett 8; see *Ruse Wars* 94; Pfeifer *Reception* 15–18). Even before the *Origin* was published, Gray maintained a professional correspondence with Darwin in

¹² Although the initial evolution discussion in America contained all of the elements noted by Bowler, the debate in 19th century America was primarily held in academic circles. In the 20th century, as public education grew and evolution began to affect public policy, the American evolution discussion became a public discussion – including more than just American academia (e.g., The Scopes Trial).

which they discussed some of the ideas that Darwin later published in the *Origin*. Gray began the “reception” of the *Origin* in America with a published review of the book. In his review, Gray tried to show how religion and the theory of evolution did not contradict one another. Gray did not argue for or against the veracity of Darwin’s theory; rather, he argued that evolution by natural selection “must be regarded as a legitimate attempt to extend the domain of natural or physical science” (11). Because of Gray’s openness to Darwin’s *Origin* and his status as a well-respected scientist, he almost immediately became the head of pro-Darwinians in America.

After his initial review of Darwin’s *Origin*, Gray published several more articles in an attempt to reconcile natural theology with Darwin’s theory. Even though Darwin disagreed with Gray’s attempts to reconcile natural theology and evolution, he recognized their rhetorical power, and so he published many of Gray’s essays in England to quiet religious opposition there (Pfeifer *Reception* 30–31; Ruse *Wars* 93–95). Gray’s arguments were effective among religious people, in part, because of his already established ethos as an orthodox Christian. Furthermore, Gray supplemented and reinforced his ethos as an orthodox Christian in his essays by occasionally “supplement[ing] [Darwin’s] natural selection with divinely guided variations”—much to Darwin’s chagrin (Ruse *Wars* 95–96). Despite the effectiveness of Gray’s ethos in England, many religious thinkers in America and abroad did not believe that Darwin’s *Origin* and religion could be reconciled (Pfeifer 32).

Opposing Gray, Louis Agassiz, the best known scientist in America and a Harvard colleague of Gray’s, became the leader of anti-Darwinians in America (Russett 9; Ruse 142–143; Pfeifer *Reception* 15). Agassiz was born and raised in Switzerland. He first

came to the United States on a popular series of lectures condemning Chambers' *Vestiges*. Because of his lectures, he was invited to teach at Harvard (Pfeifer *Reception* 7; Ruse *Wars* 90). Just before Darwin's *Origin* was published, Agassiz published the first of a series of ten books that proposed a system directly opposed to Darwin's theory of evolution (Pfeifer "United" 175).

In this series of books and in his many speeches against *Vestiges*, Agassiz developed an ethos of a "great scientist" that opposed evolution. To a large extent, his ethos as a scientist in America was built on his consistent efforts in opposition to evolution beginning with his speeches against Chambers' *Vestiges* and continuing with his lifelong opposition to Darwin's *Origin*. Ironically, although Agassiz became the leader of anti-Darwinians in America, he was by no means an orthodox religionist—in fact, he was an "arch-catastrophist," and orthodox religionists sometimes argued against him (Campbell "Ancestry" 4, 13; Pfeifer *Reception* 9–11).¹³ Yet, even with the opposition he encountered among orthodox religions, Agassiz's ethos as a "great scientist" and his consistent rhetoric in opposition to evolution made him one of the most visible and effective early voices in opposition to Darwin in America (Ruse *Wars* 90–91; see Pfeifer *Reception* 19).

In 1860, the two American scientists, Gray and Agassiz, and several other lesser-known academics and professionals¹⁴ held a series of discussions or debates about Darwin's *Origin* in Boston. These debates were subsequently published throughout the

¹³ Agassiz confirmed the notion of special creation, but argued for the distinct creations of various human races (i.e., Africans, Europeans, Chinese, etc.)—denying the account in Genesis and drawing the ire of several "orthodox denominations" (Pfeifer *Reception* 10).

¹⁴ John Armory Lowell, the Harvard trustee who first brought Agassiz to the United States, and Francis Bowen, a professor of natural religion, moral philosophy, and civil polity joined Agassiz in opposition to Darwin. Gray was joined by Samuel Kneeland, a prominent Boston physician, and Chauncey Wrighter, "then working as a computer for the *Nautical Almanac*." Theophilus Parsons, a Harvard professor of law, acted as a kind of mediator for the debates (Pfeifer *Reception* 26).

U.S. (Pfeifer *Reception* 19–30). According to historian Cynthia Russett, the results of the debates were inconclusive, but the scientific ethos of the more popular Agassiz held sway against the acceptance of Darwin’s theory among American scientists at least initially (9). On the other hand, philosopher Edward Pfeifer, acknowledging that neither side was able to silence the other, asserts that Agassiz and company were so inconsistent in their arguments that they “in all probability...provoked members of the audience [other scientists] into opposition” (19, 30).

Either way, this first series of evolution debates in America demonstrates that religious belief did not determine one’s acceptance or rejection of Darwin’s theory. Indeed, in this case, it was the religionist (Gray) who defended Darwinism, while the unorthodox religionist (Agassiz) rejected it, and in the end it appears that it was not so much the logos¹⁵ employed by either scientist during the debate as it was the ethos possessed or created by Agassiz and perceived by his audience before the debate that carried the most weight in American academia at least for a short time. In other words, the debates themselves did little to change the perceived ethos of the participants. Yet, as noted by Avon Crismore and Rodney Farnsworth, speakers can possess ethos before a speech, but they must reestablish their ethos “during the course of the discourse” (91). It seems that Agassiz came into the debate with Gray with such a powerful ethos that despite his reported blunders in the debates, his ethos persuaded his fellow scientists to still refrain from accepting Darwin’s *Origin* for several years (see Pfeifer *Reception*). However, it may be because of Agassiz’s inconsistent arguments during the debates with Gray that Agassiz failed to reestablish his ethos by his speech and thus the effectiveness of his opposition to Darwin died with him, at least among many American scientists.

¹⁵ I am using logos to mean some type of “proof” used in an argument (Lanham 122).

When Agassiz died in 1873, American scientists were already making contributions to evolutionary science (Russett 10; Ruse *Wars* 99). In fact, even though the reaction in America was somewhat delayed, most prominent American scientists accepted some version of Darwin's theory within twenty years of his 1859 publication of *Origins*, and by 1900 most natural scientists in America had generally accepted Darwin's theory or at least their own version of Darwinism (Pfeifer "United" 194, 203). However, the American version of Darwinism characteristically came with Lamarckian conditions suggesting some direction to evolutionary progress, which were more in line with religious views of directed progress, versus the randomness suggested by Darwin.¹⁶ Intermixing Darwin's views with Lamarck's more directed version of evolution was permissible because of weaknesses in Darwin's theory that were not resolved until mid-twentieth century. With Lamarck's emphasis on direction, Americans could interpret direction in evolution as the hand of divine providence (Pfeifer "United" 198–201).

Although the reaction among academics and the reaction among religions to Darwin's evolution in America were closely intertwined, it is important to specifically review the variety of religious responses in America, because the evolution discourses of the LDS Church that are examined in chapters two and three are closely related to other American responses. Furthermore, although our "attention has been mesmerized by the outburst of fundamentalist opposition to evolutionism in America," a review of the American religionists' responses shows a spectrum of reaction much broader and more diverse than the reaction typically labeled as "fundamentalist" (Bowler 322).

¹⁶ Pfeifer speculates that there were probably more "Neo-Lamarckians" in America than Darwinians by the end of the nineteenth century ("United" 199).

According to Russett, the initial reaction of the American religious thinkers to Darwin's theory was "overwhelmingly hostile" (26). Yet, at first, religionist opposition to Darwin's *Origin* in America was not even "religious." Science was tied closely to religion in America just as it was in England because of the prevalence of natural theology, and so as Pfeifer observes, most religious thinkers believed that the *Origin* would be rejected by religionists and scientists with the same scientific arguments used just a few years earlier against Chambers' *Vestiges*.¹⁷ Thus, the early criticisms of the *Origin* leveled by religious thinkers were scientific in nature, rather than religious or Biblical. The lack of religious or Biblical arguments against evolution was explained by two factors: the existence of God seemed to be more important than the inspiration of the Bible, and Darwin had not yet applied his theory to mankind, and so it was possible that his theory could agree with the idea of humans originating from a single human parent—i.e., Adam (Pfeifer "United" 181). Once again, as in England and in American academia, the initially non-religious rejection of Darwin by religionists demonstrates that the evolution/religion discussion is not as simple as religious dogma versus scientific fact.

However, soon after the *Origin*, Darwin published another book called *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* in which he explicitly denied the possibility of a special creation. In this book, Darwin claimed that man was descended from "a hairy quadruped, of arboreal habits, furnished with a tail and pointed ears" (372). Russett observes that after Darwin published these views on the evolution of man in 1871, Americans hardened their views on both sides of the evolution debate (26).

Yet, still there were more than two sides or views on evolution among American religions, and the variety of views was actually aided by scientific authorities. For

¹⁷ The general response to Chambers' *Vestiges* is discussed in Chapter 1.

example, Pfeifer notes that because of the opposition to certain aspects of evolution (e.g., natural selection) by respected British intellectuals such as Alfred Wallace, Richard Owen, and St. George Mivart, religionists were able to ignore the parts of Darwin that bothered them and yet still accept some of its tenets (“United” 189-192). Religionists in America were persuaded by the ethos of respected British scientists that they could remain true to their respective faiths and accept whatever portions of evolution seemed good to them. For example, after the initial reaction to Darwin, many Americans tried to reconcile their faith with evolution by differentiating between Darwinism and evolution—exempting man from the process of natural selection.¹⁸ Other religionists tried to ignore Darwin, as they believed that Darwinism could be weathered without much change to their theology. A few religionists even experimented with an “evolutionary theology” that was based on the idea that man was progressing through the process of evolution to become like Christ (Russett 29). Still, the opposition to Darwinism did not end, and there were many different shades of acceptance and rejection ranging from the so-called “Christian evolutionists to the fundamentalists who still rejected [evolution] as contrary to the Bible” (Pfeifer 191–192).

¹⁸ This popular view among the Americans generally was referred to as “Christian evolution” (Russett 26; Pfeifer 182).

Conclusions

Despite the initially varied range of responses to Darwin, the work of historians, philosophers, and rhetoricians has focused on the battle between the fundamentalists and the scientists, relegating other responses to the categories of liberal or moderate when there are many specific reactions that do not fit those categories and deserve attention. For example, Darwin's natural or materialistic explanation for evolution scored a hit on natural theology because at that time natural science and natural theology were so close that it was difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between them. The threat to natural theology was real. As philosopher of science Stephen Meyer explained: "If the origin of biological organisms could be explained naturalistically, as Darwin argued, then explanations invoking an intelligent designer were unnecessary and even vacuous" (Meyer 64).¹⁹ Darwin's *Origin* threatened some with the destruction of their science and their religion. This challenge or threat was not for the minority, but rather for the majority as natural science was a popular pastime in the early nineteenth century (see Moore and Campbell, "Ancestry" 3). Who were the natural theologians and what were their specific reactions? What kind of arguments did they make and how?

These questions should be applied to other specific responses. For example, Darwin's *Origin* undermined for some their belief that all species were separately and specially created by a divine being who gave each creation a special purpose. Undermining the concept of special creation also undermined the traditional idea of nature as a "stable framework of rationally contrived structures, a view which had underlain both Christian natural theology and deism" (Greene 716; see also Ruse

¹⁹ For an extensive bibliography on the range of the Darwinian influence see Gail Kennedy, ed. *Evolution and Religion*. (Boston, 1957), 110–114.

Design). What kind of rhetoric did these Christians use to respond? Certainly not all Christian denominations were alike in their responses and there were surely differences within each denomination. While some “liberal theologians” adapted to Darwin’s theory, some “conservative religious thinkers” recognized that Darwin’s evolutionary theory was being used by some as part of the “rationalist campaign” to fight against religion, and so many of them felt that they needed to challenge it (Bowler 323). It is the fight between the “conservative religious thinkers” and rationalist science in England and America that has been most watched, observed, and analyzed (see Ruse *The Evolution Wars: A Guide to the Debates*). However, there were many positions taken by religious people even within denominations, and a correct understanding of the rhetoric that they used to respond to evolution can only be gained by a close look at individuals within their specific religious/intellectual traditions.

CHAPTER TWO

ELEMENTS OF ETHOS IN MORMONISM

The evolution discourse in the American-born LDS Church is an example of one intra-faith discourse in America. This chapter provides a short review of LDS Church history; an analysis of the doctrinal foundations of the LDS Church established by Joseph Smith; and a short analysis of Mormon evolution discourse prior to the Roberts/Smith discourse. A review of LDS Church history shows that Mormon evolution discourse roughly reflects the *chronos*²⁰ and the *kairos*²¹ of other American evolution discourses.²² Also, a review of the doctrinal foundations and practices of the LDS Church reveals ethos as one of the most important and intriguing factors in Mormon evolution discourse. In addition, a review of the LDS Church's doctrinal foundations demonstrates the importance and complexity of ethos within the LDS Church—complexity made apparent by the rhetorical interaction of the Church's hierarchical structure, a belief in continuing revelation, and a belief in canonized scripture.

Ethos

When referring to ethos, I am generally referring to the perceived character or the “perceived trustworthiness” of an individual, an office, or a discipline by a particular audience (Crismore 91; Lanham 71). It is important to understand that “ethos is not a

²⁰ I am using the definition of *chronos* suggested by John E. Smith as “duration, measurable time, the background that *kairos* presupposes” (2).

²¹ John E. Smith also suggests this definition for *kairos*: “a critical occasion for decision or action, an occasion that is objectively presented or divinely ordained” (1–2). Richard Lanham suggests a broader definition of the word as the “time, place, and circumstances of a subject” (94).

²² The *chronos* and *kairos* of the Mormon evolution discourse differ slightly from the larger American discourse because of various factors. For example, Mormons were physically separated by hundreds of miles from American society when Darwin's theory was published, and so it is debatable what influence the reaction of the rest of the U.S. population had on the Mormons way out in the West. However, many Mormons came from the East and from England and other European countries, and the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 lessened the isolation of the Mormon communities in the West.

thing or a quality but an interpretation that is the product of the speaker-audience interaction” (Hauser, G. 93). Ethos can change. For example, when Agassiz spoke out against Darwin’s evolution, at least part of his American audience based their judgment of his opinions based on his ethos as an individual whose religious views were unorthodox (Campbell “Ancestry” 4, 13; Pfeifer *Reception* 9–11). Others in his audience judged Agassiz’s rhetoric based on his ethos as a professor of a prestigious university. Yet another element of Agassiz’s ethos was his association with science as a discipline (Ruse *Wars* 90–91; Pfeifer *Reception* 19). The “perceived trustworthiness” of Agassiz as an individual, his position in a particular office (i.e., his professorship), and his association with the discipline of science were all elements of ethos that influenced the reception of his rhetoric in America. Furthermore, Agassiz’s ethos was built upon his interaction with the American public with numerous speeches that consistently opposed evolution. However, the ethos of Agassiz changed over time and eventually even his son became an evolutionist (Ruse *Wars* 96). Likewise, there are several different elements of ethos in the LDS Church that affect the reception of rhetoric and that can change the ethos of an individual as he interacts with an audience. A recognition of the extant and effects of ethos in the LDS Church does not detract from the spiritual nature of speech in the Church. In other words, approaching Mormon speeches as rhetorical texts does not discount their claims to truth. Rather, recognition of ethos in the LDS Church informs a more nuanced and complete understanding of the complex interaction of rhetors and audiences within the Mormon community.

The LDS Story

As noted in the previous chapter, the reaction to Darwinism in America was primarily confined to academic circles until the early twentieth century when it began to affect public policy. The timeline or chronos of the Mormon responses to Darwinism roughly mirrored America's reaction as a whole although they were slightly delayed because of the particular circumstances of the Church. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) was founded by Joseph Smith on April 6, 1830, in Fayette, New York, and many of the first members of the Church were American citizens—and so it is assumed that they shared many of the same beliefs and practices of their contemporary Americans (e.g., natural theology). The LDS Church membership grew rapidly as extensive missionary work in America and Europe brought in many converts, and the new church members gathered together to build communities and cities under the direction of their leaders. The impulse to gather helped create a distinct community with distinct rhetoric ripe for rhetorical analysis. As the LDS Church grew in membership and political power, it was forced by mobs from one settlement to another, until in 1846 the Church was forced to leave the United States. Subsequent to their expulsion from the United States, the Mormons established many settlements in the valleys of the Rocky Mountains.

The Mormons were in the semi-isolation of their communities in the West when Darwin's *Origin* was published in 1859. Like the rest of America, the LDS Church did not deal with evolution before or immediately after the *Origin* was published. Even when the Mormons were in the main body of the United States (about 1830–1847), they were dealing with issues other than evolution (e.g., rapid growth and increasing persecution).

When the Mormons headed west, they were no less occupied with growth and survival. However, although the LDS Church did not officially respond to evolution until the early twentieth century, the doctrinal foundations of the eventual response and accompanying discourse were being laid during the prophetic career of Joseph Smith (1805–1844). The teachings of Joseph Smith provided the rules of engagement or some standard of decorum for the evolution discourse that later took place in the LDS Church. Richard Lanham describes decorum as the idea that “style should suit subject, audience, speaker and occasion” (45). Joseph Smith’s teachings on revelation and priesthood organization created a pattern that suggests a suitable or appropriate style for discourse within the LDS Church. A basic understanding Smith’s ethos and teachings is necessary for an understanding of the rhetorical situation of Mormon evolution discourse.

The Ethos of Joseph Smith

Although Joseph Smith, the founder of the LDS Church, was murdered in 1844, fifteen years before Darwin’s *Origin* was published in 1859, Smith’s teachings have been used by Mormons to argue for and against evolution.²³ Smith made no direct statements concerning the physical creation of the earth and its inhabitants; however, he laid the doctrinal foundations of Mormonism, and so even his indirect contributions to the Mormon evolution discourse are important, because “all subsequent theological expositions [by Mormons were] based on his writings.” Thus the ethos and decorum of a speaker in Mormon evolution discourse relied heavily on his understanding and use of Smith (Reid 22).²⁴

²³ Specific examples are provided in the next chapter.

²⁴ Several journal articles help to explain the theological background upon which this entire story is based. Chief Among these are Keith E. Norman, "Adam's Navel," *Dialogue* 21.2 (1988): 81–97; Benjamin Urrutia, "The Structure of Genesis, Chapter One," *Dialogue* 8.3 & 4 (1973) : 121–153; Anthony

In order to fully understand the potential effect of Smith's rhetoric on a Mormon audience one must understand his extraordinary ethos in the LDS Church. As the founder or restorer of the LDS Church, Smith is held in great esteem by Mormons. While he lived, he was known as "Prophet Joseph," and today he is referred to as "the Prophet" by official Church publications.²⁵ Smith's ethos is not based solely on the content of his speeches, though certainly his speeches go a long way in establishing his ethos, but on the belief that he is called of God as a prophet. For Mormons, belief in Joseph Smith is not based on his speech or his character alone. There is an aspect of ethos evaluation among Mormons that they claim can inform them of all "truth," including Smith's prophetic calling. This peculiar aspect of Mormon ethos evaluation is called the Spirit or the Holy Ghost. For Mormons, the Spirit can act as an independent verifier of Smith's ethos (Moroni 10:5).²⁶ For example, if one attends an LDS Church meeting, one will often hear members of the LDS Church testify of the prophetic mission and work performed by Smith. Often, the knowledge of Smith's prophetic ethos claimed by Mormons is based on a witness or a confirmation that an individual member receives via the Spirit. This spiritual confirmation of Smith's ethos gives his rhetoric great influence in the LDS Church. Smith's ethos is, in the minds of Mormons, upheld by God. In fact, in the LDS Church, he is second in spiritual standing only to Jesus Christ.²⁷ Because of

Hutchinson, "LDS Approaches to the Holy Bible," *Dialogue* 15.1 (1982): 99–124; James Faulconer, "Hutchinson Challenged," *Dialogue* 16.4 (1983): 4–7; and Anthony Hutchinson, "A Mormon Midrash? LDS Creation Narratives Reconsidered," *Dialogue* 21.4 (1988): 11–74.

²⁵ Although the Mormons believe that they are still led by a prophet today, the official publications of the Church have reserved the title "the Prophet" for Smith (Style Guide 7.11).

²⁶ "Moroni" is the name of the last book in the Book of Mormon.

²⁷ Perhaps, the most telling indication of Smith's ethos among Mormons may be found in a verse of LDS scripture penned, soon after Smith's death, by a friend and apostle, John Taylor: "Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. In the short space of twenty years, he has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God, and has been the means of publishing it on two

Smith's extraordinary ethos among Mormons, his rhetoric, though not directly responding to evolution, had a profound effect on evolution discourse in the LDS Church and so an analysis of the doctrinal foundations he laid is the next item in this chapter.²⁸

Ethos in the LDS Church

One doctrinal foundation laid by Joseph Smith was the principle of modern-day revelation or the communication of God with man. Revelation set Joseph Smith and his followers apart from other restorationist religionists²⁹ in his day, and it still sets the LDS Church and its evolution discourse apart from other religious communities today. As noted by former Chicago University law professor and LDS apostle, Dallin H. Oaks, "revelation is the key to the uniqueness of Joseph Smith's message" (153).³⁰ Smith knew that revelation was essential to his message and mission,³¹ and although Smith made many extraordinary claims during his prophetic career, philosophy of religion scholar David Paulsen argues that of all Smith's claims, "none is more fundamental than his claim to direct revelation from God. This claim challenges every variety of Christian thought and, at the same time, grounds all of Joseph's additional claims" (177).

continents; has sent the fulness 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; gathered many thousands of the Latter-day Saints, founded a great city, and left a fame and name that cannot be slain. He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood...." (*D&C* 135:3).

²⁸ A look at one of the defining debates on science and Mormonism in the next chapter demonstrates the extent of Joseph Smith's influence on Mormon evolution discourse.

²⁹ Restorationist religionists such as Joseph Smith attempted to restore or bring back what they viewed as the pure truths that had been lost to Christianity.

³⁰ Religion and history scholar Jan Shipps argues that without the restoration of revelation through Joseph Smith, "Mormonism would likely be just one more restoration movement that started out, as did the Disciples of Christ, claiming to be the only true Church of Jesus Christ, but all too quickly took its place on the religious landscape as an idiosyncratic Protestant denomination." (303)

³¹ As University of Richmond literature and religion scholar Terryl L. Givens observes, Smith believed that the "cardinal contribution of his calling" was to restore the process of revelation (56–57).

Understanding Mormon faith in revelation is key to understanding their evolution discourse because in the LDS Church revelation trumps all other kinds of knowledge and thus its use affects the ethos of a Mormon speaker. Revelation adds another source of knowledge to Mormon evolution discourse, besides scientific reasoning and traditional scriptural interpretation. Furthermore, revelation expands the rhetorical element of ethos in the LDS Church to include what has been written (traditional or canonical scripture) to what is being written or said at any particular moment by revelation through God's ordained servant(s) and how that speech or writing is being received by an audience in the Church.

While ethos in the LDS Church is tied to revelation, it is also intertwined with canonized scripture and a belief in "living oracles." Mormons accept the Bible to be the word of God (as far as it is translated correctly), as well as the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. Yet, because of Mormon belief in continuing revelation, their canon of scripture or "standard works" is not static. In a document accepted by the LDS Church as a statement of their basic beliefs, called *The Articles of Faith*, Joseph Smith wrote: "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (9). So, if a Mormon cites the standard works to support his position on evolution, his ethos is not necessarily secure in a Mormon audience. Indeed, the LDS Church believes that the revelation of God to "living oracles" can trump the written word of God (i.e., Bible, Book of Mormon, etc.) (Woodruff

“Conference Report” 22–23).³² Thus, ethos in the LDS Church is not static, but is a dynamic element of Mormon rhetoric.

The dynamic nature of ethos in the LDS Church can be demonstrated in the rhetorical practices of a relatively small unit of the Church called a ward. In a ward, a bishop is called or assigned to preside over the members. In turn, the bishop extends callings or assignments to members of the ward to perform various duties within the Church. The callings in a ward change regularly and the ethos of individuals shift with his or her calling and even within a certain calling. For example, a bishop may serve in his calling for three years and during that time period, he has the authority to counsel and teach the members of his ward. The rhetoric he uses to counsel and direct the members of his ward in speeches and one-on-one interviews is considered to be divinely inspired to a degree. However, bishops, as well as any other members of the LDS Church, are fallible human beings and so not all of their rhetoric is accepted as divinely inspired direction or counsel. Mormons believe that the Spirit (discussed previously) can reveal the truth to every individual. Therefore, the ethos attributed to a bishop by his audience is connected to his calling and also to a spiritual witness of his rhetoric.

After three years have passed (this time period may vary), a new bishop may be called, and the previous bishop may be released from his duties as a bishop and called to

³² During a conference of Church members, a Church leader gave a speech on the importance of written scripture (i.e., the Bible and the Book of Mormon). “When he concluded, Brother Joseph turned to Brother Brigham Young and said, ‘Brother Brigham, I want you to take the stand and tell us your views with regard to the living oracles and the written word of God.’ Brother Brigham took the stand, and he took the Bible, and laid it down; he took the Book of Mormon, and laid it down; and he took the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and laid it down before him, and he said: ‘There is the written word of God to us, concerning the work of God from the beginning of the world, almost, to our day. And now,’ said he, ‘when compared with the [living] oracles those books are nothing to me; those books do not convey the word of God direct to us now, as do the words of a Prophet or a man bearing the Holy Priesthood in our day and generation. I would rather have the living oracles than all the writing in the books.’ That was the course he pursued. When he was through, Brother Joseph said to the congregation: ‘Brother Brigham has told you the word of the Lord, and he has told you the truth.’ ”(Woodruff 22–23)

a position where his only responsibility is to teach Sunday school to the adults in the ward. The previous bishop is no longer the counselor and the leader of the ward, because the person called as the new bishop now automatically assumes the roles of ward leader and counselor with his calling. Thus, the calling or office of the new bishop changes his ethos for his audience (i.e., the members of his ward). Some members of the ward may still view the previous bishop as a wise counselor, because of his previous role as their bishop. However, according to official LDS Church doctrine, his ethos or authority to counsel and lead them is tied to his calling as a bishop. Thus, because individuals are regularly called and released from different assignments in the Church, ethos is a dynamic and changing element of their rhetoric.

It is likely that chaos would have reigned in the evolution discourse of the Church if Smith had not established some order to the reception and dissemination of revelation (i.e., decorum for revelation). Smith did establish this order through the organization of priesthood for the Church. Through this priesthood, Smith established an order or organization through which revelation is received and given to the members of the LDS Church. A basic understanding of the priesthood organization of the LDS Church informs an understanding of the nature of Mormon evolution discourse because the priesthood organization supplies an assigned hierarchical ethos or role for individuals and groups within the Church.³³

³³ For instance, when a person of higher priesthood authority speaks in the LDS Church, an LDS audience is probably likely to perceive his ethos as greater than the ethos of a person of lower priesthood authority. Although this is not doctrinally sound, it is often the cultural norm. Doctrinally, the office does determine who the holder has a right to speak for as a representative of God. However, all members have the same right to revelation (including women) and all priesthood holders have the same priesthood, but they have different keys and different stewardships.

The priesthood organization of the LDS Church establishes a strict hierarchy that determines the order and authority of individuals and groups. An individual's place in the priesthood hierarchy assigns more or less authority or consequence to statements made by those individuals or groups within the Church. For instance, the lead governing body of the Church consists of three men, a president and his two counselors (referred to as the First Presidency) (*D&C* 107: 22, 91). The president of the church is the only individual who has the power to speak for the Church as a whole (*D&C* 28:2, 3). The First Presidency is charged with receiving "revelations of the mind and will of God to the Church" (Smith *HC* 2:477). Therefore, statements made by the president or the First Presidency of the Church are given greater importance or authority than statements made by other individuals or groups within the Church.³⁴ The First Presidency is followed by a body of twelve men (referred to as the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles or the Twelve Apostles) that is equal in authority to the First Presidency, yet is not charged with receiving revelations or instructions for the entire Church except as directed by the First Presidency (*D&C* 107:23, 24). The Seventy is the next priesthood quorum established to lead the Church, and they operate under the direction of the Quorum of the Twelve, having equal authority as a quorum with the Twelve (*D&C* 107: 25). LDS scripture explains the order of the authority in the Church from the First Presidency to the newly

³⁴ The official position of the Church is that all divinely inspired words of a Prophet or an Apostle are scripture, but such statements only gain official status when they are given as such by the First Presidency or presented before the Church for common consent. See "The Living Prophet and Scripture," in *Teachings of the Living Prophets* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 17–22; John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Inc., 1960), 236–239; Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), 162–163; Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 187; and Steven Edward Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 13–19.

baptized convert, but it is not necessary to review the complete organization.³⁵ It is important to note that no one in the Church can legitimately receive revelation for someone who, according to the revealed order of the Church, possesses greater or higher authority (Smith *HC* 1:338).

Thus, ethos in the LDS Church is a mix between the Platonic and Aristotelian models. James S. Baumlin describes the two models of ethos: Plato's ethos, which is "translated as 'character'... would seem to describe a singular, stable, central self and Aristotle's, which is translated as 'custom' or 'habit,'... would describe a 'social' self, a set of verbal habits or behaviors, a playing out of customary roles" (xviii). Mormons do subscribe to the idea of singular stable individuals who act according to their own knowledge and conscience (see *D&C* 93:30). However, the priesthood organization of the Church establishes "customary roles" for each individual member that are recognized by the Church as a whole. So, the leaders of the LDS Church must act in their roles as voices for the Church sometimes (Aristotelian ethos), and yet they are still private individuals who possess and express private interpretations and opinions at other times (Platonic ethos). An understanding of the interaction between these Platonic and Aristotelian models of ethos is central to understanding Mormon discourse on evolution because reconciliation of the LDS belief in the stable individual and the assumed role provided by priesthood organization requires both speakers and audiences to recognize or discern which model is assumed by a rhetor in the opportune moment (or *kairos*). In

³⁵ It is important to note that though only men hold the priesthood in the LDS Church, women also hold non-priesthood positions of leadership and regularly contribute to Mormon discourse. So what factors affect the ethos of a female rhetor in the LDS Church? The answer to this question could be the subject of a separate rhetorical analysis, but some factors may include the female rhetor's position of leadership within the Church, the Spirit, the style of her speech, as well as the other factors described in this study such as her use of canonized scripture and the words of living oracles.

summary, the ethos of a Mormon rhetor in any kind of intra-Mormon discourse depends on an audience's perception of the concordance between written or canonized revelation, the words of living oracles, and priesthood position.

Mormon Evolution Discourse before Roberts and Smith

After Smith's death in 1844, Brigham Young became president of the LDS Church. Young subscribed to Smith's belief in free thinking, and his comments concerning the origin of man were wide ranging and often speculative, but they were not conclusive. The isolation of the LDS Church in the West kept the theory of Darwin at a distance for a little while. It was not until 1861, two years after the *Origin* was published, that a Mormon leader, Elder George Q. Cannon (member of the Quorum of the Twelve) responded specifically to Darwin's theory. Cannon's response asserted the superiority of revelation to science, but submitted that the evolution of lower animals and plant life (i.e., non-humans) might have occurred (651). Cannon's response was not official Church doctrine, but it demonstrated the openness of Mormon's to consider different views or interpretations of the scriptural creation account. Because there was no official interpretation given by the Church, Mormons felt free to inquire into various interpretations.

As the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, Mormons had increasing contact with the outside world, and they took some measures to maintain their unique ways of thinking and believing. For example, they constructed schools to educate their children in a way that would promote faith and counter the perceived problems of secular learning. They also established publications to assure a unity of doctrine (Reid 85–86). Yet, even with these attempts to unify the beliefs of the Church, the Mormons' views on

evolution varied widely. There were some who thought that a belief in evolution led to atheism and so they argued against it, using scientific and religious authority to do so. Others believed that scientific truths and religious truths should always be in harmony, and they strove to show how evolution was possible. By 1909 (the fiftieth publishing anniversary of the *Origin*), enough controversy had been stirred up by the theory of evolution within the LDS Church that the First Presidency of the Church decided to publish an official statement on the subject.

The official statement was prepared by a committee of church leaders, and it was published under the signatures of the First Presidency³⁶ in November of 1909 (Evenson 13). This official statement from the Church affirmed the creation account as recorded by Moses, and affirmed the ideal of harmonized truth coming from both religious and secular sources. In the end, though, the statement said that until the Lord revealed it, the origin of Adam's race is hidden (See "First Presidency Statement" in Evenson 13–25). The 1909 statement officially established the Church's position on evolution as neutral. Yet, some Mormons read into the statement their own views, insisting that it refuted or supported evolution. Continued discussions on the issue made it clear that the Church remained neutral. For example, the First Presidency, consisting of President Heber J. Grant, Anthony W. Ivins, and Charles W. Nibley, published an official statement in 1925 in response to the interest in the evolution/religion issue prompted by the Scopes Trial. The 1925 statement essentially repeated in a shorter statement many of the principles contained in the 1909 statement (see Evenson 29–33).

³⁶ The First Presidency in 1909 consisted of President Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, and John R. Winder.

The Church's neutrality allowed individuals in the Church to think what they would concerning the theory of evolution. The result of this freedom was a variety of opinions in the Church. Regular members and leaders would express their opinions in Church meetings and seek to support their positions by appeals to science, scripture, and modern revelation. In some cases, individual members sought to find and establish some sort of definitive truth concerning Darwin's theory. The disagreements between Church leaders were not bitter or acrimonious, though they were earnest.

The discussion that prompted the official LDS Church statement of 1909 continued until the official statement of 1925, and the discussion that prompted the 1925 statement continued among leaders and laymen alike in the Church. In 1931, two prominent leaders in the Church, B. H. Roberts, and Joseph Fielding Smith, made separate presentations before the top two leading quorums of the Church. In their speeches, Roberts and Smith presented opposing views on evolution. It is this discourse between Roberts and Smith that provides a text for rhetorical analysis in the next chapter. The evolution discourse of Roberts and Smith in the American-born LDS Church demonstrates one intra-faith discourse in America. The doctrinal foundations of the LDS Church make ethos one of the most important and intriguing elements in this particular Mormon evolution/religion rhetoric. The importance and complexity of ethos within the LDS Church is due to the rhetorical interaction of the Church's hierarchical structure, a belief in continuing revelation, and a belief in canonized scripture. Chapter three contains a rhetorical analysis of a specific Mormon evolution discourse between Roberts and Smith that demonstrates and analyzes the rhetorical interaction of these three elements of ethos in the LDS Church.

CHAPTER THREE

ETHOS IN THE EVOLUTION DISCOURSE OF

B.H. ROBERTS AND JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

In chapter one, the rhetorical history of evolution has been analyzed to demonstrate that there have been various reactions to Darwin's *Origin*. In this chapter, a specific event of evolution discourse is examined in the LDS Church. In 1931, two members of the LDS Church, B.H. Roberts and Joseph Fielding Smith, presented opposing arguments about the relationship between evolutionary theory and LDS doctrine before the Church's top two governing bodies.³⁷ Roberts and Smith were prominent and faithful leaders in the LDS Church, both were well versed in LDS Church doctrine, and both served as historian for the Church for a number of years, yet their opinions varied widely on evolution. My rhetorical analysis of the evolution discourse of Roberts and Smith follows the interplay of three elements of ethos in the LDS Church that were discussed in the Chapter 2: i.e., hierarchical structure, a belief in continuing revelation, and a belief in canonized scripture. This analysis leads to answers to questions posed in Chapter 1: What factors influenced the discourse of Roberts and Smith? When and where did the discourse take place and what was the background of the discourse? Who participated in the discourse? How was the discourse presented or performed or what means were utilized? Why did the discourse occur and what was the reason for the discourse or the intent of the speakers? This analysis is framed in terms common to

³⁷ The story of this debate appears in Gary Hatch, "The Truth, The Way, The Life: The Capstone to B. H. Roberts's Doctrinal Works," *Brigham Young Magazine* (November 1994): 22–29; and James B. Allen, "The Story of the Truth, The Way, The Life," in Roberts, *TWL*, clix–cxcviii. Older accounts are found in Richard Sherlock, "We Can See No Advantage to a Continuation of the Discussion: The Roberts-Smith-Talmage Affair," *Dialogue* 13, no. 3 (1980): 63–78; and Jeffrey E. Keller, "Discussion Continued: The Sequel to the Roberts-Smith-Talmage Affair," *Dialogue* 15, no. 1 (1982): 79–98.

rhetorical analyses, i.e., a rhetorical situation (exigence, constraints, audience, and context). After analyzing each element of the rhetorical situation, I analyze the specific rhetoric of Roberts and Smith.

Rhetorical Situation

For the idea of a “rhetorical situation,” I am using the definition offered by Lloyd Bitzer: “a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence” (6). A review of the rhetorical situation informs an understanding of the relative relationship of the most important elements of the specific discourse that will be analyzed. First, short biographies of the principal rhetors in the Roberts/Smith discourse help readers understand the educational and religious backgrounds of the rhetors. Second, an analysis of the events leading up to their discourse reveals the exigence or the problem that called for or prompted the discourse. Third, an examination of the kairos or the opportune moment of speech together with the constraints that were encountered by the rhetors reveals somewhat of the character of the audience and the purpose of the discourse. Fourth, a general overview of the audience helps explain the approach and style or the decorum of the presentations given by Smith and Roberts. Finally, a direct analysis of the rhetoric used by Smith and Roberts demonstrates the interaction of the three elements of LDS ethos discussed in Chapter 2.

Rhetors

There are two rhetors in this rhetorical situation, Brigham Henry Roberts (commonly known as B. H. Roberts) and Joseph Fielding Smith. B. H. Roberts is widely regarded as one of the foremost LDS Church historians and theologians (Madsen ix–xi). A convert to the Church, he emigrated from Great Britain to Utah in 1866 (Roberts, *Autobiography* 3). He began attending the University of Deseret in 1877, which was then a normal school and the precursor of the University of Utah. Roberts finished the two-year course in one year and graduated at the top of his class in 1878 (Roberts *Autobiography* 69). Not long after his graduation, Roberts was ordained a Seventy or a minister in the third-highest quorum of the LDS Church. He also served as a church historian from 1901–1930 (Roberts *Autobiography* 72). Roberts was a voracious reader, focusing much of his study time on philosophy, religion, and science, and he was also a prolific writer, producing many essays, sermons and books throughout his life of service to the LDS Church (Madsen x).³⁸ At the time of the discourse analyzed in this chapter, Roberts was the Senior President of the Quorum of the Seventy (Evenson 51).

Robert's counterpart in this particular evolution discourse, Joseph Fielding Smith, was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, on July 19, 1876. He was the son of Joseph F. Smith, the sixth President of the LDS Church, and the grandson of Joseph Smith's brother Hyrum Smith (Gibbons 1). Joseph Fielding Smith did not receive much formal education, but he was a dedicated student of the scriptures, and he did receive some junior college level instruction (McConkie 11, 18). Smith was a prolific writer, author of many articles

³⁸ In the most comprehensive biography of Roberts, Truman G. Madsen describes him as a man of “multiple careers. He was a child stone sawyer, a boy plainsman, a silver mucker, a schoolteacher, a missionary, a scholar-journalist, an editor, a playwright, an orator, a defense attorney, a theologian, an essayist, a pamphleteer, a congressman, a historian, a soldier-chaplain, a husband, a father, a member of the third highest quorum of his church, a Seventy” (ix).

and books, and like his father and grandfather, Smith spent most of his life in service to the LDS Church. He served several missions, and received many other church callings and assignments such as church historian, apostle, and eventually President of the Church³⁹ (Gibbons 4). At the time of the discourse analyzed in this chapter, Smith was a junior member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (Evenson 51).

Exigence⁴⁰

In 1927 Roberts began work on a book that he considered his most important contribution to the Church, *The Truth, The Way, The Life (TWL)*. This work was to be Robert's magnum opus, the result of a lifetime of study in the scriptures, history, philosophy, and science (Madsen 338). Roberts's intent in writing the *TWL* was to bring all truth or knowledge together into one "orderly system" (Allen 705; see Madsen 345).⁴¹ In September of 1928, Roberts learned that the Church was still looking for a suitable priesthood study manual for the next year, and he proposed that his manuscript be considered for this purpose (Allen 709). Subsequently, a committee from the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was appointed to review Roberts's manuscript as a potential study manual.⁴² The committee, chaired by George Albert Smith, thoroughly reviewed the manuscript and created a list of thirty-seven problematic points of doctrine contained in

³⁹ Even though Smith did not receive much in the way of advanced formal education, he was great supporter of the Church's system of higher education. Smith was "unabashed in his boosterism for BYU" and did much to expand and fund it—including among other things a new science center (Gibbons 178–179).

⁴⁰ Exigence is an element of the rhetorical situation described by Gerard A. Hauser as "problems that can be resolved meaningfully through the uses of speech and writing" (34).

⁴¹ Roberts's efforts may have been inspired by several verses of LDS scripture. "He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things." (*D&C* 93:8). "All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence" (*D&C* 93:30). "And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (88: 118).

⁴² The committee members were George Albert Smith, Joseph Fielding Smith, David O. McKay, Steven L. Richards, and Melvin J. Ballard.

the *TWL*. Among the questionable doctrines listed by the committee were many minor issues that could easily be changed or reconciled by Roberts (Allen 715). Yet Roberts did not agree with most of the objections on the committee's list. The most problematic part of Robert's *TWL* manuscript was the chapter on Pre-Adamites.⁴³ The committee commended the work as a whole, but they wanted the pre-Adamite chapter to be deleted from the manuscript before publication (Reid 213). The entire Council or Quorum of the Twelve reviewed the committee's report and then submitted their own report containing almost identical conclusions to the First Presidency (Sherlock "Affair"). Individual members of the Quorum of the Twelve tried to persuade Roberts to make the requested changes, but Roberts believed that the chapter on Pre-Adamites was a necessary part of the *TWL*. He maintained that the *TWL* must be published in its entirety or not at all (Madsen 344). It is interesting to note here that although Roberts was a faithful member of the Church, he was not willing in this case to submit fully to the authority of his priesthood leaders. He felt that he had discovered a way to reconcile scientific and religious truth, and while the ethos of the Quorum of the Twelve was clearly important to him, he was adamant about this particular issue with the *TWL*.

At about the same time that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was submitting its report to the First Presidency, Joseph Fielding Smith, who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and a member of the *TWL* reading committee, decided that it was time to speak out on some of the issues brought up in the controversial portions of the *TWL*. This was a period in the Church of heightened debate over the theory of evolution, in part because the Scopes Trial had highlighted extreme positions on

⁴³ The idea of pre-Adamites was not new. For example, in Europe, in 1655, Isaac La Peyrere published a book supporting this idea (See Popkin).

both sides of the issue just five years earlier.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Roberts had taken the liberty to spread his views on pre-Adamites in a series of speeches to LDS audiences while his *TWL* manuscript was still under review. Smith thought that he needed to speak out to protect what he believed were the sacred truths revealed to ancient and modern prophets against the modernist ideas embodied in evolutionary theory (Allen 715). Both Roberts and Smith were making their arguments public—taking them outside the hierarchical structure of authority in the Church. Smith attacked Roberts’s position on pre-Adamites in an address given to the April 1930 genealogical conference in Utah. In his speech, Smith voiced his opposition to pre-Adamite doctrine.

Even in the Church there are a scattered few who are now advocating and contending that the earth was peopled with a race—perhaps many races—long before the days of Adam. These men desire, of course, to square the teachings in the Bible with the teachings of modern science and philosophy with regard to the age of the earth and life on it. If you hear anyone talking this way you may answer them by saying that the doctrine of pre-Adamites is not a doctrine of the Church and is not advocated or countenanced in the Church. There is no warrant for it in scripture, not an authentic word to sustain it. (147)

Using the phrase “even in the Church,” Smith emphasizes the breadth and reach of the modernist idea of pre-Adamites, and then labeling the proponents of this false doctrine as “a scattered few,” Smith characterizes the proponents of pre-Adamite theory as a fringe group in the Church. Smith also characterizes the “desire” of these proponents as an

⁴⁴ During the Scopes Trial, the First Presidency had issued a formal statement reiterating the official neutrality of the Church (Evenson 31–33).

attempt to “square the teachings in the Bible with the teachings of modern science and philosophy,” a characterization that suggests a bow to the ways of the world, rather than faithful adherence to revealed truth. Finally, Smith tells his audience that if they hear “anyone” advocating the doctrine of pre-Adamites that they should refute them by telling them that such a doctrine is neither advocated nor “countenanced” in the Church—suggesting that if even leaders of the Church (possibly a senior president of the Seventy) were to speak of such a doctrine, any member of the Church could refute him now with the permission of an apostle of the Church. Smith is suggesting that pre-Adamite doctrine is as bad as a sin, something that ought not to even be looked upon or “countenanced” by members of the Church.

In addition to condemning pre-Adamite doctrine, Smith also used his speech to condemn evolutionary theory. Roberts had not promoted evolutionary theory specifically in the *TWL* nor in his speeches, and Smith did not name Roberts in his speech, but it was clear that Smith was responding to what he believed were implications of the views expressed by Roberts in the *TWL*. Smith was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and so his words carried a great deal of authority and persuasive force among the Mormon people, but Smith did not indicate whether his words were based on his personal opinions and convictions or whether they were based on revelation and divine authority. Furthermore, Smith’s speech was not limited to the audience at the conference, because he allowed it to be published in the *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, which was an official publication of the Church. The audiences of Smith and Roberts, as members of the Church, knew them as leaders in the Church before they gave their speeches, but because Smith and Roberts espoused different positions in their rhetoric,

there was some question among their audiences as to which one, if either one, was acting as a leader or simply expressing his personal opinions. The speeches of Smith and Roberts advocating opposing sides to the evolution/pre-Adamite issue created some confusion in the Church, because neither of these rhetors explicitly defined in their speeches their ethos nor stated whether or not they were speaking as individuals or representatives of the Church. Furthermore, their differences made it difficult if not impossible for their audiences to definitively perceive their ethos.

Nonetheless, when Roberts learned of Smith's speech, he was not happy with Smith's condemnation of his ideas. Roberts wanted to know what ethos Smith was assuming when he condemned Roberts's ideas. Roberts wrote a letter to Heber J. Grant (President of the LDS Church). In his letter, Roberts questioned the purpose and authority of Smith's speech.

I am writing you to ask if ... [Smith's speech] is a treatise on that subject that was submitted to and approved by the Council of the First Presidency and perhaps the Quorum of the Twelve? And is it put forth as the official declaration of the Church on the subject treated? Or is it the unofficial and personal declaration of the opinion only of Elder Smith?

In the latter event then I feel that that fact should have been expressed in the discourse; or if it is an official pronouncement of the Church then that fact should have been avowed; for the strictly dogmatical and the pronounced finality demand the suggested explanation in either case.

If the discourse of Elder Smith is merely his personal opinion, while not questioning his right to such opinions, and also the right to express them, when avowed as his personal opinions, yet I object to the dogmatic and finality spirit of the pronouncement and the apparent official announcement of them, as if speaking with final authority. (Evenson 55–56)

Clearly, the issue for Roberts was one of ethos. He wanted to know whether Smith's ideas had been "approved" by the highest authorities of the Church or whether Smith was only speaking of his own accord. In Roberts's mind, Smith had clearly spoken in a manner that implied to his audience the ethos of a representative of the Church, for Roberts described his speech as "strictly dogmatical" and possessing of a "pronounced finality" that suggested "final authority." Roberts was, as a member of the Church, part of the audience for Smith's speech and he was trying to figure out the ethos of Smith in this case. Because Roberts did not agree with Smith, he wanted clarification from a higher authority on the rhetorical status of Smith's ethos in this speech.

Yet, it is clear from the rest of Roberts's letter that regardless of Smith's official ethos derived from his position in the Church, Roberts does not agree with his rhetoric, because that rhetoric does not agree with at least a couple of other elements of ethos in the Church.

If Elder Smith is merely putting forth his own opinions I call in question his competency to utter such dogmatism either as a scholar or as an Apostle. I am sure he is not competent to speak in such manner from general learning or special research work on the subject; nor as an

Apostle, as in that case he would be in conflict with the plain implication at least of the scriptures, both ancient and modern, and with the teaching of a more experienced and learned and earlier Apostle than himself, and a contemporary of the Prophet Joseph Smith. (Evenson 56)

In these two sentences, Roberts calls into question the “dogmatism” (implying a lack of thoughtfulness) of Smith by questioning his ethos as either a scholar or an Apostle. In the first case, Roberts claims that Smith lacks the ethos of a scholar, because he is lacking in any particular learning or “special research on the subject.” In the second case, Roberts says that Smith lacks the ethos of an Apostle on the subject of pre-Adamites, because he is not in accordance with two elements of Mormon ethos, the “plain” or obvious implications of canonized scripture and what Roberts interprets to be the inspired words of a previous Church leader.⁴⁵

Roberts concludes his letter by suggesting that the LDS Church’s stance on the evolution/pre-Adamite issue affected, “finally, the faith and status of a very large portion of the Priesthood and educated membership of the Church, I am sure; and I trust the matter will receive early consideration.” The exigence of this rhetorical situation was clear in Roberts’s mind: the ethos Smith assumed in his condemnation of pre-Adamite/evolution theories needed to be clarified by a higher authority, because the faith of a large portion of the LDS Church was at stake. Without recognizing it, Roberts was identifying the same exigence that existed for himself and his speeches on pre-Adamites. The general membership of the LDS Church, as the audience for the speeches of Smith and Roberts, needed to know exactly what ethos these two men assumed when they

⁴⁵ This leader was Orson Hyde – his comments will be discussed latter on in this chapter in Roberts’s presentation before the Quorum of the Twelve.

spoke on topics related to evolution. President Grant recognized the exigence described by Roberts, and so he referred Roberts's letter to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles with "the request that the matter be taken up, and the difference of opinion which existed between the two brethren be composed" (Evenson 57). In addition to the exigence identified by Roberts, the Twelve probably recognized at least one more exigence—a need to maintain the peace and unity of the respective quorums that Roberts and Smith served in, rather than allow an open-ended public debate to continue that could undermine confidence in the Church, as leaders debated this issue (Evenson 57).

Kairos and Constraints⁴⁶

The time was ripe for speech (kairos), and recognizing this, the First Presidency brought Roberts and Smith together so that their differences could be settled in relative privacy before the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The Quorum of the Twelve created constraints for the ensuing discourse between Roberts and Smith that reflected their desire to maintain or restore unity and peace within the Church's leadership. For example, they decided to hear Roberts and Smith in two separate hearings, two weeks apart, reducing the likelihood of a back and forth debate between the two men.

Roberts gave his presentation first on January 7, 1931. He read a chapter of the second draft of the *TWL*, and added a short section to his presentation that dealt specifically with evolution in order to answer a few of the arguments put forward by Smith in his Genealogical Society speech. In all, Robert's presentation consisted of fifty type-written pages. The fact that Roberts simply used the manuscript of the *TWL* suggested the high confidence that he had in his position—the section that he added to

⁴⁶ Hauser also provides my definition for constraints: "the limitations and the opportunities present in a situation that bear on what may or may not be said to the audience about the imperfection [exigence] they are being asked to address" (38).

answer Smith's arguments was short and almost seemed like an afterthought. Two weeks after Roberts's presentation, Smith made his case before the Quorum of the Twelve on January 21, 1931 (Evenson 52). Smith's presentation consisted of fifty-eight type-written pages. Smith composed his presentation specifically as a rebuttal to Roberts's arguments, suggesting more of a defensive position for him than for Roberts. There was not much discussion during the presentations; the presenters read their papers, and the Quorum of the Twelve listened to their arguments (Allen 721). The two-week separation of the two presentations allowed time for all of the participants, audience and rhetors alike, to consider each position carefully and thoughtfully.

Audience

Bitzer provides the definition that I will use for the term "audience": "a rhetorical audience consists only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change" (8). The audience for the Roberts/Smith discourse was first, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and later the First Presidency. As explained in Chapter 2, the First Presidency is the highest governing body of the Church, and they are charged with receiving "revelations of the mind and will of God to the Church" (Smith *HC* 2:477). The First Presidency is followed by a body of twelve men (referred to as the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles or the Twelve Apostles) that is equal in authority to the First Presidency, yet is not charged with receiving revelations or instructions for the entire Church except as directed by the First Presidency (*D&C* 107:23, 24). In this case, the Quorum of the Twelve was instructed by the First Presidency to "compose" the matters between Roberts and Smith, and so the Twelve as well as the First Presidency did have the power to be "mediators of change" (Evenson 57). A biography of each of the

men in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the First Presidency is not necessarily relevant to this rhetorical analysis, because in the Smith/Roberts rhetorical situation, these men were acting in their official roles as leaders in the LDS Church. However, it is important to note that these men were lay leaders—meaning that they had careers that could affect their views about the presentations of Roberts and Smith.

Roberts’s Rhetoric

In the presentation that he read to the Quorum of the Twelve, Roberts argued that the Bible accounts for a relatively recent time period, and that the LDS Church ought to accept as a fact (supported by science) the existence of pre-Adamites. In a broader sense, Roberts argued that the Church ought to officially recognize the facts of science as equal with the facts of scripture, and he believed that he had an explanation that would make this equality possible through a reconciliation of these two fonts of knowledge (188, 217, 218).⁴⁷ In his presentation, Roberts does not claim that Darwin’s theory of evolution is the answer to the questions surrounding the origin of man, stating that the Church should be “leaving the disposal of the beginning and the end of pre-Adamic races to still further revealed knowledge from God, or to future knowledge ascertained by the researches of man” (198).⁴⁸ Yet, Robert’s argument did imply a belief in at least some form of organic evolution.

In his presentation, Roberts relies primarily on appeals to authority to establish his central claim. He explains that, “we can not here go into extensive treatment of the subject outlined, the volume of evidence, and the extent of the argument are too great for

⁴⁷ Robert’s earlier writings on the Book of Mormon revealed his belief that both science and revelation reveal the mind of God. See B. H. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brigham D. Madsen (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992).

⁴⁸ Ironically, Roberts was an acquaintance and friend of William Jennings Bryan, who was a major anti-evolution figure in the Scopes Monkey Trial (Madsen 241).

that in these chapters; but it is possible to give citations and conclusions of those who have treated the subject at length” (202). His primary reliance on authority or the ethos of scientists, rather than on specific scientific data or logos is appropriate given that only a fourth of his audience has scientific training—a technical scientific discussion of particular scientific evidences would probably have been out of place for a mostly non-scientific audience.⁴⁹

Also, Roberts’s audience is acting in its role as a religious body in pursuit of the truth and so the source of any truth is an important factor for them. As explained in Chapter 2, LDS doctrine includes a belief in revelation, and revelation is channeled or received through the Priesthood organization of the LDS Church for the members. This LDS doctrine does not preclude scientific reasoning and scientific truth, but it does emphasize an examination of the source of any purported truth—religious or scientific and it sets a hierarchy for the reception of such truth. Furthermore, in this rhetorical situation, the audience has been directed to address a particular exigence—determining by what authority or by what assumed ethos Roberts (and later Smith) is speaking by when they argue for or against pre-Adamites/evolution. So, the primary concern for Roberts’s audience is his ethos, and his ethos is constructed in part by the ethos of those persons he cites as evidence for his argument.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Three members of the Quorum of the Twelve had college-level education in the sciences: James E. Talmage (chemistry and geology), John A. Widstoe (biology and agriculture), and Richard R. Lyman (engineering).

⁵⁰ In the short add-on or section (246–255) Roberts abandons his authority appeals and tries to suggest with logic that his views are most reasonable: First, he answers Smith’s claim that Adam was the first man upon the earth by reasoning that Adam was the first man of his dispensation only (248). Roberts says that the scriptural account can be explained if Adam was merely the first man of his dispensation—there were others before, but Adam began our history (248). Roberts responds to the claim that there was no death on the earth before Adam by arguing that as he understands it, death is not a curse and so the Lord could still call the earth good after the creation of Adam even though death had already reigned there for a time (254–255). Roberts cites no authorities here, instead using logic to show that his position is plausible—that there

Thus, it is significant that Roberts only spends a brief time (about seven pages) in his presentation reviewing specific scientific discoveries that support the idea of pre-Adamites (191–98). In this short section, Roberts briefly touches on the record found in the rocks of the earth that support the notion of pre-Adamites. For example, after briefly introducing the idea that the “rock record” shows a succession of organisms on the earth over many thousands of years, Roberts says: “Running parallel with this line of evidence and confirming it is the evidence that comes from the discovery of human remains in various old earth strata which represent geological formations of hundreds of thousands of years ago” (193). Roberts then dedicates one short paragraph to a description of each discovery of ancient human remains, including the Heidelberg Man, the Neanderthal Man, the Piltdown Man,⁵¹ and the Cro-Magnon Man—all of whom lived, according to science, long before the Biblical account begins.

Meanwhile, Roberts dedicates three times the space in his presentation (twenty-one pages) quoting men of science whose illustrious names are probably as important as, if not more important than, what they actually say (202–223). For example, he describes the long opposition of “celebrated and all but father of geology” Sir James Lyell,⁵² who finally “recognized in the discoveries that were being made midway of the nineteenth century that man was not only contemporary with long extinct animals of past geological epochs, but that he had already developed, in those epochs into a stage of culture above

are different ways to interpret scripture (other than the way in Smith has done in his genealogical conference speech). Yet, this switch away from authority appeals seems to be almost an afterthought for Roberts and so suggests that Roberts is not overly concerned with Smith’s arguments, believing that the evidence that he presents in the main body of his text is overwhelmingly persuasive.

⁵¹ Twenty-two years after Roberts’s presentation, it was discovered in 1953 that the Piltdown Man was “the most dramatic and daring fraud ever perpetrated upon the world of science and academia” (Russell 8).

⁵² Lyell, the author of *Principles of Geology* published in 1833, articulated a theory called Uniformitarianism. He was a well-known and respected scientist in England and the United States. His rhetorical contribution to Darwin’s theory is discussed in Chapter 1.

pure savagery” (202). Notice the description that Roberts gives of Lyell’s conversion to the idea of pre-Adamites; Lyell did not rush to this conclusion, but rather he opposed it for a long time, and after some time he “recognized” what was really going on. Lyell did not make something up or theorize based on discoveries that were made, he “recognized” what was—he looked for and found the truth. Roberts is constructing a truth-seeking ethos for his scientific sources, and by doing so is attaching himself to such an ethos. This kind of ethos is important for Roberts’s audience to perceive—a point that will be discussed further later in this chapter.

In addition to citing the truth-seeking Lyell, Roberts also cites the example of Alfred Russel Wallace, “who, though very cautious and conservative, placed the origin of man not only in the Tertiary period; but in an earlier stage of it than most dared assign—even in the Miocene [hundreds of thousands or even millions of years ago]” (204). Just as he did with Lyell, Roberts cites Wallace and at the same time constructs an ethos for him that implies a man of good judgment and wisdom. Indeed, Roberts emphasizes that even though Wallace was “very cautious and conservative,” he was willing to say that man originated many millennia before Biblical Adam.

The preceding examples show that Roberts does not go into great detail in his scientific explanations, relying instead on numerous authoritative statements of renowned scientists to carry his argument and construct his own ethos. He begins with early authorities such as Lyell and Wallace, and proceeds to “still later utterances by scientists of prominence in current periodicals [that] abundantly sustain these authorities I have been quoting” (207). It is interesting to note the absence of a few prominent scientists among Roberts’s many citations; he does not cite Darwin, Huxley, or Gray. Perhaps, the

rhetorical reason for their absence is that Roberts was not arguing for Darwinism or evolution explicitly, and citing these prominent supporters of Darwin, though they certainly argued for pre-Adamites, would have expanded the breadth of his claim too far in the minds of his audience. Indeed, a citation of Darwin or Huxley might very well have detracted from Roberts's ethos in the eyes of his audience, because at least Huxley was perceived by many to be anti-religious (Ruse *Wars* 94).

As noted before, Roberts was well aware of the importance of his ethos and the ethos of the scientists that he cited in his presentation. Probably reflecting Roberts's awareness of some potential resistance from his audience to the idea of affording scientific facts the same stature as religious facts, he spends significant time in his presentation building up the collective ethos of the scientific authorities that make up the bulk of evidence for his central claim. For example, in the following statement from his presentation he tries to construct the ethos of his scientists to match the ethos of several revered religious figures (discussed later in this chapter) that he also cites.

[Scientists are] men of the highest type in the intellectual and moral world; not inferior men, or men of sensual and devilish temperament, but men who must be accounted as among the noblest and most self-sacrificing of the sons of men – of the type whence must come the noblest sons of God, since the glory of God is intelligence; and that too the glory of man. These searchers after truth are of that class....To pay attention to, and give reasonable credence to their research and findings is to link the church of God with the highest increase of human thought and effort. (244–245)

Roberts's description of scientists is perfectly fitting for his audience, as the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are or aspire to be as Roberts describes the scientists—noble, “self-sacrificing,” “sons of God,” and “searchers after truth.” These characteristics are Christian characteristics—and so Mormons, as Christians, aspire to develop them. Roberts also points out that by accepting his argument that his audience will be linking the Church of God with “the highest increase of human thought and effort.” Roberts recognizes that his rhetorical task is to persuade his audience that all of the “authorities” that he quotes are not only good scientists, but good men with a noble cause. His rhetoric shows that he knows that the persuasive success of his argument depends on his ethos, and his ethos is linked to that of the scientists that he cites. He recognizes that his ethos will not be acceptable to his audience unless the ethos of his cited scientists is established as noble, self-sacrificing, and truth-seeking.

Intermixed with Roberts's list of scientific authorities are some citations of religious authorities. For example, Roberts defines the word “replenish” as it is used in the Biblical account of the creation to mean “refill” (Genesis 1:28). Using this definition, Roberts argues that Adam and Eve were commanded by the Lord to refill a world that had already been inhabited by people. Roberts turns to former prominent LDS authorities Orson Hyde of the Quorum of the Twelve and Brigham Young to support his interpretation of the word “replenish.” Roberts cites a speech by Hyde in which he essentially makes the “replenish/refill” argument just rehearsed by Roberts, and then Roberts emphasizes the fact that Brigham Young endorsed Elder Hyde's speech (199–201). By connecting and supporting his argument for pre-Adamites to a former senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve (Hyde) and a former president of the Church

(Young), Roberts is seeking to link scientific authority with religious authority— an example of the complicated interaction of the three elements of ethos in the LDS Church. Roberts, himself a member of the presidency of the Seventy, is interpreting scripture, citing a member of the Quorum of the Twelve and a President of the Church. Thus, revelation, priesthood authority, and canonical scripture are invoked in Roberts’s argument. It is up to Roberts’s audience to eventually decide whether these three elements of LDS ethos are linked appropriately.

Roberts seeks to establish his ethos even further by citing even greater religious authorities. It is interesting to note that Roberts’s citation of prominent religious authorities builds upwards from a lower authority to the highest authority in the LDS Church. He begins by citing Hyde, whose words are confirmed by President Brigham Young, and then he cites Joseph Smith or “The Prophet” (as he is known to the LDS Church), and finally Jesus Christ (224-227). When an apostle speaks, Mormons listen; when a President of the Church speaks, the Mormon people listen more closely; when the Lord speaks or is quoted directly, the matter is settled.

Roberts’s citations of Joseph Smith and Jesus Christ only provide indirect evidence in favor of the theory of pre-Adamites. Specifically, Roberts says that Joseph Smith and Jesus taught that the Lord did nothing but that which he saw his father (God) do before him (John 5:19–20). Therefore, Roberts reasons, there must have been death before Adam, because in order for the Father to do what Jesus did, He must have passed through death and resurrection, and this must have happened long before Adam appeared on the Earth (*TWL* 224–225). Roberts’s use of these two eminent figures or authorities ties his argument to the highest authorities in Mormon thought. Regardless of Roberts’s

interpretation of the words of Joseph Smith and Jesus Christ, his appeal to their words to support his central claim mark his two most important appeals to authority, because for Roberts's audience, there are few if any authorities more persuasive than Joseph Smith and there are certainly no authorities more persuasive or credible than Jesus Christ for men who were called to serve as his "special witnesses" (i.e., The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve).⁵³ If Roberts can successfully tie his ethos to the positively persuasive ethos of Joseph Smith and Jesus Christ, he has successfully made his case.

Smith's Rhetoric

In his presentation two weeks after Roberts's, Smith's central claim is that "organic evolution...is as false as [its] author who reigns in hell" and that the theories that follow from organic evolution (e.g., pre-Adamites) are also false. Smith states that his position has been supported by "Apostles and leading brethren of the Church from the beginning...and that surely, no Latter-day Saint who accepts the revelations of the Lord can believe that the Lord placed man on the earth millions of years ago in a body unfit for exaltation, for he has declared that man, on this earth and on millions of other earths, is his offspring" (Smith⁵⁴). Smith's language is bold and clear and leaves no room for compromise, for "no Latter-day Saint can accept the revelations of the Lord" and also accept evolution/pre-Adamite doctrine. Although Smith does take some time in his presentation to recognize the importance and value of scientific inquiry, stating that "we all know that great benefits have come to mankind through [scientific] discoveries," he refuses to recognize the equality or unity of knowledge discovered by man or science with the truths as he interprets them in the scriptures and the words of modern day

⁵³ See D&C 107:23, 26.

⁵⁴ Smith's presentation to the Quorum of the Twelve is published in the appendix of an edition of Roberts' *TWL* and Smith's presentation is not paginated.

prophets. In Smith's view, science must conform to "the revealed word of the Lord" and not vice versa.

Smith relies consistently throughout his presentation on appeals to primarily religious authority to support his central claim. Smith sees scripture as the "measuring rod, the test tube, the crucible, by which we may prove all things advocated by man." Perhaps Smith's metaphorical allusions to scientific tools to represent scripture, such as a "measuring rod," a "test tube," and a "crucible," reflect his deeply held belief that God and his scripture are the ultimate fonts of knowledge—the ultimate scientists and scientific text in a way. In any case, Smith is clear that he is not willing to grant Roberts's claim that the ethos of science is equal with the ethos of religion. He states: "So far as the philosophy and wisdom of the world is concerned, it means nothing to me, unless it conforms to the revealed word of the Lord." Thus Smith makes a distinct separation between science or "the philosophy and wisdom of the world" and scripture or the "revealed word of the Lord." Smith believes in a hierarchy of knowledge with revealed knowledge on top and scientific knowledge somewhere down below.

Nonetheless, Smith begins the defense of his central claim that pre-Adamite doctrine and evolution are false with some observations on science. He seeks to establish that evolution and pre-Adamite doctrines are false by attacking the ethos of geology as a science,⁵⁵ and he uses a professor of geology, George McCready Price, to support his arguments. A possible problem with Smith's use of Price is that Price was an adamant creationist with little training in the sciences. His work was largely scorned and ignored by the scientists of his day, and the disdain for his work among scientists today has not changed (Ruse *Wars* 264; Numbers *Creationists* 106–114). Quoting McCready, Smith

⁵⁵ Geology is the principal science making claims about the existence of pre-biblical eras on the Earth.

says: “In geology, facts and theories are still in-extricably [sic] commingled and in the ordinary college text book of the science, the most absurd and fantastic speculations are still taught to the students with all the solemnity and pompous importance which might be allowable in speaking of the facts of chemistry or physics.” Smith knows that as he puts it, “the greater part of Elder Roberts’s paper has to do with the testimonies of the world’s eminent scientists in relation to the story told in geology,” and so casting doubt on the integrity or the ethos of geology as a science by calling its theories “absurd” and “fantastic” may go a long ways towards discrediting Roberts’s entire argument. To this end, Smith also argues that geology is wrong in its application of today’s rate of change to yesterday, and criticizes the assumption that there has always been a struggle for life from the beginning—calling these two claims “fatal mistakes” and suggesting with this word choice that such mistakes largely discredit the science that makes them.⁵⁶ Smith also asserts, based on evidence from Price, that fossils are not in order in the layers of rock on the earth and so the age of the earth cannot be determined by the fossils, and so geology has not proven that the earth is much older than suggested by scripture. In an interesting rhetorical move, Smith quotes Thomas Henry Huxley, “an advocate of evolution himself” to reinforce the argument of Price that “all that geology can prove is local order of succession.” Using the ethos of a scientist (Price) and the ethos of a great supporter of Darwinism (Huxley), Smith seeks to undermine the science of geology.

Smith’s use of a scientist to support his argument shows that he believes in the ethos of science inasmuch as science conforms to his religious beliefs—a response similar to that of other American religionists. Also, Smith’s use of a scientific authority

⁵⁶ Smith also asserts, based on evidence from Price, that fossils are not in order in the layers of rock on the earth and so the age of the earth cannot be determined by the fossils, and so geology has not proven that the earth is much older than suggested by scripture.

against science contrasts well with what Smith then presents as a unified religious belief in the LDS Church. It seems as though the principal reason for Smith's rhetoric against geology is to cast serious doubt on the ethos of science as a discipline, while emphasizing his trust in the ethos of faith or religious based sources of knowledge. Smith's argument downgrades the ethos of science in relation to the ethos of religion as sources of truth.

Smith's transition from his "scientific" arguments against geology to his religious arguments against evolution is a citation of LDS canonized scripture. Smith cites the Book of Mormon to also discredit geology, claiming that this book of scripture places the birth-date of the Rocky Mountains hundreds of thousands of years before geology does.⁵⁷ Smith explains his use of this seemingly unrelated claim by saying that it demonstrates his complete confidence in "revelation from the Lord" versus the "opinions and conclusions of men." In this forthright manner, Smith builds his ethos before his religious audience and strikes at half of the heart of Roberts's scientific/religious based ethos.⁵⁸ Smith's rhetoric is definitely more "religious" than Roberts's rhetoric. Smith's rhetoric is full of sweeping, forthright claims that he believes are based in the absolute truth of revelation, while Roberts's rhetoric was more careful and even tedious at times—or more scientific. This difference is perhaps demonstrated best by Smith's transition sentence to religious citations: "I shall leave this question, therefore, of man's geological lore and later we will consider it from the word of the Lord, and let Him speak through his prophets." Smith believes that he is dealing with authoritative truth, while Roberts's arguments are (in Smith's mind) based in "lore."

⁵⁷ Smith does not cite a specific scripture in the Book of Mormon, but he is presumably referring to the events described in 3 Nephi 8.

⁵⁸ Roberts's ethos was largely built on scientists whose work was based in the science of geology.

Having struck at the basis of Roberts's scientific claims in geology, and having established clearly for his audience his firm reliance on revelation over science, Smith criticizes specifically one of the fruits of evolutionary theory that Roberts espoused in his presentation—i.e., the theory of pre-Adamites. Smith uses what he views as ultimately authoritative scriptural citations to counter Roberts's appeals to scientific authorities. For example, Smith asserts that pre-Adamite doctrine is false, because the Lord declared that Adam was the first of all men, and the scriptures say that there was no death before Adam (Moses 3:7; 2 Nephi 2:22). Smith cites scriptures from the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price as proof of his assertions. He also points out that the Hebrew word from which the word "replenish" was translated can also be translated to mean "fill" (instead of "re-fill" as Roberts asserts), and he counters Roberts's citation of Orson Hyde and Brigham Young, by noting that the main subject of Hyde's talk was marriage, and that his reference to pre-Adamites was only a side-note that President Young did not specifically endorse. Smith argues that if, as Roberts claimed, Young did endorse Hyde's words on pre-Adamites, then "he is placed in opposition to the revelations of the Lord and the expressed views of many of his brethren of the General Authorities, including one entire Presidency, who spoke officially. Therefore I regret that President Young has been mentioned as an advocate of this theory." Smith recognizes that an endorsement of pre-Adamite theory by an authority such as President Young would essentially decide the matter in Roberts's favor, and yet Smith does not attack the ethos of Young or Hyde, but instead explains that Robert's has misinterpreted their statements.

Smith proceeds in his argument by countering Roberts's evolutionary thought by citing several different kinds of religious authority, both modern and ancient. For example, Smith points out that the creation account in the scriptures and the LDS temple ceremony teach that there was no death before Adam, and so Smith concludes:

There is not one word of evidence in the scriptures that any race of people ever inhabited this earth before the advent of Adam. The doctrine of "pre-Adamites" appears in opposition to the entire plan of creation. This teaching that there were races here before the time of Adam is only an hypothesis. It cannot be anything more, and the result of such teaching will end in uncertainty, confusion and disagreement, for there is no revelation supporting it.

Again, Smith's rhetoric is bold and sure—there is "not one word of evidence"; "this teaching is an hypothesis"; "it cannot be anything more"—all of these phrases invoke a "dogmatic" and even scriptural tone. There is no doubt in Smith's mind about what he is presenting to his audience.

Smith reasons that it is impossible to think of a race of men that were not children of God—so no men could have been upon the earth before Adam, for he was the first child of God on the earth according to the word of the Lord in scripture and in the teachings of modern day prophets. In support of this argument, Smith quotes prominent church authorities including Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor,⁵⁹ Parley P. Pratt, and Orson Pratt.⁶⁰ In much the same way that Roberts used many scientific authorities to create and maintain his ethos, Smith seems intent on persuading his

⁵⁹ Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and John Taylor were all former presidents of the LDS Church.

⁶⁰ Orson and Parley Pratt were both members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

audience with the sheer number of LDS Church authorities cited in favor of his central claim; with each citation Smith is also creating and maintaining his ethos as a man of faith who relies only on God and his ordained servants for his knowledge. Just as Roberts invoked various elements of scientific and religious authority to construct his ethos, Smith does so as well. Smith is speaking as an apostle (hierarchical authority), cites scripture (canonized revelation), and makes many references to the teachings of LDS Church authorities (modern-day revelation). Smith knows that if he can construct an ethos based on the concordance of all three elements of LDS authority, he will also have made his case.

Exigence Resolved: The First Presidency's Response

To review, the first exigence identified earlier was that the ethos assumed by Roberts and Smith or perceived by their LDS audiences needed to be clarified by a higher authority, because the faith of a large portion of the LDS Church was at stake. The Quorum of the Twelve was asked to deal with this exigence, but after hearing both men, the Twelve avoided making a decision in favor of one side or the other, and ended up referring the matter back to the First Presidency. Before the First Presidency made a decision, Roberts asked for an opportunity to respond to Smith's arguments before the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. However, the First Presidency decided that enough had been said on the subject, and they expressed this sentiment in a memorandum that was circulated among the General Authorities of the Church (Evenson 52).⁶¹ In this memorandum, the First Presidency reminded the Authorities that their words were taken as doctrine whether they were only expressing their opinions or official church doctrine.

⁶¹ "General Authorities" includes all of the presiding authorities in the LDS Church (i.e., First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve, the Seventy, etc.)

The First Presidency also acknowledged that both Smith and Roberts had marshaled evidence supporting their views, but that neither one had been able to prove their point with finality (Evenson 65). Further, the First Presidency declared that neither the pre-Adamite theory espoused by Roberts, nor the position taken by Smith was accepted as official doctrine of the Church. Thus, the First Presidency resolved the first exigence by implying that neither Roberts nor Smith was authorized as a leader of the Church to either support or oppose evolution/pre-Adamite theories. The memorandum ended with the following paragraphs:

Upon the fundamental doctrines of the Church we are all agreed. Our mission is to bear the message of the restored gospel to the people of the world. Leave Geology, Biology, Archaeology and Anthropology, no one of which has to do with salvation of the souls of mankind, to scientific research, while we magnify our calling in the realm of the Church.

We can see no advantage to be gained by a continuation of the discussion to which reference is here made, but on the contrary are certain that it would lead to confusion, division and misunderstanding if carried further. Upon one thing we should all be able to agree, namely, that Presidents Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder and Anthon H. Lund were right when they said: “Adam is the primal parent of our race.”⁶² (Evenson 67)

The purpose of the First Presidency in publishing this memorandum was clearly an attempt to end what they saw as a fruitless discussion, and to focus the attention of the

⁶² “Adam is the primal parent of our race” is a taken from the 1909 statement of the First Presidency (Evenson 23).

General Authorities on the fundamental doctrines of the LDS Church. Thus, the First Presidency also resolved the second exigence identified earlier, i.e., a need to maintain the peace and unity of the respective quorums that Roberts and Smith served in, rather than allow an open-ended public debate to continue that could undermine confidence in the Church, as leaders debated this issue. Indeed, the resolution to the immediate exigence, avoiding a public debate between Smith and Roberts was complete as Roberts and Smith did not continue their evolution discourse after this memorandum was released. However, the general or unofficial discourse among Mormons about evolution did not die, and is still vigorously discussed in various forums in the Church today, though the Church has maintained strict official neutrality on the subject.

It is important to note that both men (Roberts and Smith) continued to live faithful lives of service in the Church after their presentations before the Quorum of the Twelve. The continued faithfulness of both men may be partially attributed to the decision of the First Presidency to remain neutral on a subject that both men obviously felt very strongly about. For some, it may seem surprising that the Church did not commit to one side of the issue or another. For example, some may wonder why Smith did not win the debate when he, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, had a higher calling in the Church than Roberts, and an unofficially higher status among Mormons as son of a former president of the Church (Joseph F. Smith), and descendant of Joseph Smith's brother, Hyrum. It may also be a surprise to some that Smith did not win even when he cites more scriptures and church authorities and seems to have the more "religious" or faith-based evidence for his claims. The fact that Smith did not win surely says something about how highly the Church values neutrality and freedom of thought, and it shows how ethos is not a fixed or

static element of discourse within the LDS Church. This intra-faith discourse was judged by its own merits, and not simply based on the position of authority held by the speakers.

In the end, the intertwining aspects of Platonic and Aristotelian ethos in the LDS Church were worked out or clarified by the First Presidency's statement, and thus the primary exigence of this particular rhetorical situation was resolved at least at the official level of the LDS Church. The First Presidency acted in its role as the official voice of the Church, and in doing so they overruled the confusion of interpretation of canonized scripture. They did not rule in favor of one side or the other, but they did say that neither Roberts nor Smith had made *the* correct interpretation(s).⁶³ Thus, the First Presidency did what canonized scripture was not able to do by itself – establish the current position of the LDS Church on the evolution issue. Neither President Grant, nor either of his counselors, gave their personal opinion on evolution. They all chose to assume their “customary roles” or Aristotelian ethos as leaders of the Church (Baumlin xviii). The First Presidency's response also clarified the role aspect of ethos for LDS Church authorities by counseling them to leave the sciences to scientists and to focus on the ethos more appropriate to their callings. The First Presidency described its role as an authoritative body in the LDS Church, dealing with matters of faith instead of science. Furthermore, the First Presidency's response affirmed the authority of a past prophet (i.e., Joseph F. Smith and by implication his predecessors and successors) and the scriptures (i.e., the creation account), without condemning or endorsing the authority of science. Though the First Presidency's message did not harmonize scientific theories with LDS

⁶³ I am referring here to the many scriptural citations that Smith and Roberts used to support their opposing central claims.

Church doctrine, it left open that possibility and many Mormons continue to explore that possibility.

CONCLUSION

I began this thesis with the idea that an analysis of a particular intra-faith discourse about evolution would reveal nuances in this widespread and ongoing debate that had hitherto been largely ignored by rhetorical studies. An analysis and review of rhetorical studies showed that most such studies had focused primarily on the “fundamentalist outburst” against evolution. However, tracing the rhetorical history of evolution demonstrated that there was much more to the rhetoric of evolution and religion than just fundamentalist religion versus science. Indeed, Darwin’s rhetorical task in England and America was to pull together the rhetoric of semi-religious scientific theories or traditions to persuade the many people who fell in between the “fundamentalists” and the “liberals.” Darwin’s feat was remarkable, but completely successful rhetoric (i.e., completely persuasive rhetoric) was not feasible, and the variety of responses to Darwin’s theory and its many successors testify to the fact that Darwin’s rhetorical success was certainly fragmented and incomplete. Thus, there were and are many diverse discourses that have sprung up and continue in many different venues. I decided to analyze one such discourse in the American-born LDS Church, where the structure or organization of the Church allows for an identification of official and unofficial discourse. At first glance, it may seem to some that the LDS Church would fit well under the label “fundamentalist,” but a closer analysis shows that this is certainly not the case.

So what does one call the LDS Church’s position on evolution? It does not fit under the typical labels that have been used to describe the religious stance on evolution (i.e., liberals, moderates and fundamentalists). Is there a label for a neutral position?

What would be the label applied to Roberts or Smith for that matter? Both men were men of faith, and yet their views were split. Roberts was not convinced of evolution entirely, but he believed that some parts of it were irrefutable. He was clearly influenced by the reaction of scientists and religionists alike in Europe and America, as he cited both in his presentation, but his view was not identical to those authorities that he cited, because his faith was different. Smith was also influenced by the rhetoric of at least one American scientist (i.e., Price), but Smith came out strongly against evolution. Smith did hint near the end of his presentation that he would be open to the further expansion of knowledge refuting his position against evolution. Nonetheless, no one in the Roberts/Smith debate was declared a winner, and no one was declared a loser. In this rhetorical situation, there was no need for a victorious and a vanquished debater. Unlike in the more widely known and studied cases of Huxley versus Wilberforce, Agassiz versus Gray, and Darrow versus Jennings, the two men in the Mormon debate were not going after each other personally or attacking each other's faith. Both men believed in the same cause or in the same faith and they were working for the same goal, and so their disagreement was not bitter. The audience of Smith and Roberts also shared the same faith and goal, and so they did not have reason to stir a controversy or prolong the debate further than necessary. Though the rhetoric of individual responses to evolution in the LDS Church may be similar to the "media" responses examined in most rhetorical studies, the "official" evolution discourse within the LDS Church escapes conventional labels and a rhetorical analysis of this debate reveals the why's of some of those differences.

Finally, as has been demonstrated clearly now, the evolution debates that have been going on for many years are not only concerned with the question of religious

dogma and scientific fact. These ongoing debates include the possibility of diverse opinions between religious communities or within a religious community, such as the LDS Church. When focusing on these debates that are so often typically characterized as dogma vs. fact, scholars are *not* left with only three options: scholars who support evolution; scholars who oppose evolution; or those who try, unsuccessfully, to combine the two. There are many more options, one of which is neutrality. The debate is not simply between fundamentalism and science. It is between thoughtful and not-so-thoughtful people of all faiths and persuasions that try to work out the many social, philosophical, political and religious implications of evolutionary theory.

An analysis of the rhetoric of these many different responses helps reveal the way that the various participants view and interact with their world and their faith. My analysis of the Roberts and Smith discourse provides a view of the varied implications and interactions of ethos in the LDS Church. Ethos provides one approach or window into the evolution discourse in the LDS Church. The ethos of a Mormon rhetor in intra-Mormon evolution discourse depends on an audience's perception of the concordance between written or canonized revelation, the words of living oracles, and priesthood position. However, citing more scriptures and prophets, or possessing a higher priesthood position does not automatically make a rhetor's argument supreme in the LDS Church. The Roberts/Smith debate demonstrated that rhetoric in the LDS Church is not judged solely by the rhetor's position of authority or by the rhetor's citation of authority (e.g., canonized scripture or modern prophets); rather, the rhetor's rhetoric is judged at least to a degree, by its own merits. Thus, it is important to note that ethos is only one

rhetorical element of the Mormon evolution discourse, and it is only one of several windows or approaches to evolution discourse within the LDS Church.

More rhetorical studies of the evolution debates taking place in the LDS Church and other specific religious settings will possibly reveal much more about the way that ethos and other elements of rhetoric inform the seemingly endless evolution/religion discussion. For example, a closer comparison of the rhetoric used in the celebrated debates in Europe and America with the discourse of Roberts and Smith will bring out more clearly the various religious, scientific, and political motivations involved in each debate. Also, focusing on the rhetorical concept of *kairos* in the Mormon evolution discourse or the discourse of evolution in any other specific religious setting might help reveal more clearly the influences of culture in those religious communities generally. Furthermore, a rhetorical analysis of a specific religious group that might now be classified under the label “fundamentalist” might uncover different approaches to the evolution that are currently unknown or misunderstood. Hopefully, the goal and result of all such studies will be to help create a more nuanced and accurate view of the interactions between religion and science. Thus, rhetorical critics can recognize the complexity of the evolution/religion debate and aid in the clearer understanding of that complexity.

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