

CHARLES SUMNER'S USE OF ORATORY AS

A TOOL OF SOCIAL INFLUENCE

A Thesis

Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Speech
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
B. L. Ware, Jr.

December 1970

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author approaches the task of writing acknowledgements for this study with a great deal of mixed emotion. On the one hand, to take all of the credit is also to take all of the blame. On the other, the author cannot help but feel that he has overcome a great number of obstacles in writing this study. Some of these obstacles were as impersonal as Selective Service Local Board 59's reluctance to grant the author the necessary leisure time for writing this thesis. Other obstacles were more personal. In the end, the author presents this study to the academic community with the hope that there is more than a modicum of truth in J. M. Thornburn's observation that "all genuine, deep delight of life is in showing people the mud-pies you have made; and life is at its best when we confidingly recommend our mud-pies to each other's sympathetic consideration." However, the most profound gratitude must be extended to Dr. William B. English, the advisor and friend who helped the author overcome obstacles in the writing of this thesis and who taught him most of what he knows about making mud-pies.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to answer the question: how did Charles Sumner's oratory aid and/or hinder him in acquiring immense political influence? The method of accomplishing this purpose was the result of a combination of Aristotelian and Burkian critical principles. Specifically, the method consisted of (1) reducing the texts of Sumner's speeches to enthymematic form, (2) determining whether or not the Senator made his lines of argument consubstantial with the common thoughts of his auditors, and (3) explaining and evaluating why and how Sumner failed and succeeded in achieving consubstantiality with his audiences. The combination of purpose and method employed in this study affirmed the tripartite thesis therein advanced. First, Sumner identified his reform proposals with ideas widely accepted by Americans in the fifteen years prior to the Civil War. Second, this identification through rhetorical strategies approached completeness only with Sumner's specific audience composed of Northern reformers. Third, Sumner was never able to achieve substantial identification between his proposals and the ideas of his auditors on a national level. Hence, he failed to maximize the influence obtainable in an ideal sense from his rhetorical endeavors. This thesis

was affirmed through the study of nine speeches on various social issues delivered by Sumner between the years 1845 to 1860.

The success of Sumner in utilizing oratory as an instrument of political influence came from his ability to support his proposals with ideas central to the public faith and philosophy of most mid-nineteenth-century Americans. Through the use of rhetorical strategies such as religiofication and victimage, Sumner was able to create for many of his listeners a secular religion of human progress. The persuasive impact of this secular analogue of the Christian faith was more localized in the case of Sumner's addresses on social reform and pacificism. On these two issues, he achieved consubstantiality with only a small group of Northern philanthropists because most Americans simply were not as ego-involved on the questions of social reform and pacificism as was Sumner. The Massachusetts Senator was, therefore, never able to completely establish his secular faith in the minds of most Americans on these two issues.

With his speeches against slavery, however, Sumner found an issue felt very intensely by most Antebellum Americans, and he was able to utilize his oratory in such a way as to capitalize upon these feelings. Again relying on the strategies of religiofication and victimage, always couched in terms found in the everyday beliefs of his auditors,

Sumner gained immense support from Northern opponents to slavery as a result of his oratory. The increasing number of people in the North who came to oppose slavery served to increase Sumner's political influence. His oratory, although it did not cause the antislavery movement and perhaps did not even significantly swell the ranks of the movement, was the necessary instrument which spotlighted Sumner as a political leader of slavery's opponents.

As a result of the sectional appeal of Sumner's oratory, however, he never was successful in identifying himself with a sufficient number of Americans to become a national political leader. In this way, therefore, his oratory limited his political influence.

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CHARLES SUMNER'S USE OF ORATORY AS

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CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

The Importance of Charles Sumner

Charles Sumner, philanthropist and Senator from Massachusetts, was an important orator during the Middle Period of America's history. He was, unlike many of the famous speakers of the day, a rhetorician of considerable importance even prior to his entry into politics. Sumner delivered his first major public address, a discourse on pacifism entitled "The True Grandeur of Nations," to an audience of over 2,000 Bostonians on July 4, 1845. Various peace societies immediately circulated 7,000 abridged editions of the text, and the complete address underwent five printings within a few months.¹ Over the next few years, Sumner became one of the most popular lyceum lecturers in New England's towns and colleges. By 1850, the future Senator "was well known by his printed addresses" throughout

¹George H. Haynes, Charles Sumner (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Company, 1909), pp. 89-90. See also Charles Sumner, The True Grandeur of Nations (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1845).

the North by antislavery and peace advocates.² His frequent addresses in support of these two causes resulted in Sumner's observation as early as 1848 that "my name is connected somewhat with two questions, which may be succinctly described as those of peace and slavery."³ Perhaps as a sign of his popularity as a reform orator, Sumner's addresses on philanthropy required a multivolume work when published a year before his election to Congress.⁴

Continuing his interest in social reform during his first term in Congress, "the Massachusetts senator came to be recognized as the most eloquent congressional spokesman of the antislavery cause." Although only a freshman Senator, Charles Sumner attracted large audiences whenever he delivered an important address to his fellow legislators. Announcement that Sumner was about to speak came to mean that "the Senate Chamber was usually filled, sometimes even the anterooms being packed."⁵ Drawing such large audiences in a city which

²Edward L. Pierce, Memoir and Letters of Charles Sumner (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1894), III, 32.

³Letter, Sumner to George Putnam, April, 1848, as cited by David Donald, Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), p. 130. Donald's work is hereafter cited as Charles Sumner.

⁴See Charles Sumner, Orations and Speeches (2 vols.; Boston: Ticknor, Reid, and Fields, 1850).

⁵R. Elaine Pagel and Carl Dallinger, "Charles Sumner," in A History and Criticism of American Public Address, ed. by William Norwood Bragance (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1960), II, 665.

had only recently witnessed the great speeches of Daniel Webster and Henry Clay was certainly an indication of Sumner's oratorical ability.

Charles Sumner was soon to rank among men such as Clay and Webster as one of the most influential politicians of the nineteenth century. By 1861, the Bay State Senator was "one of the most powerful men in the United States."⁶ One historian noted that Sumner occupied a "position of power and influence" in national politics second only to that of the President.⁷ At the time of Sumner's death in 1874, John Sherman contended that the Massachusetts Senator "was by the judgment of his associates here, by the confidence of his constituents, by the general voice of the people, the foremost man in civil service in the United States."⁸ Best summarizing the extent of the Senator's public influence, Donald wrote that

Sumner's life touched upon virtually every significant movement in mid-nineteenth-century American history . . . In a period when senators often exercised more power than presidents of the United States, Charles Sumner was one of the most potent and enduring forces in the American government.⁹

⁶Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 388. ⁷Haynes, p. 438.

⁸U. S. Congress, Senate, 43rd Congress, 1st sess., April 27, 1874, Congressional Record, II, 3405. April 27 was set aside in both houses as a day of eulogies for Sumner. For more Senate eulogies see 3399-3406. See also House, Congressional Record, II, 3409-3419.

⁹Charles Sumner, p. vii.

Given that Charles Sumner was both an orator and an influential politician, he is of great importance to speech critics. The major function of speech criticism is to evaluate how men employ spoken rhetoric as an instrument of social influence.¹⁰ Since historians almost unanimously agree that Sumner was politically influential, study of his speeches becomes all the more pressing. Students of speech must eventually answer the question: how did Charles Sumner's oratory aid and/or hinder him in acquiring immense influence in public affairs? Speech critics are reluctant to pose the question; they have yet to posit a satisfactory answer.

The Available Literature

Although the literature available on Charles Sumner is extensive, no satisfactory criticism of his public speaking exists. Even though the Massachusetts Senator is the subject of numerous historical treatises, speech critics are not able to explain convincingly the relationship between his public addresses and his acquisition of political influence. Furthermore, although rhetoricians and historians alike view Sumner's rhetoric as an important source of his public influence, they present little consensus regarding the basic nature of his speeches. In all, no sound rhetorical dimension is to be found in the available studies of the Senator.

¹⁰Albert J. Croft, "The Functions of Rhetorical Criticism," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLII (October, 1956), 289.

The Historical Literature

Historical estimates of Sumner's oratory appeared in twelve complete biographies and numerous life sketches of the Senator.¹¹ Throughout these works, historians agreed that his oratory was an important source of his public influence. Edwin Percy Whipple, for example, submitted that Sumner's speeches on reform "so worked into the mind and moral sentiment of Massachusetts that he became at last, Senator of that State in Congress."¹² Another biographer contended that these same speeches gave the future Senator an appeal to youth "far beyond that of any orator of the time" and that this attraction "opened the way to his political career" and "remained through life one of the chief sources of his strength."¹³ Among modern historians, Donald noted that "no doubt a large part of Sumner's contemporary repute" resulted from his public speaking.¹⁴

¹¹Many historical treatments of Sumner are critiqued by Louis Ruchames, "Charles Sumner and American Historiography," The Journal of Negro History, XXXVIII (April, 1953), 139-160. For a listing and criticism of the major biographies, see Donald, Charles Sumner, p. ix. Donald's work itself is the only major biography of Sumner in sixty years. It has, however, been the subject of severe criticism. See Louis Ruchames, "The Pulitzer Prize Treatment of Charles Sumner," Massachusetts Review, II (Summer, 1961), 749-769; and Paul Goodman, "David Donald's 'Charles Sumner' Reconsidered," The New England Quarterly, XXXVII (September, 1964), 373-387.

¹²Recollections of Eminent Men (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1887), p. 218.

¹³Pierce, III, 32.

¹⁴Charles Sumner, p. 218.

Although historians agreed that Sumner's oratory was an important source of his influence, they expressed widely disparate opinions as to why his speaking enhanced his political power. Earlier biographers and historians stressed that Sumner's intellectualism, idealism, and sense of morality were the important persuasive elements in his discourses. Edmund G. Ross, for example, insisted that Sumner's "assumption of the floor in debate was, as a rule, a promise of an hour's intellectual feast."¹⁵ Frank Preston Stearns contended that Sumner's wide knowledge made him such an effective speaker that he replaced William Seward as leader of the Free Soil movement. "Sumner was," wrote Stearns, "not only a more effective speaker, but possessed greater [intellectual] resources for debate."¹⁶ In addition to these qualities, those historians writing before 1910 usually alleged that Sumner possessed considerable insight into the popular mind. One historian concluded that the Senator's

. . . power lay in his insight into moral forces and his ability to convert to his opinion the great public, by whose pressure his colleagues [in the Senate] were often reluctantly brought to follow his standard.¹⁷

¹⁵"Political Leaders of the Reconstruction Period," Forum, XX (October, 1895), 222.

¹⁶Cambridge Sketches (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), p. 193.

¹⁷Haynes, p. 450. Some modern historians also believe that Sumner was in accord with the mainstream of thought in the North. See Goodman, 380, 386; and Ruchames, "The Pulitzer Prize Treatment of Charles Sumner," 759.

Later historians, however, came to view Charles Sumner as an extremist demagogue¹⁸ who employed emotional appeals and pseudo-logic to inflame public opinion in order to further his own political career. Donald, for example, accused the Senator of yielding to the temptation of using "Jacksonian demagoguery" for political expedience.¹⁹

Samuel Eliot Morison emphasized that the language employed in Sumner's address, "The Crime Against Kansas," was such that it "exhausted the vocabulary of vituperation,"²⁰ and David Donald concluded that this same speech "reeked of the sewer."²¹ For Allan Nevins, "The Crime Against Kansas" merely "reeked of emotions" while the Senator's other addresses "contained much that was in wretched taste."²²

These undesirable elements, modern historians implied, were the sources of Sumner's rhetorical successes and public influence. George Fort Milton described the Massachusetts

¹⁸As used here, a demagogue is one who appeals principally to the "non-thinking side of human nature." See Wayne C. Minnick, The Art of Persuasion (2nd ed. rev.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), p. 6.

¹⁹Charles Sumner, p. 180.

²⁰The Oxford History of the American People (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 715.

²¹Lincoln's Herndon (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), p. 88.

²²A House Dividing, Vol. II: Ordeal of the Union (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), pp. 438-439.

Senator as the "eerie, evil genius who sat in Daniel Webster's seat in the Senate, spinning tenuous spider-webs of far-fetched theory about negro [sic] equality." As a result, Milton observed that Sumner was the "American Charles Fox" to antislavery elements throughout the country and to them represented "the hope of the Western World."²³ Nevins indicated that half of the Northern press was quick to "applaud and enforce anything" Sumner said, including his "exaggerations and extravagances."²⁴ Hence, recent historians presented Charles Sumner as an extremist demagogue, not as an intellectual spokesman for responsible public opinion in the North.²⁵

The Rhetorical Literature

Students of speech are delinquent in helping to solve the conflict among historians as to why Sumner's rhetoric enhanced his political influence. Three studies in the literature of speech center upon the oratory of Charles Sumner. In the area of graduate research, only the Master's

²³The Age of Hate (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1930), p. 33.

²⁴Nevins, p. 441.

²⁵Perhaps the large number of publications upon Sumner explains the sparsity of graduate studies upon his life. A DATRIX search revealed no dissertations dealing with Sumner. A review of the Index to American Doctoral Dissertations for the years 1941 to 1968 provided only one source on Charles Sumner. See Victor H. Cohen, "Charles Sumner and Foreign Relations" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of History, University of Oklahoma, 1951).

thesis of Carl A. Dallinger deals with Sumner's public speaking. This student limits his study to the aspect of invention in one of Sumner's addresses, "The True Grandeur of Nations."²⁶ Dallinger, in conjunction with R. Elaine Pagel, wrote an historical essay on the Senator's public speaking.²⁷ Robert T. Oliver's essay on Sumner's oratory is also historical in nature.²⁸ Numerically, such a record of research is not an impressive one. The critical analysis found in the existing studies of the Senator's rhetoric, however, is even less impressive than their number.

The works by these three authors failed to convincingly relate Sumner's rhetoric to his acquisition of public influence because each employed historical rather than critical methods. Each of these authors' studies described Sumner, his ideas, character, and appearance. The three of them also reported the content of his public addresses. None of the three, however, devoted any extensive attention to the Senator's audiences. Dallinger, for example, after three scant pages of audience analysis, concluded simply that "The True Grandeur of Nations" occurred before an "educated,

²⁶"Inventio in the Speeches of Charles Sumner" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Dept. of Speech, University of Iowa, 1938).

²⁷As cited on supra, p. 2.

²⁸History of Public Speaking in America (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1965), pp. 253-269.

patriotic, religious, Boston audience."²⁹ Oliver virtually ignored the ideas, attitudes, and values of Sumner's auditors.³⁰ Pagel and Dallinger confined themselves merely to describing effects upon immediate audiences.³¹ Consequently, the end products of these analyses did not differ significantly from those conclusions reached by historians.³²

Such efforts as these did not, in addition, explain why or how Sumner's rhetoric contributed to his public influence. Pagel and Dallinger, for example, were able to conclude only that Sumner's speaking "arouses all sorts of censure, as well as praise."³³ Making no concerted effort to understand the motivations and ideas of the Senator's audiences, these students of speech could not hope to explain why Sumner's ideas elicited the results they so diligently recorded. Consequently, these scholars failed to explain how Sumner's public speaking aided him in acquiring immense political influence. The available studies of Sumner's rhetoric were useful only insofar as they illustrated the crux of the problem in evaluating the Senator's use of public speaking as a tool of social influence.

²⁹See pp. 97-100.

³⁰For example, see pp. 261-262.

³¹See pp. 767-768.

³²See David Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. 216-219.

³³See p. 768.

The Problem Defined

The preceding review of the available literature on Charles Sumner's oratory defines the central problem in evaluating the Senator's use of speech as a tool of social influence. The problem is that common to any act of rhetorical criticism. Rhetoric is the study of the techniques which men employ to connect their ideas to those of their audiences.³⁴ Hence, the appraisal of Sumner as a speaker necessarily requires a detailed study of the ideas held by his auditors.

Neither historians nor speech critics have successfully met this requirement in the case of Charles Sumner. Historians cannot agree whether to consider Sumner a spokesman for a segment of public opinion or to label him an extremist demagogue.³⁵ The faults of rhetoricians are also evident. Speech critics, who should know best the importance of audiences, are even less sensitive to the predispositions of Sumner's auditors than are historians. The mutual negligence of historians and rhetoricians means that no definitive evaluation of Sumner's rhetoric is available.

³⁴This definition of rhetoric is that of Donald C. Bryant, "Rhetoric: Its Function and Its Scope," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXIX (December, 1953), 413. Ideas are "groups of didactic propositions or, at the other extreme, mere sentiments or predispositions." See Croft, 287.

³⁵This criticism of historical treatments of Sumner's rhetoric is suggested by Goodman, 380.

Realizing the importance of idea adaptation, four requirements become incumbent upon any rhetorician seeking to evaluate Charles Sumner's use of speech as a source of public influence. (1) A careful delineation of those ideas which Sumner desired to communicate is necessary. (2) The critic must recognize those audiences with which the Senator sought to communicate. He must also establish which audiences Sumner's speeches actually reached. (3) The ideas held by these audiences are of great importance. The critic must not only be cognizant of the attitudes of specific groups on certain questions, he must also acknowledge those "germinal values" or "public philosophies" common to most Americans in Sumner's day.³⁶ Such a procedure is in accord with the dictum that "the means of persuasion in any situation are closely related to cultural and philosophic environments."³⁷ (4) The student of speech must determine and evaluate those strategies which Sumner employed to relate his ideas with those of his audiences. This study proposes to meet each of these requirements.

³⁶See Croft, 278.

³⁷See Eugene C. Chenoweth, Michael T. Dues, and Uvieja Z. Good, "The Significance of Humanistic Rhetoric in British Public Address," The Central States Speech Journal, XX (Summer, 1969), 115.

The Scope and Argument of the Study

The purpose of this study is to focus the available resources of rhetoric and history into a satisfactory answer to the question: How did Charles Sumner's oratory aid and/or hinder him in acquiring immense political influence? With this over-all purpose in mind, the limits and argument of this study require some explanation.

Limits of the Study

The purpose of this study established its limits. Nine speeches proposing social reforms and delivered between 1845 and 1860 contributed more than any others to Sumner's notoriety. These speeches were on three topics: pacificism, social reform, and slavery. Sumner's speaking on pacifism changed him from an obscure young man into "one of the first orators of New England, his reputation established as a speaker of extraordinary force and a reformer of utter fearlessness."³⁸ The future Senator's speeches on reform broadened his reputation and prestige throughout the North.³⁹ Finally, his addresses on slavery gained him national notoriety.⁴⁰ These nine speeches were:

³⁸Allan Nevins, Fruits of Manifest Destiny, Vol. I: Ordeal of the Union (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), p. 393.

³⁹Pierce, III, 32.

⁴⁰Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 235.

1. "The True Grandeur of Nations." Boston, July 4, 1845.
2. "The Law of Human Progress." Union College, July 25, 1848.
3. "War System and the Commonwealth of Nations." Boston, May 28, 1849.
4. "Our Immediate Antislavery Duties." Boston, November 6, 1850.
5. "Justice to the Land States, and Policy of Roads." Senate, March 16, 1852.
6. "Freedom National, Slavery Sectional." Senate, August 28, 1852.
7. "The Landmark of Freedom: No Repeal of the Missouri Compromise." Senate, February 21, 1854.
8. "The Crime Against Kansas: The Apologies for the Crime; The True Remedy." Senate, May 19-20, 1856.
9. "The Barbarism of Slavery." Senate, June 4, 1860.

The temporal limitation of this study to the years between 1845 and 1860 suggested itself for several reasons. Sumner delivered no major public addresses prior to 1845. By 1861, the Senator was one of the most influential men in American public life. Even though he was to become more prestigious as the years passed, his increased influence was not due to his public speaking. After 1861, Sumner's health did not allow him to depend upon lengthy public addresses as a source of political power.⁴¹ Hence, any political influence

⁴¹Oliver, p. 269.

that Sumner acquired through his use of oratory came about between 1845 and 1860. A review of the Massachusetts Senator's oratory between these years provided the argument of this study.

The Argument of the Study

Given the premise that Charles Sumner's oratory was an important source of his political influence, the thesis presented in this study is a tripartite argument. First, Sumner identified his rhetorical proposals with ideas widely accepted by Americans in the fifteen years prior to the Civil War. Second, this identification through rhetorical techniques and strategies approached completeness only with Sumner's audience composed of Northern philanthropist reformers. Third, Sumner was never able to achieve substantial identification with a national audience, and, thus, he failed to maximize the influence obtainable from his rhetoric.

Charles Sumner's success in employing rhetoric as a source of public influence resulted from his ability, conscious or unconscious, to identify his propositions with rhetorical premises derived from what one author called the "American democratic faith." Believed in almost universally by Americans of the Middle Period, the basic elements of this faith were (1) a belief in fundamental law, (2) a profound respect for the individual, and (3) an acceptance of

America's uniqueness in history.⁴² Obviously, each of these major tenets subsumed a multitude of lesser faiths. These subordinate beliefs also gained wide acceptance despite, or perhaps because of, their large number and ambiguous nature. As quantified by one historian, Americans during the fifteen years before the Civil War shared "ninety per cent of [their] attitudes and institutions" after accounting for sectional differences.⁴³

Sumner was most successful in identifying his specific proposals with these widely accepted beliefs for an audience of Northern philanthropist reformers. The Senator performed this task by the use of enthymemes. Sumner effectively made use of rhetorical syllogisms by relying upon the complex system of political symbolism which evolved in the mid-nineteenth century. As a result, he could easily abstract to or from the great body of potential enthymematic premises found in the "American democratic faith" simply by utilizing this symbol system.⁴⁴ By employing appropriate symbols for his audience of Northern philanthropists, Sumner was successful

⁴²Ralph Henry Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought (2nd ed. revised; New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1956), pp. 12-25.

⁴³David Donald, Lincoln Reconsidered (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 216.

⁴⁴See Gabriel, pp. 91-104. See also Daniel J. Boorstin, The Americans: The National Experience (New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 325-390.

in adapting his ideas to those of this group and vice versa. Hence, in this way, the Bay State Senator successfully used oratory as a source for political influence.⁴⁵

Sumner, however, was never successful in identifying his proposals with the predispositions of a large national audience. The basic tenets, as well as the subordinate concepts, of the mid-nineteenth century American ideology contained enough ambiguity to allow varied interpretations by numerous interest groups.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the system of political symbolization was, like any system of symbols, subject to connotative interpretation.⁴⁷ Unfortunately for Sumner, these flaws in the "American democratic faith" were most noticeably present in the public's opinions of reform in general, and of slavery and pacificism in general. These particular issues were divisive in nature, as Donald noted.⁴⁸ Hence, although Sumner's rhetoric on these topics contained ideas which appealed to most Americans, the more specific he became in support of Northern reformers, the more he alienated

⁴⁵See Goodman, 380, 386. Goodman suggests that this growing sentiment for anti-slavery reform was the basis for the Senator's political influence.

⁴⁶See Gabriel, p. 16. ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 99.

⁴⁸Lincoln Reconsidered, pp. 220-235. Donald views American faith in progress, which can be roughly equated to change or to reform, as a basic cause of pre-Civil War social disintegration. He also emphasizes that the annexation of Texas (as opposed to pacificism) and slavery were also divisive questions.

Southerners and conservatives. His close identification with the philanthropist sentiment through his rhetoric, as a result, limited his influence.

Method of Inquiry

Support for the preceding argument results from the method of inquiry employed in this study. The investigative tools used in this thesis come from the theories of Aristotle and the critic, Kenneth Burke. The critical instruments provided by Burke should be viewed as an extension of the traditional Aristotelian rhetoric rather than as a separate system.⁴⁹ These instruments are useful in this study because they emphasize the rhetorical adaptation of ideas. The nature of the investigative tools, in turn, suggests the order and content of the chapters following this introduction.

Investigative Tools

The confluence of Aristotle's ideas on rhetoric with those of Burke occurs in the very essence of their respective theories. For Aristotle, "the substance of rhetorical persuasion" is the enthymeme.⁵⁰ He explains that "we must use as our modes of persuasion and argument, notions possessed by everybody."⁵¹ Summarizing his concept of the enthymeme,

⁴⁹Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), p. xiv. Hereafter cited as Rhetoric.

⁵⁰Rhetorica I. i. 1354^a14-15. ⁵¹Ibid., 1355^a27-28.

Aristotle notes that "the materials of [rhetorical] syllogisms are the ordinary opinions of men."⁵² The importance of the enthymeme is that, "owing to the skill of the speaker, the audience itself helps construct the proofs by which it is persuaded."⁵³

Burke's concept of rhetoric subsumes Aristotle's theory of the enthymeme. The key terms in Burke's rhetoric are the synonyms, "identification" and "consubstantiality." He suggests that persons identify or become consubstantial "in terms of some principle they share in common."⁵⁴ Burkian identification, then, is substantially the same as the mutual construction of proofs, i.e., enthymemes, found in Aristotelian persuasion. Burke summarizes the relationship between identification and Aristotelian persuasion by writing:

We might well keep it in mind that a speaker persuades an audience by the use of stylistic identifications; his act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker's interests; and the speaker draws on identification of interests to establish rapport between himself and his audience.⁵⁵

Burke's theory of rhetoric, however, goes beyond the Aristotelian concept of persuasion in that it considers the "whole field of motivational language, conscious and

⁵²Ibid., II. xxv. 1402^a33-34.

⁵³Lloyd F. Bitzer, "Aristotle's Enthymeme Revisited," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLV (December, 1959), 408.

⁵⁴Burke, Rhetoric, p. 43.

⁵⁵Ibid.

unconscious, in the rhetoric of conformity and appeal."⁵⁶

Burke sees man as a being who constantly strives to achieve cooperation from his fellow beings to attain the "Ultimate Good."⁵⁷ Since part of man's essence is his ability to

symbolize, man performs with his symbols what he cannot do with his hands.⁵⁸ Seeing man is an actor, Burke suggests

that he is best analyzed within the framework of the dramatic pentad: the scene, agent, act, purpose, agency.⁵⁹

All human action, contends Burke, can be analyzed by expressing the dynamic interaction of these motivational viewpoints in terms of ratios, e.g., Act-scene ratio, act-agent ratio, and so on until all ten possible combinations are employed.

The act-scene ratio, then, would express the influence the nature of the situation exerts upon the quality of the act and vice versa.⁶⁰ Ultimately, Burke submits that "all critical and imaginative works are answers to questions" or problems resulting from such motivational interactions.⁶¹

⁵⁶Daniel Fogarty, Roots for a New Rhetoric (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 76.

⁵⁷Burke, Rhetoric, p. 23. ⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 22-23.

⁵⁹A Grammar of Motives (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1945), pp. xv-xvii.

⁶⁰L. Virginia Holland, "Kenneth Burke's Dramatistic Approach in Speech Criticism," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLI (December, 1955), 353.

⁶¹The Philosophy of Literary Form (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), p. 3.

Burke's critical system extends Aristotle's theory since it permits the study of both conscious and unconscious motivations in rhetoric. The human rhetorical works resulting from motivational interactions are not "merely answers" to a problem; "they are strategic answers, stylized answers."⁶² He defines such strategies as "linguistic movements for encompassing situations."⁶³ Since Burke employs the terms "situation" and "motive" interchangeably, linguistic usage betrays even unconscious motivation. He does not, as did the Classical rhetoricians, limit himself to the study of "explicit design in rhetorical endeavor."⁶⁴ Burke's rhetorical theory, therefore, both extends and compliments Aristotle's explanation of persuasion.

The mergence of perspectives found in these two theories facilitates accomplishing the purpose of the study: to explain how Charles Sumner's rhetoric contributed to or detracted from his public influence. An enthymematic analysis places emphasis upon discovering Sumner's ideas and juxtaposing them to the opinions commonly held by his audiences.. Burke's theory of rhetorical motivation focuses the critic's attention upon how Sumner relates his ideas to those of his audience, i.e., how he achieves consubstantiality or why he fails to do so. In short, the steps of the method are:

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Burke, Rhetoric, p. 35.

1. A reduction of the texts of speeches to syllogistic form. Inductive forms are treated as either support or sources for deductions.
2. An estimate of whether or not the lines of argument are made consubstantial with the public philosophies or specific ideas of the auditors.
3. An explanation and evaluation in Burkian terms of why and how Sumner failed or succeeded in achieving consubstantiality.

Precis of Chapters

The use of the method of inquiry discussed above requires that four chapters follow this discussion of the nature of the study. Chapter II is an analysis of Charles Sumner, the speaker. It begins with a description of the Senator's achievements and education as an orator and moves to a detailed analysis of Sumner's character and motives.

Chapter III is an examination of the American scene from 1845 to 1860. The emphasis here is to determine the nature of the "public philosophies" and "germinal values," along with their accompanying symbols and rituals, which compose the "American democratic faith." Then a distinction among Sumner's auditors, according to their more specific ideas on reform, is possible. This chapter is not a complete historical interpretation of the Middle Period. It is the use of historical and empirical data to analyze Sumner's audiences.

Chapter IV is descriptive and analytical. An analysis of nine of the Senator's reform speeches yields a listing of his most frequently used enthymemes. Investigation of rhetorical strategies explains how these rhetorical syllogisms relate to both the "germinal values" and the particular ideas of Sumner's audiences.

The final chapter of this study, by means of synthesizing data from previous chapters, is an evaluation of Sumner's use of rhetoric as a tool of public influence. Here, the conclusions of this study are drawn and summarized. Finally, any implications for further research are noted, as are any additional findings of this thesis.

CHAPTER II

THE STATESMAN DOCTRINAIRE AS AN ORATOR

Biography and Rhetorical Criticism

Speech critics recognize the importance of biography to their craft. Traditional and nontraditional rhetoricians alike believe that the final form of a given speech partially results from the orator's "training and experience, his perception of the world and those who inhabit it, his habits of thought, and his language patterns."¹ Hence, knowledge of a speaker's life is necessary to understand his unique employment of the modes of proof. Anthony Hillbruner, a traditionalist, emphasizes the importance of biography to the critic in understanding an orator's ethical and emotional appeals. "A speech, as every rhetorician since Cicero and Quintilian knows," writes Hillbruner, "can often be effective or ineffective as a result of the impact of the speaker's total personality."² Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird stress the importance of biography in understanding a public speaker's

¹Robert Cathcart, Post Communication Critical Analysis and Evaluation (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966), p. 61.

²Critical Dimensions: The Art of Public Address Criticism (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 44-45.

use of logical forms.³ Among the nontraditionalists, Kenneth Burke suggests the importance of biographical inquiry by centering his theory of criticism around the discovery of human motives.⁴

Following the advice of rhetorical theorists, this chapter is a description and analysis of Charles Sumner, the speaker. Rather than attempting a complete biography of Sumner, the subsequent discussion focuses upon those aspects of the Senator's life which are important in understanding his oratory. Hence, the following is an analysis of Sumner's achievements and character to 1860.

Sumner's Achievements

Louis Ruchames characterized Charles Sumner as a "scholar, humanitarian, and senator."⁵ A review of the Senator's life to the beginning of the Civil War revealed the near comprehensive nature of this assessment. Until 1860, most of Charles Sumner's major achievements related in some way to his scholarly endeavors, his interest in social reform, or his entry into politics.

³Speech Criticism (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1948), pp. 335-336.

⁴A Rhetoric of Motives (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), p. 35.

⁵"The Pulitzer Prize Treatment of Charles Sumner," Massachusetts Review, II (Summer, 1961), 749.

Sumner: The Scholar

From the standpoint of educational opportunity, Sumner was fortunate in both the location and the circumstances of his birth. Born in Boston on January 6, 1811, Sumner's birthplace offered educational opportunities far beyond those then accessible in many parts of the United States.⁶ Furthermore, his parents, Charles Pickney Sumner and the former Relief Jacob, recognized the importance of sound education.⁷ These fortunate circumstances permitted Sumner to obtain an excellent educational background for an orator.

Early Education: 1817-1830

Charles Sumner's early education in the Boston public schools and at Harvard College consisted of both classical and liberal studies. After receiving elementary education first at the private school conducted by an aunt and later at the public West Writing-School, the young Sumner enrolled in the Boston Public Latin School in 1821.⁸ There, he gained a familiarity with classical works which served as a

⁶Archibald H. Grimke, The Life of Charles Sumner (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1892), pp. 9, 25.

⁷Edward L. Pierce, Memoir and Letters of Charles Sumner (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1894), I, 36, 31.

⁸David Donald, Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), pp. 8-9. Donald's work hereafter cited as Charles Sumner. See also Ibid., pp. 36-37.

source for oratorical illustrations throughout his life. He read and memorized large portions of works by authors such as Caesar, Tacitus, Sallust, Vergil, Horace, Homer, and notably, Cicero.⁹ At the Latin School, Sumner also demonstrated an early interest in public address. He admired Daniel Webster's use of classical illustrations when he heard the famous Senator in Boston. Perhaps this event interested Sumner in the debates in which he participated while a student at the Latin School.¹⁰ An ardent student, though not at the top of his class, the student was privileged to attend a banquet at Faneuil Hall as a reward for his class standing. On that occasion, the future Senator heard prominent Massachusetts speakers, among whom was President John Quincy Adams. Estimating the impact of this event, George H. Haynes wrote that "the associations of that historic forum and of those famous statesmen-orators cannot have failed to make a deep impression" upon the boy.¹¹

Sumner received a more liberal course of study at Harvard College from 1826 to 1830. He studied Greek, Latin, algebra, and geometry daily. On each Saturday, practical

⁹Sumner read selected orations by Cicero. See Pierce, I, 37.

¹⁰Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. 9-10. Donald may have heard Webster more than once during these years. See Grimke, p. 25.

¹¹Charles Sumner (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Company, 1909), p. 24.

exercises in declamation replaced math in the curriculum.

Upon occasion, the young Sumner heard lectures on French and Spanish literature, physics, and rhetoric. After studying these courses for four years, Sumner graduated in the second third of his class.¹²

The impact of Harvard upon Charles Sumner's intellectual development was difficult to determine. A few years after graduation, he wrote: "I am not aware that any one single thing is well taught to the Undergraduates of Harvard College. Certainly I left it without knowing anything."¹³ Donald was only slightly more positive in noting that in Sumner's "four years at Cambridge only the occasional lectures of George Ticknor . . . and the sound advice of Edward Tyrell Channing on rhetoric seem to have made an effect upon him."¹⁴ Sumner did adhere closely to Channing's teaching in rhetoric until 1860,¹⁵ and perhaps his instruction at Harvard resulted in Sumner's increased interest in oratory demonstrated during an independent year of study after graduation.

¹²Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. 12-15; and Pierce, I, 45-50.

¹³Letter, Sumner to Joseph Story, September 24, 1839, as cited by Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 24.

¹⁴Charles Sumner, pp. 13-14. ¹⁵Ibid., pp. 213-219.

Sumner's Rhetorical Training

Charles Sumner received both theoretical and practical training in public speaking from Edward Tyrell Channing throughout his four years as a Harvard undergraduate. As presented to the Harvard students, Channing's instruction constituted an inventive, complete, and amoral rhetoric. Channing, the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard, derived his rhetoric from "experience and from observation of speakers."¹⁶ Disclosing his debt to classical and eighteenth-century rhetoricians, the Boylston Professor defined rhetoric as those "rules and principles which will help to make the expression of . . . thoughts effective."¹⁷ Dorothy I. Anderson and Waldo W. Braden, in the Introduction to their edition of Channing's lectures, noted that he "deplored the tendency of rhetoricians to limit themselves to propriety of expression rather than to study the principles" of logic and reason.¹⁸ Professor Channing, having established his main emphasis upon invention, concluded that the purpose of courses in rhetoric was "to instruct a man in finding and arranging his arguments, the reasons, the proofs by which he is to maintain his great, leading propositions."¹⁹ Although

¹⁶Lectures Read to the Seniors in Harvard College, ed. by Dorothy I. Anderson and Waldo W. Braden (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), pp. 30-31.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 31-32.

¹⁸Ibid., p. xxiii.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 35.

Channing did not distinguish between written and oral discourse, he did insist upon thorough, almost pedantic, research prior to any rhetorical exercise.²⁰

Even though the Boylston Professor devoted most of his attention to invention, he considered the other rhetorical canons important. Concerning arrangement, he concluded that a speaker "must have his parts fixed and always visible, his statements almost laboriously distinct, the strain of the discourse unbroken."²¹ Emphasizing naturalness of style, Channing abhorred the use of "mixed metaphors, clumsy sentences, poor word choice, verboseness, and grandiose expression."²² As for delivery, he advised that the speaker should "let his style of delivery be quiet and familiar. The tones should be spontaneous and sincere, that they may gradually acquire that arresting power which marks the colloquial manner."²³ Hence, Channing offered instruction in a complete rhetoric.

The most unique and interesting aspect of Channing's rhetoric, however, was its lack of an ethical dimension. The Professor emphasized the effectiveness of emotional appeals. He noted that

²⁰Ibid., pp. 30-32, 35-38.

²¹Ibid., p. 71.

²²This conclusion reached by Braden and Anderson. See Ibid., p. xi.

²³Ibid., p. 71.

. . . sometimes the sudden outbreak of passion in the audience is the sign of a deep and never-dying sentiment and purpose, and the orator's victory will be as memorable as that of his countrymen in the next great fight.²⁴

Although he noted that such use of emotionalism rightfully occurred when it led to "responsible action,"²⁵ Channing failed to include in his lectures any ethical limit upon the use of pathos. He relied, instead, upon the "excellence of the laws, the institutions, and the noble people of his time" to reject "demagogues."²⁶

Independent Study

Perhaps as a result of E. T. Channing's advice on the observation of orators, Sumner devoted most of the time during a year of independent study after graduation from Harvard to listening to noted New England orators. Although attempting a rigorous study of math, literature, and history, "Sumner neglected no opportunity to listen to the best public speakers."²⁷ Among others, he witnessed orations delivered by Josiah Quincy, James T. Austin, and John Pierpont. Sumner seemed to be especially captivated by the speaking of Daniel Webster. After hearing Webster's oration on the tariff delivered in Boston on October 30, 1830, Sumner travelled a

²⁴Ibid., p. 80.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶See discussion by Braden and Anderson in Ibid., pp. xxvi-xxx.

²⁷Pierce, I, 74.

few days later to Salem to observe the same speaker in the Knaap-White murder trial.²⁸ There, however, young Sumner was "delighted" with the "keenness" of Webster's opponent, Franklin Dexter, who displayed considerable ability "in worming the truth out of witnesses on their cross-examination, and especially in summing up the evidence in the prisoner's behalf."²⁹

Sumner's auditing of these great orators rounded out his own formal education in the arts of rhetoric and possibly influenced him as much as did the teaching of Channing. Perhaps, as Dr. Samuel Emery suggested, Sumner's appreciation of forensic oratory led to his enrollment in the Harvard Law School the next year after the Knaap-White trial.³⁰

Later Education: 1831-1840

Beginning in 1831, the future Bay State Senator commenced a decade of activities which he at least considered of primary importance to his education. In August of 1831, he enrolled for two years in the Harvard Law School.³¹ After graduation, he practiced law for three years on the advice of Joseph Story with the hopes of obtaining a

²⁸Ibid., pp. 74-75.

²⁹Letter, Rev. Dr. Samuel M. Emery to Edward L. Pierce, n.d., as cited in Ibid., p. 75.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 22.

teaching position in the Harvard Law School.³² From 1837 to 1840, Sumner travelled in Europe for the purpose of "noting in France and Germany the Administration of justice and the course of legal institutions and in England frequenting Westminster Hall and drinking at the very bubbling fountain of the common law."³³ This decade certainly proved important in Sumner's growth as an intellectual and as an orator.

Harvard Law School

Charles Sumner's tenure at the Harvard Law School proved rewarding in several ways. To begin with, his prodigious study of the law gained him the reputation as being the best read lawyer of his age in Boston.³⁴ Sumner "completed not merely all the prescribed books for the two-year course, but also the works recommended for supplementary reading" at the dictates of the student's ability and leisure.³⁵ Still, he found time for considerable study of history and literature on his own and for assisting his professors in publishing legal texts.³⁶ Considering this

³²Ibid., p. 32.

³³Letter, Sumner to Joseph Story, July 13, 1837, as cited in Ibid., p. 44.

³⁴Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 31. ³⁵Ibid., p. 26.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 25-27. Sumner wrote that "a lawyer must know law, history, philosophy, human nature; and . . . he must drink of all the springs of literature." See Sumner's unpublished biographical notes written in May, 1851, as cited in Ibid., p. 25.

tremendous scholastic effort, John W. Browne, a fellow student, remarked that Sumner "is to the law what he used to be to history,--a repertory of facts to which we might all resort."³⁷

In addition to his classwork, Sumner maintained his interest in public speaking. As president of a temperance society among students, he observed a number of lecturers, the most notable of whom was John G. Palfrey.³⁸ As a member of the law school debating society, Sumner "bore his part in discussions." "He was not fluent in speech," further commented Pierce, "but he prepared himself with care."³⁹ In addition, the future Senator heard addresses delivered by Justice Story and Edward Everett.⁴⁰ Concerning the latter's address, "Education of Mankind," Sumner queried: "need I say that Everett did wonders on Phi Beta day?"⁴¹ His letters contained numerous quotations from the speeches of Edmund Burke, Sumner's ideal orator.⁴² Sumner's studies and

³⁷Letter, Brown to Johnathan F. Stearns, May 6, 1832, as cited by Pierce, I, 99.

³⁸Pierce, I, 101.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Letter, Sumner to Charlemagne Tower, October 24, 1832, as cited by Pierce, I, 116.

⁴¹Letter, Sumner to Tower, September 1, 1833, as cited in Pierce, I, 122.

⁴²For example, see the letter, Sumner to Stearns, September 25, 1831, as cited in Ibid., 110. Sumner quotes Burke's "Plan for Economical Reform."

his extracurricular devotion to rhetoric consumed so much time that he warned: "I wish no acquaintances for they eat up time like locusts. The old classmates are enough."⁴³

Several new acquaintances, however, profited Sumner's intellectual development immeasurably. "Sumner's application while a student at the Law School," wrote Walter G. Shotwell, "soon attracted the attention of his professors, Joseph Story and John H. Ashmun."⁴⁴ The latter "accepted Sumner as a friend and almost as an equal." Simon Greenleaf, Ashmun's successor, was "equally fond" of Sumner.⁴⁵ However, according to Anna Laurens Dawes, "the chief advantage which Sumner gained in those two years came . . . from the personal influence of the great jurist, Joseph Story."⁴⁶ Although a Justice of the United States Supreme Court, Story directed Sumner's "studies, advised his reading, welcomed him to his home, his fireside and his confidence."⁴⁷ Summing up Sumner's intellectual and rhetorical debt to Story, Nason wrote:

⁴³Letter, Sumner to Tower, September 29, 1831, as cited in Ibid., 111.

⁴⁴Life of Charles Sumner (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1910), p. 22.

⁴⁵Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁶Charles Sumner (Dodd, Mead and Company, 1892), p. 12.

⁴⁷Shotwell, p. 23.

To his association and communion with this distinguished jurist . . . Mr. Sumner was to no small extent indebted for his profound views of equity and human rights . . . It was under the genial and erudite tuition of Judge Story, and in the moot courts and discussions of the Law School, that Mr. Sumner first began to command the admiration of his fellow students, as a man of marked ability and rhetorical power.⁴⁸

Practical Education

Acting on the advice of Justice Story, Sumner added a more practical dimension to his education after graduating from Harvard Law School. Incidental to this undertaking, he also gained a greater practical knowledge of rhetorical skills. Travelling to Washington, D.C., to observe the Supreme Court, Sumner visited the Capitol. There, he found Henry Clay's "eloquence . . . splendid and thrilling," and he stressed that Clay "showed feeling; to which, of course, his audience responded."⁴⁹ Despite John C. Calhoun's tendency to be "very rugged in his language" and "unstudied . . . style," Sumner admired the South Carolina Senator's skill in "marching directly to the main points of his subject without stopping for parley or introduction."⁵⁰ In the Supreme Court, however, the Bostonian was unimpressed with Daniel Webster and Francis

⁴⁸Nason, pp. 41-42.

⁴⁹Letter, Sumner to his parents, March 3, 1834, as cited by Pierce, I, 137.

⁵⁰Letter, Sumner to Charles Pickney Sumner, March 21, 1834, as cited by Pierce, I, 143.

Scott Key because neither seemed well prepared in their speaking.⁵¹ At home in Boston, Sumner was equally critical of the sermons of William Ellery Channing, whom he declared a failure in using "the forms of logical discussion, and the close, continuous chain of reasoning."⁵²

Aside from observing other speakers, Sumner gained considerable practice in public speaking during the years immediately following his graduation from law school. While establishing a sizeable legal practice during these years, Sumner engaged in some forensic speaking, although he remained ineffective at cross-examination and relied too much upon prepared notes.⁵³ Aside from his law practice, he contributed heavily to legal journals. At least one of Sumner's articles received "favorable critical notice."⁵⁴ While writing legal treatises, Sumner's "style became more compact, his vocabulary

⁵¹Letter, Sumner to Simon Greenleaf, March 3, 1834, as cited by Pierce, I, 135.

⁵²Letter, Sumner to George Sumner, September, 1842, as cited by Pierce, I, 157. Although written in 1842, Sumner is referring to criticism of Channing voiced in approximately 1835. See Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 36.

⁵³Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. 31-32.

⁵⁴Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. 29, 31-32. See Charles Sumner, "Lex Loci,--Can the Assignee of a Scotch bond maintain an Action in his own name in the Courts of this Country?," The American Jurist, XI (January, 1834), 101-115. In all, Sumner wrote ten legal articles for three journals. In 1834, he became one of the editors of The American Jurist. See Pierce, I, 123-124.

more select, his thought clearer and more compact."⁵⁵ In 1835 and 1836, the future Senator lectured in the Harvard Law School where the students seemed pleased with the technical aspects of his discourses.⁵⁶ With this increased practical experience, Sumner felt that he had gained "new confidence, as well as facility, and, perhaps, capacity" both as a public speaker and as a student of the law.⁵⁷

Sumner Abroad

However, in order to attain "added capacity for usefulness," Charles Sumner travelled in Europe from December, 1837, to April, 1840.⁵⁸ In the course of his travels, Sumner met a large number of important Europeans, many of whom were famous orators, and he adopted a less parochial view of the world. Landing first in France, Sumner embarked upon a study of that country's legal system after mastering the language. For several weeks, he observed the best legal advocates in the French courts, men such as Michel Chevalier, the Baron de Geranda, and Jean Marie Padessus.⁵⁹ Before departing for England, the Massachusetts traveller met most of the leading French intellectual, social, and political leaders.⁶⁰

⁵⁵Pierce, I, 97. ⁵⁶Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 29.

⁵⁷Letter, Sumner to Story, February 5, 1837, as cited in Ibid., p. 34.

⁵⁸Letter, Sumner to Story, December 7, 1837, as cited by Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 44.

⁵⁹Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. 49-50. ⁶⁰Dawes, p. 26.

In England, Sumner met even more important people than he had in France. Apparently becoming the social success of the decade, the Bostonian associated with William Wordsworth, Thomas Carlyle, Sir William Follett, T. B. Macauley, Benjamin Disraeli, and a number of other notable Englishmen.⁶¹ While attending a debate in the House of Commons, Sumner found Robert Peel "polished, graceful, self-possessed, candid, or apparently candid in the extreme." John Russell's speaking impressed Sumner, as did that of Richard Shiel, who "broke forth with one of his splendid bursts, full of animation in the extreme."⁶² Lord Henry Brougham, however, ceased to be the "pure and enlightened orator of Christianity" after he alienated Sumner with his vulgarity in conversation.⁶³ Unable to equal such social success in Italy and Germany, where Sumner spent all of his time studying literature and law, he returned briefly to England before departing for Boston.⁶⁴

Charles Sumner's travels in Europe brought to fruition Simon Greenleaf's fears that the future Senator would not return as the "simple, whole-souled, transparent" individual

⁶¹Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. 55-56.

⁶²Letter, Sumner to Story, June 14, 1838, as cited by Pierce, I, 316.

⁶³Letter, Sumner to George S. Hillard, September 6, 1838, as cited by Pierce, I, 352.

⁶⁴Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. 66-69.

he had been.⁶⁵ In fact, Sumner had abandoned his parochial estimate of his previous associates and their ideas. "One who mingles in the broad society of London and Paris," wrote Sumner, "must be reminded, by the sad contrast, of the narrow impertinence that characterizes our town."⁶⁶ On leaving Europe, he wrote that in England "civilization has gone further than with us."⁶⁷ "My tour," he concluded, "has . . . taught me my ignorance."⁶⁸ He was sure that, when compared to Europe, America was "sad enough--vulgar, petty, grovelling."⁶⁹

Sumner: The Reformer

Shortly after Sumner's return to America in 1840, he began neglecting both his legal practice and Boston Society for the purpose of becoming a prominent spokesman for humanist reform. By 1845, Sumner had become actively involved in several philanthropic movements, and he had begun to deliver lengthy and numerous public addresses in support of reform

⁶⁵Letter, Greenleaf to Francis Lieber, April 11, 1838, as cited in Ibid., p. 61.

⁶⁶Letter, Sumner to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, January 24, 1839, as cited by Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. 60-61.

⁶⁷Letter, Sumner to Benjamin Rand, February 20, 1839, as cited by Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 61.

⁶⁸Letter, Sumner to Lieber, September 12, 1839, as cited by Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 69.

⁶⁹Letter, Sumner to Story, March 24, 1840, as cited by Pierce, II, 144.

causes. Increasingly, he sought the counsel of intellectual reformers to the exclusion of all others. Consequently, the years after his return were ones of development for both his rhetoric and his intellect.

Reform Activities: 1841-1850

In the decade of the 1840's, Charles Sumner was active in philanthropic movements to improve education, to reform prisons, to promote pacificism, and to abolish slavery. From 1845 to 1849, he was active in promoting the establishment of normal schools and in advocating the desegregation of Boston's public schools.⁷⁰ His activism in the peace movement lasted for four years after the presentation of his defense of pacificism in his speech, "The True Grandeur of Nations," in 1845.⁷¹ Shortly before he achieved notoriety as a peace advocate, Sumner had become interested in prison reform, an interest which lasted until about 1848. After 1849, the future Free Soil Senator devoted most of his attention to the problems caused by slavery.⁷² Sumner had, however, established himself as one of the leading spokesmen for each of these causes before he devoted his attention singularly to slavery.⁷³

⁷⁰Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. 101-103, 180-181.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 117-120. ⁷²Pierce, III, 79-97.

⁷³After 1849, Sumner apparently lost his zeal for any reform but those associated with slavery. See Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 120.

Sumner's Reform Rhetoric

In his career of a little over five years as a reformer, Charles Sumner delivered a substantial and important body of public addresses related to social reform. A popular and frequent advocate of philanthropy, the future Senator was able to reach large audiences. Besides immediate auditors, his speeches usually appeared in printed form shortly after delivery. For example, publishers in the United States printed six editions of "The True Grandeur of Nations," and this address underwent an equal number of printings in England.⁷⁴ Following this speech, Sumner became one of the most popular lyceum speakers in New England. Some of his speeches so appealed to the public that he repeated them on several different occasions.⁷⁵

Not confining his efforts to appeals to mass audiences, the future Senator defended prison reform throughout the debates held before the Boston Prison Discipline Society in 1847, a task which extended through eight evenings of debate and received considerable review in the local newspapers.⁷⁶ Carrying his case for desegregation to the courts, Sumner argued before the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts in

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 114.

⁷⁵Such was the case, for example, with "White Slavery in the Barbary States." See Pierce, III, 24.

⁷⁶See Ibid., 89-92.

the Roberts case of 1849.⁷⁷ Sumner's willingness to address all types of audiences and his success in gaining public attention established him as one of the outstanding reform speakers of the 1840's.

During Sumner's years as an active reformer, two men above all others influenced his rhetoric and the ideas contained therein. Throughout this period, he continued his study of great intellects and orators, primarily concentrating upon Demosthenes, Edmund Burke, and Daniel Webster.⁷⁸ However, two close acquaintances, William Ellery Channing and John Quincy Adams, exerted the most influence upon the future Senator's thinking. Summarizing the extent of Sumner's intellectual debt to the Unitarian minister, Donald noted that "where Channing led, Sumner followed."⁷⁹ Charles Sumner's philosophy of reform and his ideas on slavery and peace contained much that Channing believed and argued.⁸⁰ Although Adams' influence upon Sumner began only after 1845, it was equally important if not as extensive as that exerted by Channing. The ex-President instilled in Sumner an interest

⁷⁷See Leonard W. Levy and Harlan B. Phillips, "The Roberts Case: Source of the 'Separate but Equal' Doctrine," American Historical Review, LVI (April, 1951), 510-518. The Court upheld segregation by unanimous decision.

⁷⁸Shotwell, p. 118.

⁷⁹Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 100.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 99-101, 133, 115.

in utilizing political means to secure social reform.⁸¹ In addition, Sumner derived his interpretation of constitutional law from the elderly statesman.⁸²

These two mentors also influenced Sumner's rhetoric as well as his thinking. From Adams, Sumner seemed to copy a certain "fearless pugnacity" in debate.⁸³ In Channing's rhetoric, however, the future Senator found the basis for his own theory of the function of public address. Sumner's own commentary upon the minister as an orator illustrated the importance of Channing as a rhetorical model for the younger reformer.

Eloquence has been called action; but it is something more . . . It cannot assume its highest form in personal pursuit of dishonest guardians or selfish contentions for a crown, not in defence of a murderer, or invective hurled at a conspirator. I would not over-step the proper modesty of this discussion, nor would I disparage the genius of the great masters; but all must join in admitting that no rhetorical skill or oratorical power can elevate these lower, earthy things to the natural heights on which Channing stood, when he pleaded for Freedom and Peace.⁸⁴

⁸¹Shotwell, p. 119.

⁸²Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. 153-154.

⁸³Shotwell, p. 118.

⁸⁴"The Scholar, the Jurist, the Artist, the Philanthropist," in The Works of Charles Sumner, I (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1870), 297. Sumner's collected works hereafter cited as Works.

The Politics of Reform

After 1844, Charles Sumner's concern for "Freedom" and "Peace" increasingly led him into active involvement in politics. The movement by the Polk administration for the annexation of Texas threatened not only war with Mexico, but also the extension of slavery. Sumner, who had long abhorred slavery and was shortly to denounce the institution in his lyceum addresses,⁸⁵ was incensed by the actions of the Federal government.⁸⁶ Overcoming his earlier aversion to politics,⁸⁷ he became a member of the Massachusetts Committee to Prevent the Admission of Texas as a Slave State in October, 1845.⁸⁸ In November, he delivered his first political address and thereby became a leader among the Conscience Whigs.⁸⁹ By 1848, the future Senator clearly recognized politics as a legitimate channel for securing social reforms. On June 28 of that year, Sumner noted:

⁸⁵Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. 130-132. Also see Charles Sumner, "White Slavery in the Barbary States," in Works, I, 385-485.

⁸⁶Letter, Sumner to George Sumner, July 1, 1844, as cited by Pierce, II, 309.

⁸⁷See the letter, Sumner to C. P. Sumner, March 19, 1834, as cited by Pierce, I, 142.

⁸⁸See Massachusetts Committee to Prevent the Admission of Texas as a Slave State, Report of the Committee, Report (October 21, 1845), p. 10.

⁸⁹See Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 140. See also Charles Sumner, "The Wrong of Slavery," in Works, I, 133-148.

In the contemplation of . . . great interests, the intrigues of party, the machinations of politicians, the combinations of office-seekers, all seem to pass from sight. Politics and morals, no longer divorced from each other, become one and inseparable in the holy wedlock of Christian sentiment. Such a union elevates politics, while it gives a new sphere to morals.⁹⁰

Although not at all unsuccessful in employing intra-party politics,⁹¹ Charles Sumner also relied upon public speaking to assist in his attainment of public office. Sumner's rhetoric in support of pacificism had already secured for him considerable backing from leaders of the abolitionist Liberty party.⁹² In the elections of 1848, Sumner accepted the nomination of the Free Soil party for congressman from Boston.⁹³ Although defeated, he was pleased with the impact of his political addresses. Reviewing the campaign, he wrote:

I have spoken a great deal, usually to large audiences, and with a certain effect. As a necessary consequence I have been a mark for abuse. I have been attacked bitterly; but I have consoled myself by what John Quincy Adams said to me during the last year of his life: "No man is abused whose influence is not felt."⁹⁴

⁹⁰"Union Among Men of All Parties Against the Slave Power and the Extension of Slavery," in Works, II, 87.

⁹¹See Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 164.

⁹²See J. Welfred Holmes, "Whittier and Sumner: A Political Friendship," The New England Quarterly, XXX (March, 1957), 58-59. Donald concurs with Holmes on this point. See Ibid., pp. 164-165.

⁹³Sumner had been offered nomination to Congress in 1846 by a faction of the Conscience Whigs, but he had declined. See Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 149.

⁹⁴Letter, Sumner to George Sumner, November 15, 1848, as cited by Pierce, III, 185.

Sumner: The Senator

Although he was again to lose an election for the Congressional seat from Boston in 1850, the next year proved to be one of political triumph for Charles Sumner.⁹⁵ In 1851, a coalition of Free Soilers and Massachusetts Democrats elected Sumner to the United States Senate. Although the coalition was the immediate cause of Sumner's election, his record as a reform orator was, in part, responsible for his acceptability to both parties. After taking Webster's seat in the Senate, the Boston reformer continued to rely upon anti-slavery speeches to maintain his political backing in his home state. The Massachusetts Senator's development as an orator, therefore, was important to his political success.

Rhetoric in the Election of 1850

Charles Sumner's public speaking was a major asset in his election to the Senate. In the election of 1850, the Free Soil party and the antislavery Democrats had to work together to defeat the traditionally strong Whig party.⁹⁶ Sumner, because of his previous public position on slavery, was the most acceptable candidate to both parties for Senator. He had not been, as his reform speeches of the previous five years indicated, an ardent Whig, although he had previously

⁹⁵ Sumner did not believe he could win the election to the House of Representatives from the Whig stronghold of Boston. See Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 185.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 189.

supported that party.⁹⁷ "In case anyone had forgotten that Sumner had never been a strong Whig and had often cooperated with the Democrats," noted Donald concerning Sumner's actions in late 1850, "the two handsomely bound volumes of his speeches, which he published at this strategic time, proved the point."⁹⁸ To guarantee his nomination and support by the Free Soilers, Sumner addressed that party's convention a few days prior to the nominations. This address, "in some respects his most effective one before the people," succeeded in placing Sumner "foremost among the Free Soilers as a candidate for senator."⁹⁹ Charles Sumner's skill as a public speaker was an important factor in assisting him to gain the Senate seat from Massachusetts.

Rhetoric in the Senate: 1851-1860

Sumner continued to make extensive use of his skills as an orator after taking his seat in the Senate. He was a frequent participant in debates, and he addressed himself to many of the political issues confronting the Senate in the decade of the 1850's.¹⁰⁰ On three occasions during the decade,

⁹⁷Pierce, III, 231.

⁹⁸Charles Sumner, p. 187. The reference is to Charles Sumner, Orations and Speeches (2 vols.; Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1850).

⁹⁹Pierce, III, pp. 227, 229.

¹⁰⁰For a collection of the Senator's speeches until 1856, see Charles Sumner, Recent Speeches and Addresses (Boston: Higgins and Bradley, 1856).

however, Sumner delivered speeches in the Senate which dealt with antislavery reforms and which proved especially important to his own political career.

On August 26, 1852, Sumner addressed the Senate in a major speech, "Freedom National; Slavery Sectional," for the purpose of quieting dissent within the ranks of the Massachusetts Free Soilers.¹⁰¹ Prior to this discourse, Sumner's

silence on the question of slavery had resulted in severe criticism from the rank and file of the Free Soil party.¹⁰²

"You must not," Henry Wilson warned Sumner, "let the session close without speaking. Should you do so, you would be openly denounced by nine tenths of our people."¹⁰³ Wendall Phillips

was able to stop a resolution condemning Sumner at a Free Soil Caucus only by recalling the Senator's past record as a reform orator.¹⁰⁴ The speech silenced the criticism of Sumner. It

restored Sumner "to his full tide of popularity with the" members of the Free Soil party in Massachusetts.¹⁰⁵ In

¹⁰¹See Sumner, Works, III, 87-196.

¹⁰²For a discussion of dissent in the Free Soil party because of Sumner's silence, see Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. 220-224.

¹⁰³Letter, Wilson to Sumner, June 29, 1852, as cited by Pierce, III, 288.

¹⁰⁴Letter, Phillips to Sumner, April 27, 1852, as cited by Pierce, III, 286.

¹⁰⁵Letter, Samuel Downer to Horace Mann, August 28, 1852, as cited by Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 239.

addition, "Freedom National; Slavery Sectional" appeared in full in numerous Northern newspapers and "quickly ran through five editions" in pamphlet form.¹⁰⁶ By 1855, however, Sumner again found himself threatened politically by unhappiness among his constituency.

On May 19-20, 1856, Sumner again employed public address as a means of satisfying the demands of his constituents that he act against the spread of slavery.¹⁰⁷ "If Sumner was to regain his political strength in Massachusetts," wrote Donald, "he had once again to agitate the slavery question."¹⁰⁸ Writing to Theodore Parker, Sumner announced: "I shall pronounce the most thorough philippic ever uttered in a legislative body."¹⁰⁹ The Northern response to the resulting address, "The Crime Against Kansas," was favorable to Sumner's political fortunes. In addition, he became something of a martyr to the Republican party subsequent to the beating he received from Preston Brooks, whose own response to the speech found great favor in the South.¹¹⁰ Whether from agreement with Sumner's ideas on slavery or from sympathy for the Senator's prolonged recovery from the beating, his

¹⁰⁶ Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 239.

¹⁰⁷ See Ibid., pp. 276-277. ¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 277.

¹⁰⁹ Letter, May 17, 1856, as cited by Pierce, III, 439.

¹¹⁰ See Pierce, III, 457-459, 472-475.

supporters in the Massachusetts legislature returned him to office by a large majority in 1857.¹¹¹

Upon resuming his seat in the Senate in 1860, Charles Sumner lost little time in resuming his rhetorical attacks upon slavery. His address, "The Barbarism of Slavery," became so popular in the North that it was included in the campaign literature of the Republicans despite the opposition of party leaders.¹¹² "The Barbarism of Slavery" was the last speech in Congress which discussed slavery in general, and it was Sumner's last reform oration.¹¹³ The proponents of slavery soon left Washington, and the Bay State Senator turned his attentions to practical political matters dealing with the Civil War and reunion.

By the beginning of the Civil War, Charles Sumner's achievements were remarkable. As an orator, he had progressed from the boy admirer of the great Classical and modern speakers

¹¹¹ See Donald, *Charles Sumner*, p. 322. For discussion of Sumner's injuries, see Laura A. White, "Was Charles Sumner Shamming, 1856-1859?," *The New England Quarterly*, XXXIII (September, 1960), 291-324; and David Donald, "The Vacant Chair," in *Psychological Studies of Famous Americans*, ed. by Norman Kiell (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), pp. 157-176.

¹¹² See Sumner, *Works*, V, 1-174. See also, Donald, *Charles Sumner*, pp. 358-363. This speech also was reprinted in numerous Northern newspapers and was published in pamphlet form. See Haynes, p. 236.

¹¹³ See Robert T. Oliver, *History of Public Speaking in America* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1965), p. 269. Also see Haynes, p. 235.

to become one of the major New England reform speakers. His oratory in agitation for social reforms in the Senate earned him the reputation as the outstanding antislavery advocate of the years preceding the Civil War. In terms of character and thought, he had ceased to be the parochial, shallow, simple Sumner and had become a statesman doctrinaire, a man who was one of the most influential of his era.

Sumner's Character

An exact discernment of Charles Sumner's character is extremely difficult. The conflicting nature of contemporary reports of the Senator's personal strengths and weaknesses is extremely confusing. As Edwin Percy Whipple noted:

. . . it was the misfortune of Sumner that, more than any other public man of his time, he was subjected to the extremes of adulation and obloquy. His real character can hardly be discerned amid the tumult of puffs and scoffs, of exaltations and execrations, which the mere mention of his name excited during his public career.¹¹⁴

As a result of the disparate nature of contemporary evaluations of Sumner, later historians found support for at least two representations of the nature of the Senator's character.¹¹⁵ Historians writing prior to 1910 typically

¹¹⁴Recollections of Eminent Men (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1887), p. 205.

¹¹⁵This discussion of the historical treatments of Sumner is heavily indebted to Louis Ruchames, "Charles Sumner and American Historiography," The Journal of Negro History, XXXVIII (April, 1953), 139-160.

presented Charles Sumner as an example of the perfect nineteenth-century man. For these writers, even though they frequently disagreed with Sumner on particular issues, as did James Schouler, he was the "ideal statesman."¹¹⁶ They particularly approved of the Senator's dedication to social reform. Whipple, for example, admiringly characterized Sumner as "a philanthropist, a lover of mankind, to his very core."¹¹⁷ As such, James Ford Rhodes called Sumner "one of nature's noblemen, cast in her finest mold."¹¹⁸ Aside from his ideas on philanthropy, these historians respected a number of qualities they attributed to the Massachusetts Senator. They frequently made reference, as did Benjamin Perley Poore, "to his pure heart, to his sense of duty and right, to his courageous willingness to bear obloquy, to his unwearied industry," and to a number of other formidable qualities.¹¹⁹

Historians writing from around the turn of the century until the present hold a radically different view of Sumner's character than did his earlier biographers. Louis Ruchames observes that

¹¹⁶ History of the United States of America (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1899), VI, 229.

¹¹⁷ See p. 207.

¹¹⁸ History of the United States (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1900), II, 141.

¹¹⁹ Perley's Reminiscences (Philadelphia: Hubbard Brothers, Publishers, 1886), II, 292.

. . . in volume after volume written during the past three or four decades, Sumner appears in the garb of an egotistical and arrogant bigot, frequently coarse and vulgar in his debates in the Senate, and driven by fanaticism and revenge in his attitude toward Southerners. Where praiseworthy qualities are cited, they are generally placed within a context of derogation, which renders them insignificant.¹²⁰

A sampling of recent historical commentaries upon Sumner proved Ruchames correct in his observation. Allan Nevins and Henry Steel Commager, perhaps referring to what the Senator's earlier biographers called "industry" or "constancy," labeled him "the fanatical Charles Sumner."¹²¹ James Truslow Adams concurred by mentioning "the fanaticism and egotism of Sumner."¹²² Richard Hofstadter decreed him "a haughty and impatient abolitionist,"¹²³ while Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., described him as "the frigid Sumner."¹²⁴ David Donald entitled him simply the "arrogant Massachusetts solon."¹²⁵ Finally, to Samuel Eliot Morison, the Senator

¹²⁰"Charles Sumner and American Historiography," 139.

¹²¹America: The Story of a Free People (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1942), p. 254.

¹²²The Epic of America (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950), p. 262.

¹²³The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), p. 128.

¹²⁴The Age of Jackson (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1946), p. 61.

¹²⁵Lincoln's Herndon (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), p. 88.

remained a complete "doctrinaire."¹²⁶

Despite the difficulty of the undertaking, a determination of Charles Sumner's character is of importance in criticizing his rhetoric for two reasons. First, Sumner's character determined his potential use of ethical forms of proof. Hence, an examination of Sumner's character is necessary to evaluate his use of ethos. Second, the Burkian emphasis upon motives necessitates a knowledge of the Senator's personality. The subsequent discussion, therefore, is a review of Sumner's rhetorical personality and motives.

Sumner's Rhetorical Character

Charles Sumner's character was, naturally, a mixture of the good and the bad. The perception of Sumner's character by contemporaries seemed to be controlled more by the coincidence of Sumner's values with those of the particular observer than by any other factor.¹²⁷ Over-all, his character assets were such that they appealed most to New Englanders of Puritan stock and philanthropic mind. His personal liabilities, though fewer in number, tended to overshadow his admirable

¹²⁶The Oxford History of the American People (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 715.

¹²⁷Coincidence of beliefs and values is commonly recognized as an important component of ethos. See William Baker English, "Robert S. Kerr--A Study in Ethos," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Speech, University of Oklahoma, 1966). In Sumner's case, a review of evaluations of him convinces this writer that coincidence of values was the controlling factor in determining evaluations of his character.

character traits in the minds of those who disagreed with Sumner.

Contemporaries of Sumner found much in his character to admire. Charles Sumner was a humanitarian. Endowed with a penchant for self-sacrifice, he honestly cared for the well-being of humanity in general.¹²⁸ Closely related to his spirit of self-sacrifice, he was a magnanimous man who was never personally ambitious nor jealous of the successes of others.¹²⁹ Always an idealist and a scholar,¹³⁰ he lived by a set of unimpeachable moral principles.¹³¹ Above all, Sumner considered himself a defender of the right, and his love of justice led to his display of a great deal of personal courage in withstanding criticism.¹³² Finally, he was always

¹²⁸ See George P. Fisher, "Memoir and Letters of Charles Sumner," Yale Review, II (August, 1893), 121; and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Charles Sumner," The Independent, XXVI (April 2, 1874), 1. See also Whipple, p. 207.

¹²⁹ See George Bancroft, "Some Radicals as Statesmen: Chase, Sumner, Adams, and Stevens," The Atlantic Monthly, LXXXVI (August, 1900), 291; and George F. Hoar, "Sumner," The Forum, XVI (January, 1894), 557. See also Whipple, p. 225; Fisher, 130; and Higginson, 1-2.

¹³⁰ See Whipple, p. 240; and Bancroft, 281.

¹³¹ See Moorfield Storey, Charles Sumner (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1900), p. 431; and Arnold B. Johnson, "Charles Sumner," Cosmopolitan, III (June, 1887), 409. See also Whipple, p. 240; Fisher, 121; and Hoar, 556.

¹³² See Elias Nason, The Life and Times of Charles Sumner (Boston: B. B. Russell, 1874), p. 72. See also Whipple, p. 241; Fisher, 121; Bancroft, 281; Hoar, 553-554; Storey, p. 431; and Johnson, 416.

sincere, never devious or secretive, as to his motives and reasons for acting.¹³³

Despite these impressive personal strengths, the Senator also had substantial weaknesses of character. Few contemporaries failed to comment upon Sumner's vanity, his egotistical and domineering manner.¹³⁴ His vanity led Sumner to assume a posture of moral implacability. He refused to accept any questioning of his beliefs after he had decided he was right.¹³⁵ Although he withstood much obloquy, the slightest criticism offended him.¹³⁶ These traits, combined with his tendency to carry idealism to impracticality and with his complete lack of a sense of humor,¹³⁷ repulsed many of Sumner's contemporaries in American society and government.

Given this mixture of good and bad traits, judgments of Charles Sumner's character differed according to the beliefs of the particular evaluator. Northern reformers typically

¹³³See Carl Schurz, Carl Sumner: An Essay, ed. by Arthur Reed Hogue (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1951), p. 81; and Henry Cabot Lodge, "Some Early Memories," Scribner's Magazine, LIII (June, 1913), 716.

¹³⁴See Whipple, p. 224; Fisher, 121; Lodge, 716; Bancroft, 281; Hoar, 556; Storey, p. 431; and Schurz, p. 81.

¹³⁵See Whipple, p. 223; Bancroft, 281; and Johnson, 416.

¹³⁶See Whipple, p. 223; and Hoar, 557.

¹³⁷See Hoar, 552; Fisher, 129; and Schurz, p. 82.

admired Sumner, the man. With their appreciation for "Puritanism," "individual righteousness," and their desire to "make a heaven of this world," they found in Sumner the perfect embodiment of the ideal reformer. They could even admire his lack of humor.¹³⁸ To many Northern reformers, Sumner was the "senator with a conscience."¹³⁹ To more practical, conservative Northerners and to the romantic Southerners, however, Sumner was not nearly so admirable. George Ticknor, the patron of Boston society, labeled Sumner "an outrageous philanthropist."¹⁴⁰ Senator James Mason considered Sumner "non compos mentis."¹⁴¹ The Massachusetts Senator was generally reviled throughout the South.¹⁴²

Motives of a Reformer

The preceding discussion of Charles Sumner's character presented the reasons historians did not attribute his interest in philanthropy to personal political ambitions. The Senator was a humanitarian and actually was reluctant to

¹³⁸These traits of New England reformers presented by Vernon Louis Parrington, The Romantic Revolution in America, Vol. II: Main Currents in American Thought (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1930), pp. 271-274.

¹³⁹Theodore Parker as quoted by Ruchames, "Charles Sumner and American Historiography," ¹⁴⁰.

¹⁴⁰As quoted by Pierce, III, 119.

¹⁴¹As quoted by Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 288.

¹⁴²See Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. 288-289.

assume public office.¹⁴³ Yet, the nature of Sumner's motives aside, explanation of the nature of his actions for social reform and for acquiring political office were difficult to determine. The most recent explanation of the Senator's motives in seeking social reform, that of David Donald, did not convincingly explain his actions in either Boston or Washington.¹⁴⁴ Donald's discussion of Sumner's motives was especially weak in explaining the nature of the Senator's reform rhetoric.

David Donald attributed Sumner's interest in reform to increased frustration which the future Senator encountered after his European tour. In particular, Donald enumerated Sumner's disappointments with his family life, his failure in business, and his loss of friends and rejection by Boston society.¹⁴⁵ "The darker his own personal prospects became," contended Donald, "the greater grew his willingness to recognize a duty to improve society."¹⁴⁶ This historian even attributed the nature of Sumner's reform rhetoric to the future Senator's frustration in personal life.

¹⁴³Supra, p. 45; and Donald, Charles Sumner, pp. ix-x.

¹⁴⁴See Paul Goodman, "David Donald's 'Charles Sumner' Reconsidered," The New England Quarterly, XXXVII (September, 1964), 381-383; and Ruchames, "The Pulitzer Prize Treatment of Charles Sumner," 756-757.

¹⁴⁵Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 101; and Goodman, 381.

¹⁴⁶Charles Sumner, p. 101.

His [Sumner's] inner state of mind was reflected in the rhetoric of his orations, in the frequent images of destruction and mutilation which recurred in his speeches. His references to "nations, now prostrate on the earth with bloody streams running from their sides," to "Blood! blood! . . . on the hands of the representative from Boston," to the "blood which spurts from the lacerated, quivering flesh of the slave," are ample, if unintentional, evidence of the deep anger which drove him on.¹⁴⁷

Donald's explanation of Sumner's motivations ignored the future Senator's demonstration of a deep-seated interest in social reform long before 1845. As early as 1831, Sumner noted: "I have left Boston and the profitless thoughts which its streets, its inhabitants, its politics, and its newspapers ever excite."¹⁴⁸ He desired exclusion from society in order to study "the vast heaps of law-matter, as the temple in which the majesty of right has taken its abode."¹⁴⁹ In 1840, Sumner was already a subscriber to antislavery newspapers and a member of peace societies.¹⁵⁰ In 1837, the future reform activist declared that "the Utopias of one age have been the realities of the next."¹⁵¹ Hence, at the

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 152.

¹⁴⁸Letter, Sumner to Tower, September 29, 1831, as cited by Pierce, I, 111.

¹⁴⁹Letter, Sumner to Stearns, September 25, 1831, as cited by Pierce, I, 109.

¹⁵⁰See Goodman, 382.

¹⁵¹Letter, Sumner to Lieber, October 27, 1837, as cited by Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 106.

very most, Charles Sumner's frustrations in 1845 merely reawakened an interest in reform which he had long held.

Yet, Donald was partially correct in attributing Sumner's reform rhetoric to his frustration. Sumner came to love rhetorical controversy. Finding himself a member of a minority in both Boston and Washington,¹⁵² Sumner could actually do little to reform society. Hence, because of frustration in securing reforms rather than in society, he resorted to "W. E. Channing's technique of reform through verbal exorcism."¹⁵³ With his reform rhetoric, Sumner sublimated for what he could not actually do to society through his actions.

Aside from being a man of considerable achievements, Charles Sumner was a "'statesman doctrinaire' . . . a man inflexibly committed to a set of basic ideas as moral principles."¹⁵⁴ A very moral man, he did not act to further his own ambitions. Having long harbored a distaste for the society in which he found himself, after 1845 he commenced an active career as a reformer. He always believed that he acted in the best interest of society. Even as a Senator, his inflammatory rhetoric was intended to better the lot of mankind rather than his own political fortunes. Undeniably, his public addresses often benefited Sumner politically.

¹⁵²Donald, Charles Sumner, p. 205.

¹⁵³Ibid., p. 116.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. vii.

However, he intended his speeches to help others. A better understanding of how his public addresses fulfilled this intention as well as elevated him to the position of national prominence he enjoyed in 1860 required an understanding of mid-nineteenth century American society.

CHAPTER III

THE AMERICAN SCENE: 1845-1860

The Historical Function of Rhetoric

Speech critics, of necessity, are also historians. Albert J. Croft describes the historical function of speech criticism as being one of reporting and interpreting "the manner in which a speaker's social values have been related to the social values of his audiences in the course of his rhetorical adaptation."¹ Kenneth Burke goes so far as to equate historical situations with rhetorical motives and, thus, to imply that a given speech is inseparable from its historical-intellectual mileu.² Given the observation, then, that the rhetorician is an intellectual historian, the critic must note the "ordinary opinions of men" at the time a given speech is delivered.³ This chapter, therefore, is an examination of the intellectual context surrounding Charles Sumner's addresses in the fifteen years prior to the Civil War.

¹"The Functions of Rhetorical Criticism," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLII (October, 1956), 287.

²See A Rhetoric of Motives (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), p. 35.

³See Aristotle Rhetorica II. xxv. 1402^a33-34.

The subsequent discussion of American ideology in the years preceding the Civil War is in two major parts. The first section is a discovery of the intellectual principles valued by most mid-nineteenth century Americans. The second section focuses upon the differing views of social reform, pacificism, and slavery held by the various audiences to Sumner's reform speeches. Taken as a whole, this chapter constitutes an analysis of each of Charles Sumner's audiences. It does not constitute a history of the times, only an estimate of the popular thought of the Middle Period.

The American Democratic Faith

Ralph Henry Gabriel identified three general doctrines believed in by most Americans of the Middle Period. "Taken together," Gabriel wrote concerning these principles, "they comprised quite literally an American democratic faith."⁴ As previously noted, the three tenets of the "American democratic faith" were: (1) a belief in fundamental law, (2) a profound respect for the individual, and (3) an acceptance of America's uniqueness in history.⁵

These three doctrines were, however, even more important than Gabriel suspected. Each of these broad tenets was the source of a number of lesser, but usually equally

⁴The Course of American Democratic Thought (2nd ed. revised; New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1956), p. 14.

⁵See Ibid., pp. 12-25. See also Supra, p. .

accepted, beliefs of pre-Civil War Americans. In fact, the three beliefs noted above formed the apex of a pyramidal hierarchy of ideas which subsumed the thoughts and values of the majority of the people in the United States. In addition, Antebellum Americans commonly used a system of symbols and rituals derived from the wide acceptance of these doctrines of the democratic faith. Any criticism of Charles Sumner's reform addresses, hence, required a survey of these three main doctrines, of the relevant subordinate ideas derived therefrom, and of the rituals and symbolism of the "American democratic faith."⁶

Doctrine of Fundamental Law

The widespread acceptance by most mid-nineteenth century Americans that there was a fundamental law superior to that made by man greatly affected the popular ideology of the day. The typical American's belief in fundamental law resulted from a confluence of the theories of eighteenth century philosophers with certain traditions from Judeo-Christian theology. Among others, two results from this mergence of thought were the reverence of most Americans (1) for private property and (2) for social progress.

The earliest American acceptance of the doctrine of a fundamental law evolved from the transmission of eighteenth

⁶See Croft, 287.

century European political philosophy to the Colonies. Developing and modifying the ideas of John Locke who delineated life, liberty, and property as natural rights, pamphleteers such as Tom Paine and Richard Price popularized belief in natural law throughout the Colonies. From the acceptance of natural rights, a short mental leap led the Colonists to "the idea of a natural law self-evident to the common man."⁷ In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson developed the most popular statement of these natural rights guaranteed by the fundamental law by describing them as those of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The course of the ideological transmission of the concept of fundamental law to America was best summarized by Gabriel:

. . . from the idea of justice and also from the Enlightenment assumption of the reasonableness of the Author of Nature grew the idea of natural rights of John Locke and of the eighteenth century. Logically the Creator who brought forth man must have endowed him with the right to life and liberty. For the Author of nature to have denied these rights to his creature would have been cruel injustice. The idea of natural rights was general among Americans of the pre-Revolutionary years. Thomas Jefferson wrote into the Declaration of Independence a doctrine to which virtually all his contemporaries assented.⁸

⁷Staughton Lynd, Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), p. 59.

⁸See p. 15.

Other thinkers, more heavily imbued with the traditions of Judeo-Christian theology than were the intellectual descendents of the Enlightenment, later completed the American concept of a fundamental law by adding a moral and religious dimension. "There is but one unfailing good," wrote William Ellery Channing, "and that is, fidelity to the Everlasting Law written on the heart, and re-written and republished in God's Word."⁹ "There are principles of abstract justice which the Creator of all things has impressed on the mind of his creature man," concurred the Virginian John Marshall in 1823, "and which are admitted to regulate, in great degree, the rights of civilized nations."¹⁰ Another jurist, Joseph Story, defined the fundamental law as "the duty to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God."¹¹ Gabriel best described the substance of the doctrine of fundamental law in the middle of the nineteenth century:

. . . actually the fundamental law of the Middle Period, as it was accepted by a people little trained in philosophy, consisted of a blend of two familiar things, the doctrine of natural rights of the Declaration of Independence and the eternal will of

⁹"Slavery," in The Works of William E. Channing, D.D., II (8th ed.; Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1848), p. 8.

¹⁰See Johnson and Graham's *Lessee v. William M'Intosh*, 543 Wheaton (U.S.), 572 (1823) as cited in Gabriel, p. 16.

¹¹The Miscellaneous Writings of Joseph Story, ed. by William W. Story (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1852), p. 431.

a just and loving God about which the minister preached in church.¹²

Furthermore, the acceptance of this doctrine of the fundamental law was a nationwide phenomenon during the Middle Period. The intellectual leaders of the South, as well as those in the North, accepted the blend of natural and moral rights as the basis of the fundamental law. For example, John C. Calhoun wrote:

In order to have a clear and just conception of the nature and object of government, it is indispensable to understand correctly what the constitution or law of our nature is, in which government originates; . . . that law, without which government would not, and with which, it must necessarily exist.¹³

For Calhoun, the natural law which spawned government was "of Divine ordination."¹⁴ Other leaders and the common people of the South both absorbed Calhoun's version of the fundamental law into their thinking.¹⁵

In fact, the doctrine of fundamental law was a part of the everyday thinking of most Americans during the Middle Period. As it had for their ancestors during the Revolution, the fundamental law provided them with a "set of moral standards governing private conduct."¹⁶ In addition, mid-nineteenth

¹²Gabriel, p. 17.

¹³"A Disquisition on Government," in The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. by Richard K. Cralle, I (Charleston: Steam Power-Press of Walker and James, 1851), 1.

¹⁴Ibid., 5.

¹⁵Gabriel, p. 109.

¹⁶See Clinton Rossiter, Seedtime of the Republic (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953), p. 368.

century Americans viewed the fundamental law as an actual codification which regulated government, as well as private citizens, through the judicial process.¹⁷ Furthermore, the doctrine of fundamental law was the source of two widely accepted, and somewhat antithetical, subordinate beliefs of the Middle Period.

The Sanctity of Private Property

Americans in the Middle Period acknowledged the sanctity of private property as being a logical inference from the Enlightenment strain in their doctrine of the fundamental law. Thomas Jefferson had failed in his attempt to make property a social rather than a natural right. In the Declaration of Independence, "he was something of a nonconformist in substituting" the pursuit of happiness for the Lockian right of property.¹⁸ From the very beginning, most Americans assumed that the Declaration's "provision for the rights of persons was supposed to include of itself those of property."¹⁹

Both the literature and the political rhetoric of the mid-nineteenth century abounded with defenses of the institution of private property. The novels of James Fenimore

¹⁷Gabriel, p. 17. See also Ibid.

¹⁸Rossiter, p. 380.

¹⁹Letter, James Madison to James Brown, 1788, as cited by Lynd, p. 68.

Cooper, Herman Melville, and Nathaniel Hawthorne and the public speeches of Edward Everett were all popular espousals of the importance of property as a right.²⁰ In South Carolina, Francis Lieber wrote the most popular political science treatises of the Middle Period, and he staunchly defended the importance of property as a natural right.²¹ Lieber considered the unlimited acquisition of property a "primordial right."²² Joseph Story and James Kent, the two most influential jurists of the day, severely restricted the role of government in regulating property in their texts on constitutional law.²³

In addition, the political rhetoric of both the Whig and the Democratic parties of the 1840's and 1850's demonstrated the importance of appeals in support of private property as a means of securing votes. Joel H. Silbey convincingly argued that the political platforms of both parties

²⁰See Arthur Alphonse Ekirch, Jr., The Idea of Progress in America, 1815-1860 (New York: Peter Smith, 1951), pp. 182-189.

²¹See Merle Curti, "Francis Lieber and Nationalism," The Huntington Library Quarterly, IV (April, 1941), 270-276, 283-284.

²²See Manual of Political Ethics, ed. by Theodore D. Woolsey (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1892), I, 193. See also On Liberty and Self-Government, ed. by Theodore D. Woolsey (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1894), p. 103.

²³Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (2nd ed.; New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1951), p. 237.

indicated that

the two major political parties generally agreed that the government--federal, state, and local--played a major role in the American economic system. Both parties sought legislative enactments which would promote the economic growth of different groups on the American scene.²⁴

Significantly, both parties promised to protect and enhance the growth of private wealth although they disagreed as to how best to accomplish this task.²⁵ Hence, the traditional view of the Democratic party as seeking "to restrain the power of the business community"²⁶ failed to realize the importance of property to even the party of Jackson. As the platforms, the appeals to the people, clearly indicated, the typical American of the Middle Period considered the proper role of government as being one of sanctifying rather than regulating private property.²⁷

²⁴The Shrine of Party (Pittsburg: The University of Pittsburg Press, 1967), pp. 26-27.

²⁵See Lee Benson, The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 86-109.

²⁶See Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1946), pp. 505-523.

²⁷See Silbey, p. 27. The statistical procedures of Benson and Silbey were crude, but their interpretations are persuasive. See David Donald, "Radical Historians on the Move," New York Times Book Review, July 19, 1970, p. 2.

Progress as a Natural Law

Somewhat antithetical to their high regard for the rights of property, Americans of the Middle Period also subscribed to the idea that human and social progress was a natural law. One historian noted that in the middle of the nineteenth century a "host of patriotic orators and writers . . . reminded the American people that the Revolution and the Declaration of Independence had made possible that freedom and liberty which would henceforth be the guide-star for the future progress of democracy."²⁸ Hence, the people derived their faith in progress from their belief in the doctrine of fundamental law.

In addition, the American people's faith in progress cut across sectional and class boundaries. Fredrick Grimke, an Ohio political scientist, felt that future progress was assured by certain "laws of the physical world" which had "existed always precisely as they" did in the Middle Period.²⁹ George Bancroft and Richard Hildreth, the leading historians of the day, concurred with Grimke on much the same grounds.³⁰ In the South, Lieber insisted that progress would come from

²⁸Ekirch, p. 38.

²⁹The Nature and Tendency of Free Institutions, ed. by John William Ward (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1968), p. 672.

³⁰Ekirch, pp. 260-262.

from existing institutions.³¹ "What is man born for," queried Ralph Waldo Emerson, "but to be a Reformer, a Remaker of what man has made?"³² The common people responded that man's purpose was to progress, to further improve civilization and democracy. Americans' "faith in progress" became a "dogma of widespread mass appeal" in the Middle Period.³³

Doctrine of the Free Individual

Closely aligned with Americans' belief in fundamental law was their widespread acceptance of the "doctrine of the free individual."³⁴ Since they were convinced that progress was an immutable law of nature, most people of the Middle Period reached the conclusion that man as an individual was capable of unlimited improvement, if only he were given the opportunity. "The infallible index of true progress," insisted Emerson, "is found in the tone the man takes."³⁵ The self-sufficient frontiersman became the ideal of the West

³¹See On Civil Liberty and Self-Government, I, 25. See also Curti, "Francis Lieber and Nationalism," 270-276.

³²"Man the Reformer," in The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. by J. E. Cabot, I (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1883), 236. Hereafter cited as Works.

³³Ekirch, p. 32.

³⁴See Gabriel, p. 20. The terminology, "doctrine of the free individual," is Gabriel's.

³⁵See "The Over-Soul" in Works, II, 261.

and the center of much of the day's literature.³⁶ In the more industrialized East, "capitalistic enterprise had not developed beyond the stage in which its most important figure was the individual entrepreneur."³⁷ The rhetoric in the South abounded with "appeals to American free institutions" in the area of economic endeavor.³⁸ Americans had come to believe that individuals must be accorded freedom to seize those opportunities open to them. Given this freedom they were sure that man could reach a state of civilization, governed by the fundamental law, in which "the higher part of [man's] nature is made to predominate over the lower."³⁹ Accepting the potential of the free individual, they looked to government to provide and secure opportunities.

As a result of their acceptance of the doctrine of the free individual, most Americans became concerned with American expansion. In the 1840's, "citizens' meetings in different parts of the nation supported American expansion and warmly endorsed the acquisition of Oregon and Texas."⁴⁰ Most Americans welcomed territorial expansion as a means of enhancing opportunities for individuals to improve their own lots in life. Even if they opposed a certain territorial

³⁶See Daniel Boorstin, The Americans: The National Experience (New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 327-333.

³⁷Gabriel, p. 21.

³⁸Ekirch, p. 225.

³⁹Grimke, p. 47.

⁴⁰Silbey, p. 60.

acquisition, as the North did in the case of the Mexican War, all Americans were concerned with how the "fruits" of conquest were made available for agricultural and industrial progress.⁴¹ Hence, the doctrine of the free individual played an important role in the thinking of most Americans.

Doctrine of American Uniqueness

The third major tenet of the "American democratic faith," the doctrine of America's uniqueness in history, also affected the average citizen's thought during the Middle Period. Most Americans of the mid-nineteenth century believed that the United States had a mission of setting an example for the rest of the world, an example of what a nation of free men governed by the fundamental law could accomplish.⁴² "We stand the latest, and if we fail, probably the last experiment of self-government by the people," proclaimed Joseph Story on July 4, 1826. "Already," he concluded, "the age has caught the spirit of our institutions."⁴³ Gabriel summarized the impact of the doctrine of American uniqueness upon the popular thought of the Middle Period:

. . . the doctrine of mission . . . provided for American democracy with its emphasis on freedom and diversity of opinion, a philosophy of unity. And, finally, the conviction of the destiny of America held up before the humble democrat . . . a vision

⁴¹Silbey, p. 11.

⁴²See Gabriel, pp. 22-25.

⁴³Oration by Story as quoted by Ibid., p. 23.

in which he could see his inconspicuous performance of civic duties invested with a world of significance.⁴⁴

The Upswing of Democracy

One of the two subordinate and widely accepted ideas derived from the doctrine of American uniqueness was the belief that the American form of democracy was the ideal form of government. Prior to 1830, Americans "had not, as a rule, committed themselves openly to democracy."⁴⁵ As early as 1815, however, Americans had accomplished "a successful drive . . . to bring about universal white suffrage."⁴⁶ So pleased were they with the result that the Middle Period "witnessed the upswing of democracy."⁴⁷ For the people of the day, a major part of the American mission was to demonstrate the desirability of a democratic government, a form of government which met with little criticism in the United States.⁴⁸

Most Americans were so committed to a democratic form of government that they came to consider "democracy" as being synonymous with "civilization." Hence, Charles and Mary Beard employed the two terms interchangeably in their

⁴⁴See p. 25.

⁴⁵Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, The American Spirit, Vol. IV: The Rise of American Civilization (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942), p. 178.

⁴⁶Gabriel, p. 20.

⁴⁷Beard and Beard, p. 178.

⁴⁸Gabriel, p. 23.

history of American civilization during the Middle Period.⁴⁹ They noted that Intellectual leaders of the mid-nineteenth century such as George Bancroft,⁵⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson,⁵¹ W. E. Channing,⁵² and Henry C. Carey⁵³ all committed themselves as advocates for democracy. Having established the importance of democracy to mid-nineteenth century concepts of American civilization, the Beards concluded:

. . . undoubtedly the idea [of American democratic civilization] had been widely disseminated and was making a deeper imprint on popular consciousness. . . . Although many of the books, addresses, and articles in which the idea was discussed were directed to small circles, others reached large audiences. . . . Powerful persons, women as well as men, whose voices reached multitudes in their efforts to influence public opinion in innumerable directions, had sent this "electric word" broadcast. Other indications that the idea was being diffused more widely and gaining force appeared in the growth of American journalism during the era of the popular upsurge . . .⁵⁴

American Nationalism

Just as the doctrine of American uniqueness provided Americans with a mission, it also gave them a strong sense of national unity. They began to take pride in all things American. Ralph Waldo Emerson's oration, "The American Scholar," was one of many calls for nationalism in literature.⁵⁵

⁴⁹See Beard and Beard, pp. 168-276. ⁵⁰Ibid., p. 178.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 194. ⁵²Ibid., p. 254.

⁵³Ibid., p. 223. ⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 273-274.

⁵⁵See "The American Scholar," in Works, I, 113.

Massachusetts Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw, Joseph Story, and others Americanized the common law and established legal principles applicable to conditions in all the states.⁵⁶

George Bancroft's history achieved rapid popularity because "he used the national past as testimony of the national mission."⁵⁷ In fact, during the Middle Period, nationalism became a sort of popular religion among the common people.⁵⁸

As a result of their nationalist sentiment, the Americans of the Middle Period overcame sectional differences and formed two national political parties. At least throughout the 1840's, the United States had "an essentially national political culture and most involved people, despite their local differences and viewpoints, operated within the basic institutions of that culture--the Whig and Democratic parties."⁵⁹ In this period, "the common people became increasingly interested in politics."⁶⁰ Virtually everyone was involved in the nationwide concern over national political questions. American nationalism was such a strong force that, "even in 1860, sectional influences apparently did not determine how every Southern congressman would vote--even on issues dealing directly with slavery in the territories."⁶¹

⁵⁶Boorstin, p. 39.

⁵⁷Ibid., 373.

⁵⁸Gabriel, p. 25.

⁵⁹Silbey, p. 142.

⁶⁰Merle Curti, et al., A History of American Civilization (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), p. 259.

⁶¹Silbey, p. 145.

Clearly, the "American democratic faith" and its subordinate ideas such as nationalism remained a significant force throughout the 1840's and 1850's.

Rituals and Symbols

In many ways, the "American democratic faith" was the equivalent of a popular religion. As Gabriel noted, there were a number of parallels between Judeo-Christian theology and the outlook most Americans had upon their political system during the mid-nineteenth century. (1) The doctrine of fundamental law was closely related to the Christian view of the Divine Word. (2) Both the Constitution and the statutes of the day were considered much the same as the restraints upon evil found in the Calvinist tradition. (3) The doctrine of the free individual with its emphasis upon the progress of men "had its counterpart in the emphasis of the Evangelicals upon the freedom of the regenerated man from the terrors of [the] Old Testament code." (4) The emphasis upon progress in the democratic faith paralleled the Christian concepts of Eden and Heaven. (5) "The mission of American democracy to save the world from the oppression of autocrats," concluded Gabriel, "was a secular version of the destiny of Christianity to save the world from the governance of Satan."⁶²

⁶²See pp. 37-38.

Provided with the status of a popular religion, the democratic faith of Americans also included a number of rituals and a system of symbols. These two characteristics were of import to any religion, and the "American democratic faith" was no exception. Although the rituals and symbols approached infinity in number, some were more important than others in the relationship between the common people and their faith in democracy.

Rituals of the Democratic Faith

Of all the means of observing the democratic faith in the middle of the nineteenth century, "oratory had become the main form of American public ritual."⁶³ Americans of the Middle Period held the spoken word in awe. In their religion, most Americans concurred with Emerson that the sermon was "essentially the most flexible of all organs, of all forms."⁶⁴ Hence, they naturally turned to oratory in their public worship of democracy. In the public arena of the Middle Period, "the orator--the man speaking to or for or with his community--acquired a mythic role."⁶⁵

⁶³Boorstin, p. 312.

⁶⁴See "The Divinity School Address," The Literature of the United States, ed. by Walter Blair, Theodore Hornberger, and Randall Stewart (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, and Company, 1957), p. 453.

⁶⁵Boorstin, p. 308.

Daniel Boorstin's examination of American literature of the Middle Period effectively described the importance of oratory as a ritual of the democratic faith. "In this first national era," wrote Boorstin, "the 'great orations' were widely recognized as the levers of American history and the formulae of American purpose."⁶⁶ Speech was the most important form for establishing the American political tradition of democracy and for amplifying the tenets of the democratic faith. "The brevity of the American tradition and the scarcity of sacred political texts gave the Great Debates [of the Middle Period] a peculiar role in helping the nation to discover itself."⁶⁷ So strong and so important was the mythos surrounding oratory that much of the American literature was a "declamatory literature." Thousands of speeches were reprinted, and many public statements were in speech form and style even though they were never delivered.⁶⁸ Even when in print, these sermons of the "American democratic faith" were accorded all of the respect devoted to actual orations. These printed speeches still functioned as orations-- "as a stirrer primarily of common sentiments between a speaker (rather than a writer) and a listener (rather than a reader)."⁶⁹ Boorstin concluded that

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 312.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 307.

⁶⁹Ibid.

Oration seemed almost to displace legislation as the main form of political action. The "great speeches" of that era possessed a popular power, a historic significance, and a symbolic meaning difficult for us to understand.⁷⁰

Although many of the speech occasions were rituals, one, the Fourth of July celebration, set "the mood of American national ritual in the Middle Period."⁷¹ "East, West, North, or South, the Oration was the featured performance" of the Fourth of July, the Sabbath of the democratic faith.⁷² Whatever other events accompanied the celebration, the Fourth of July oration was always "the climax of the celebration."⁷³ This particular rhetorical ritual even acquired standardized motifs. First, Fourth of July orations typically demonstrated "the optimism, the enthusiasm, the vagueness of line between fact and hope, between what had actually happened and what ought to have happened," which most Americans of the day felt when contemplating the past and future of their nation.⁷⁴ Second, most of the orations delivered on the Fourth served as a "festival of justification," a reaffirming of faith in "the arguments and purposes of national existence."⁷⁵ Fourth of July orations, and declamatory rhetoric in general, were certainly the major rituals of the "American democratic faith."

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 311.

⁷²Boorstin, p. 388.

⁷⁴Boorstin, p. 389.

⁷¹Gabriel, p. 99.

⁷³Gabriel, p. 98.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 390.

Symbols of the Democratic Faith

America's faith in democracy, like any religion, required common symbols to unify and motivate its followers. The ideas and concepts included in the democratic faith were abstractions. To have real meaning to the common people, they needed some form of symbolic expression.⁷⁶ To a certain extent, this need for symbols of national unity in support of the doctrines of the democratic faith was fulfilled by the "deification" of many of the nation's early military and political leaders. Biographers such as Mason Weems, William Tudor, and William Wirt mythologized their respective subjects: George Washington, James Otis, and Patrick Henry. Historians such as Jared Sparks edited and embellished the papers of the founding fathers until they took on the aspect of "sacred writings" which embodied the democratic ideals of the Middle Period.⁷⁷ The two most important symbols of the democratic faith, however, were the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

For Americans of the Middle Period, the Declaration of Independence was the ultimate espousal of the democratic faith. The Declaration exhibited sufficient ambiguity to make it a flexible espousal of the principles of democracy. It was, due to its many possible meanings, a unifying symbol acceptable to all Americans. "The Declaration," concluded Gabriel,

⁷⁶Gabriel, p. 92.

⁷⁷See Boorstin, pp. 337-362.

"created no problems and roused no controversies. The Declaration was not law but rather rhetoric, brilliant rhetoric."⁷⁸ Consequently, the Declaration of Independence became the most popular symbol of the democratic faith in the rhetorical rituals of the Middle Period.⁷⁹

Although not as important for ceremonial purposes, the Constitution was also an important symbol of the "American democratic faith." The Constitution symbolized the desire of Americans to subject their social and political actions to a sacred, written law in the way in which they measured their actions morally by the code presented in the Bible. The Constitution, then, even with differing interpretations, was an important symbol of justice which acted as a written codification of the fundamental law.⁸⁰ The best description of how the Constitution fulfilled its role as a symbol of the democratic faith was presented by a twentieth-century novelist:

. . . in those days, people were always standing on the Constitution. The Constitution was like the Bible. When you appealed to the Constitution, you had made the ultimate appeal. If you could quote the Constitution to support your argument, you had quoted God. People who quoted the Constitution always did so solemnly and as if that finished the matter. The majority of arguments ended by each man appealing to the Constitution, and the man who did it oftenest⁸¹ and in the loudest voice was adjudged the winner.

⁷⁸Gabriel, p. 99. ⁷⁹Ibid., p. 98. ⁸⁰Gabriel, p. 103.

⁸¹Ross Lockridge, Jr., Raintree County (New York: Popular Library Press, 1948), p. 41.

Audiences of the Middle Period

The "American democratic faith" was a powerful unifying force from 1845 to 1860, but the United States also exemplified significant divisiveness during the same period. The people differed on a number of social, economic, and political questions. Because of these differences, any orator of the period of necessity addressed a number of audiences if his speeches received more than local attention. Among others, three particularly divisive issues of the day were those of (1) social reform, (2) peace, and (3) slavery.⁸² These somewhat inter-related questions defined some of the audiences of the Middle Period by way of the differing values expressed by various groups in relation to these three issues.

The subsequent discussion is an historical amplification of the various viewpoints expressed by mid-nineteenth century Americans regarding the three issues noted above. Due to the conflicting interpretations of the period from 1845 to 1860 by historians and due to the speech critic's dependence upon historians, the rhetorician faces a difficult task in analyzing the audiences of the Middle Period. The following discussion rests upon two assumptions. First, the assumption is made that overt behavior such as voting is the most effective means of judging attitude in a democratic

⁸²See supra, pp. 65-79.

society. Second, the subsequent survey presumes that congressional voting patterns reflected the attitudes of constituencies, if not in each particular case, at least in general between the years 1845 to 1860. These assumptions are made by historians such as Joel H. Silbey, Lee Benson, and Thomas B. Alexander.⁸³ Hence, the following analysis of the audiences of the Middle Period rests upon conclusions based upon empirical evidence whenever possible. Specifically, the interpretation of the mid-nineteenth century American scene offered by these three historians is emphasized in the subsequent discussion.

The combined emphasis upon the issues of social reform, peace, and slavery and upon empirical evidence isolated at least five important audiences of the Middle Period. With relation to the questions of social reform and peace, two audiences dominated the scene from 1845 to roughly 1852. These two audiences were the Whig and Democratic parties. With the increasing importance of the slavery question after 1846, however, the issues of social reform and peace decreased in importance in the public eye.⁸⁴ Consequently, the populace

⁸³See Silbey, pp. 13-17; Benson, p. vii; and Thomas B. Alexander, Sectional Stress and Party Strength (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967), pp. 3-8.

⁸⁴As used in this section, social reform refers primarily to differing philosophies of how best to secure political or economic progress. It is to be distinguished from humanistic or philanthropic reform. In addition, the peace issue refers to all those questions related to war as a means of territorial expansion.

realigned into two sectionalized political parties.⁸⁵ These new parties constituted two new audiences. Finally, throughout the period, a group of Northern philanthropist reformers increased in importance as an audience because of their impact upon the thought of the day regarding social change, slavery, and peace.

The Era of National Parties

Between 1845 and 1852, most Americans supported either the Whig or Democratic parties. The parties each had supporters in all sections of the country, and they each demonstrated considerable cohesiveness. In essence, they constituted a national political culture and most involved people operated within either the Whig or Democratic parties. An analysis of each party's platforms and congressional voting behavior suggested that the parties represented two distinct viewpoints regarding the questions of social reform or change and peace. In addition, during the years between 1845 and 1852, the parties were able to repress sectional dissent on the slavery issue, thus suggesting that this question had not completely sectionalized the nation at that time.

⁸⁵The Republican party is assumed to be merely an extension of the Whig party. See Alexander, p. 110; and Silbey, p. 144.

Whig vs. Democrat

Throughout the era of national parties from 1845 to 1852, the Whig and Democratic parties remained close rivals and drew support from all sections of the country. An analysis of the presidential elections of 1848 and 1852 revealed how close the two parties were to each other in relative strength. In the election of 1848, national returns indicated that the Whigs received 47.3 percent of the popular vote as opposed to the Democrats' 42.5 percent. In 1852, the Democrats led with 50.7 percent of the vote while the Whigs trailed with 43.9 percent of the vote.⁸⁶ Utilizing the same eight regional blocks employed by the United States Census Bureau during the period, Silbey concluded that this balance of voting power extended below the national level and that each section had a closely matched two-party system. On only two occasions between 1836 and 1852 did either party gain more than 60 percent of the vote in a national election year in any one of these eight regions.⁸⁷

A look at the sectional distribution of votes in these two elections disclosed the truly national nature of each of the parties. In 1848 and 1852, the Democrats averaged 51.7 percent of the votes in the South, 42.7 percent in

⁸⁶Silbey, p. 19. All percentages in this section are rounded to the nearest one-tenth of a percent. Third parties are ignored.

⁸⁷Ibid.

the North, and 48.9 percent in the Old Northwest. Whig averages for the same elections ran at 48.6 percent, 46.5 percent, and 43 percent in each of the three sections respectively.⁸⁸ Obviously, the seven years between 1845 and 1852 was an era in which two political parties, both of roughly equivalent strength and each receiving substantial support from all sections, held sway in the American political arena. In addition, as the following discussion of each of the two parties demonstrated, the Whigs and Democrats had different programs which were acceptable to people in all sections of the nation.⁸⁹

The Democratic Party

During the 1840's and into the early 1850's, the Democratic party was successful in maintaining a national following by offering the voters a program labelled by one historian as "negative liberalism."⁹⁰ The democratic negativism related primarily to questions dealing with social, political, or economic reform. Specifically, the Democrats in Congress displayed considerable party unity while voting

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 21.

⁸⁹Although this discussion does not mention the years 1845-1847, conditions regarding the parties were probably the same as for the years 1848-1852. The election of 1844 was not significantly different in party strength or make-up than was the case in 1848 and 1852. See Silbey, pp. 19-21.

⁹⁰Benson, pp. 104-109.

against tariffs, land issues, and internal improvements in the Twenty-ninth and Thirtieth Congresses. The Democrats attempted positive action only in the area of territorial expansion. These conclusions found support through analysis of the voting of Democratic congressmen.

Twenty-ninth and Thirtieth Congresses

Throughout the Twenty-ninth and Thirtieth Congresses, "party identification remained the most important influence in Congressional voting" despite some loss of party unity.⁹¹ On those issues relating to social reform, the Democrats in these two Congresses consistently favored limiting the role of the federal government. For example, on the tariff issue, 67.4 percent of the House Democrats clearly favored low duties in 1846 while 15.6 percent assumed a moderate position neither particularly for nor against higher rates.⁹² In 1847, 63.3 percent strongly favored low tariffs, and 35 percent were moderate on the question.⁹³ Of the Democrats in the Twenty-ninth Congress, 76.5 percent favored disbursement of

⁹¹Silbey, p. 81.

⁹²Ibid., p. 71. To compute the strength of positions, Silbey employed a Guttman scalogram. See p. 15. In the discussion of these issues, the Senate voting is not considered. Generally, Senate voting patterns were more extreme in their support of the same position assumed by House Democrats.

⁹³Ibid., p. 88.

government lands at low prices to aid small farmers.⁹⁴

Along much the same order, 65.7 percent voted against government intervention in internal improvements.⁹⁵ In the Thirtieth Congress finally, 62.6 percent of the House Democrats were strongly disposed against government intervention in the area of internal improvements.⁹⁶

Hence, on questions relating to social reform, the Democratic party maintained a coherent policy of "negative liberalism" throughout the Twenty-ninth and Thirtieth Congresses. The level of party unity on these questions "changed only moderately" in the years between the two Congresses.⁹⁷ The dissention from party doctrine on these questions was, however, at times sectional in origin. The West, for example, broke from the party in supporting internal improvements.⁹⁸ Yet, the Democratic party showed cohesion and effective discipline on the issues of social reform.

The Democrats were similarly united on questions relating to territorial expansion and the Mexican War. Early in the Twenty-ninth Congress, Democrats were, however, hard pressed in mustering party support for territorial expansion at the cost of war. In 1845, on questions relating to the annexation of Texas and other territories, 77.6 percent of the House Democrats voted pro-expansion, but only 40.6 percent

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 72. ⁹⁵Ibid., p. 75. ⁹⁶Ibid., p. 88.

⁹⁷Alexander, p. 66. ⁹⁸Silbey, p. 82.

of their Senate colleagues voted likewise because of fears of war.⁹⁹ When war began, 92.6 percent of the Democratic senators, rallying behind a Democratic President, voted for measures furthering the war.¹⁰⁰ Democratic representatives, being more vulnerable to public reaction, changed their previous position in support of territorial expansion at the cost of war. The northern Democratic representatives broke from the party, and only 45.2 percent of the House Democrats favored pro-war measures.¹⁰¹ By the Thirtieth Congress, however, party discipline had been restored. In this Congress, 91 percent of the Democratic representatives and 64.7 percent of the senators voted for the war.¹⁰² Hence, Democrats, with some difficulty from sectional dissent, maintained party cohesion throughout these two Congresses on issues relating to territorial expansion and war as well as on those on social reform.¹⁰³

Thirty-first and Thirty-second Congresses

Although the Democrats remained a strong national party throughout the Thirty-first and Thirty-second Congresses, less party cohesion on questions relating to social reform and peace was evident from 1849 to 1852 than in the previous four years. In the area of social reform, the Democrats

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 74. ¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 77. ¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 86. ¹⁰³Alexander, p. 66.

continued their policy of "negative liberalism." On the public lands issue in the Thirty-first Congress, 44.6 percent of the House Democrats favored liberal sales measures while 42.4 percent were moderate on the issue.¹⁰⁴ The change from the previous voting patterns was due to local demands rising out of the Mexican War.¹⁰⁵ The same phenomenon evidenced itself in the decreasing opposition toward government intervention in internal improvements. On this issue, 49.5 percent of the Democrats in the House were anti-government involvement.¹⁰⁶ By the Thirty-second Congress, however, the Representatives mustered an opposition of 56.2 percent against federal involvement.¹⁰⁷ During these two Congresses, the Democrats also opposed extension of postal and other governmental services by percentages ranging from 40 to 50 percent.¹⁰⁸

On questions relating to war, the Democrats were less aggressive than they had been in previous Congresses. On the issue of intervening on behalf of Hungary against Austria, 59.5 percent strongly favored an aggressive policy while 35.1 percent of the Democratic representatives remained moderate on the question.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴Silbey, p. 115. ¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 116. ¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., pp. 130-131. Again, Senate voting is excluded because it reflected the same trends as in House voting.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 134.

Clearly, by 1852, "large-scale cohesive factors" no longer influenced Democratic voting in the way they once had.¹¹⁰ Although the Democrats still maintained a national policy on the questions relating to social change and peace, party discipline had decreased. "Congressional voting had broken down," noted Silbey, "more than ever before, into a multiplicity of factional groupings, behavioral factors, and individual decision-making, with only occasional alignments of these patterns into large-scale partisan or sectional groupings."¹¹¹ Although the Democratic party was not yet a sectional party, its voting patterns evidenced "a critical loosening of party ties" which had made it a national party.¹¹²

The Whig Party

Throughout the years between 1845 and 1852, the Whigs retained their status as a national party by offering the voters a program of "positive liberalism" which usually differed from the platform supported by the Democrats.¹¹³ In the areas related to social change, Whigs typically supported high tariffs, federal intervention in internal improvements, and a liberal land policy.¹¹⁴ In areas involving foreign affairs, Whigs usually exhibited less aggressiveness than did the Democrats. Again, these conclusions found support through surveys of congressional voting patterns.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 135. ¹¹¹Ibid. ¹¹²Alexander, p. 77.

¹¹³Benson, pp. 104-109. ¹¹⁴Silbey, pp. 29-32.

Twenty-ninth and Thirtieth Congresses

In the Twenty-ninth and Thirtieth Congresses, the Whig party demonstrated considerable unity in support of their program of "positive liberalism." On issues involving questions of social change, the Whigs consistently supported increasingly the central government's role. In the Twenty-ninth Congress, 98.6 percent of the House Whigs voted for high tariffs.¹¹⁵ In the second session, 97 percent favored high tariffs.¹¹⁶ In 1846, 98.4 percent of the Whig representatives desired higher rates on public land sales.¹¹⁷ Finally, during the Twenty-ninth Congress, 87.1 percent of the representatives voted for federal intervention in internal improvements.¹¹⁸ In the Thirtieth Congress, this percentage had increased to 94.7 percent.¹¹⁹ The Whigs, then, suffered from little dissent from 1845 to 1849 over issues relating to social change. If anything, the Whigs were more united during these years on the social change issues than were the Democrats.¹²⁰

A high degree of party unity also was characteristic of the Whig party on the territorial expansion and Mexican War issues. In the Twenty-ninth Congress, 67.3 percent of

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 71. ¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 88. ¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 72.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 75. ¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 88.

¹²⁰The Senate is excluded from this discussion because voting trends among Whig senators were virtually the same as in the House.

the House Whigs opposed expansion with 31 percent of the party congressmen being moderate on the issue.¹²¹ Faring better in the Senate, 100 percent of the Whigs voted anti-expansion.¹²² The southern Whigs composed most of the dissent on the territorial expansion issue.¹²³ When war broke out with Mexico, sectional difficulties were again evident. In the House during the Twenty-ninth Congress, 60 percent opposed the conflict while 23.1 percent openly approved of the fight with Mexico.¹²³ The Whig leaders were able to restore party unity by the Thirtieth Congress, however, when 86.8 percent of the representatives and 91.7 percent of the senators voted against the war measures.¹²⁴ Despite some sectional dissent, the Whigs eventually united against the War with Mexico. The Whigs, over-all in the years between the Twenty-ninth and Thirtieth Congresses, exhibited only a slight loss of party cohesion.¹²⁵

Thirty-first and Thirty-second Congresses

In the Thirty-first and Thirty-second Congresses, the Whig party suffered the same fractionalization that beset the Democratic party although they, too, like the Party of Jackson, remained a strong national party. In the area of social reform, the Whigs continued their opposition to the

¹²¹Ibid., p. 74. ¹²²Ibid. ¹²³Ibid., p. 75.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 86. ¹²⁵Alexander, p. 66.

"negative liberalism" of the Democrats. In the Thirty-first Congress, 54.7 percent of the House Whigs voted for lower prices and, thus, reversed the previous party position. The reason for this reversal was that many of the votes in this session involved distributing cheap land to veterans of the Mexican War, and more importantly, those who dissented from the reversal did not constitute a sectional grouping.¹²⁶

On the question of government intervention in internal improvements, the Whigs equally split in the Thirty-first Congress.

In the House, 44.2 percent were pro-intervention and 42.2 percent were anti-intervention.¹²⁷

By the second session of the Thirty-first Congress, however, the Whigs were again in support of a program of "positive liberalism." In this session, 86.4 percent of the House Whigs voted pro-intervention.¹²⁸ Whigs also favored increased postal service and the provision for more governmental services in the same session.¹²⁹

During the Thirty-second Congress, the Whig senators returned to a program of high land prices when 85 percent of them voted for a conservative land policy.¹³⁰ Despite considerable loss of party cohesion, the Whigs returned to a policy of "positive liberalism" on questions relating to social change.

¹²⁶ Silbey, p. 114.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 129.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 132.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp. 130-131.

On questions relating to peace, the Whigs, on the whole, continued to remain non-aggressive. In the Thirty-second Congress, 57.1 percent of the Whig senators voted against intervention on behalf of Hungary and 35.7 percent were moderate on the issue. In the House, 35.3 percent were non-aggressive and 58.8 percent were moderate on this question.¹³¹ Considering the peace issue, as well as the social reform issue, the Whigs maintained party unity throughout these two Congresses, but the cohesion of previous Congresses was no longer evident in the Whig congressmen's voting patterns.¹³²

The Seeds of Sectionalism

The obvious loss of party cohesion between 1845 and 1852 disclosed in the previous discussion was the result of the reopening of the slavery question during the Thirty-first Congress. The slavery question was not a new one. As early as 1836, the voting records of Congressmen evidenced sectional voting and a loss of party cohesion on matters relating to slavery.¹³³ During the Twenty-ninth and Thirtieth Congresses, the slavery question resulted in sectional voting. In roll calls on the Wilmot Proviso in the Thirtieth Congress, for example, 83.3 percent of all northern congressmen

¹³¹Ibid., p. 134.

¹³²Alexander, p. 77.

¹³³Ibid., p. 11.

voted against slavery, and 100 percent of all southern congressmen voted pro-slavery.¹³⁴ In these two Congresses, however, the slavery question remained closely related to war issues in many roll calls, and, eventually, congressmen typically voted with their parties on war votes. Hence, the sectional antagonism on the slavery question remained somewhat muted, and these two Congresses demonstrated high levels of party cohesion.¹³⁵ Such was not the case with the Thirty-first and Thirty-second Congresses, however.

With the war over, these two Congresses had to deal with the question of extending slavery into the newly gained territory. The slavery question, no longer related to the partisan war issues, was considered alone. The Thirty-first Congress was "simply inundated" with roll calls related only to slavery.¹³⁶ Silbey described the nature of these issues:

. . . when congressmen acted on issues rising out of the territorial question in 1850 they actually considered and voted on two distinct matters. On one set of issues the emphasis was frankly sectional, a continuation of the hostility of the previous few years and an attempt by sectional leaders to win sectional goals and sectional advantage. In various proposals sectionalists in both North and South either attacked the institutions of the other section, such as in a motion to outlaw slavery in the District of Columbia, or sought some particular advantage for their own section, as in the attempt to pass a stronger fugitive slave bill or to admit California as a free state, without tieing [sic] these demands to other proposals

¹³⁴Ibid., pp. 62, 92.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Ibid., pp. 71-73.

. . . On the second set of issues, however, compromise, not sectional advantage, was at the heart of the proposals. As the antisectionalists around Clay and Douglas pushed forward the compromise "package" opposed by Calhoun and others like him, the question became not one of direct sectional advantage, but whether or not one was willing to forego such advantage, forget differences, and unite to settle the question on the terms proposed.¹³⁷

Hence, some issues, labelled "sectional issues" by Silbey, were evidence of internecine sectional political strife. Some questions, labelled "compromise issues," were honest attempts to resolve sectional difficulties.¹³⁸

How did the congressmen vote on these two sets of issues in 1850? On the "sectional issues" voting was markedly sectional. In the Senate, 94.4 percent of the southern Democrats and 70 percent of the southern Whigs voted pro South. The remainder of all Southern senators were moderate.¹³⁹ Although northern Democratic senators refused to become as extreme in their roll calls, voting by all northern senators was also sectional. Of the northern Democrats in the Senate, 26.7 percent voted pro-North, 53.3 percent were moderate, and 20 percent went with the South.¹⁴⁰ For the roll calls on all "sectional issues," the Democratic senators averaged only a 57.1 percent vote for the party position. The Whigs averaged only a 43 percent vote for their party position.¹⁴¹ The situation was much

¹³⁷ See page 108-109.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 118.

the same in the House roll calls on "sectional issues." The House Democrats averaged only a 53.5 percent vote for the party's position, and the Whigs averaged a 58.5 percent vote for the party position on "sectional issue" roll calls.¹⁴²

Although the roll calls on the "compromise issues" exhibited some partisan behavior, here again the voting was essentially sectional. In the Senate, 64.3 percent of all northern congressmen voted anti-compromise while 68 percent of all southern senators favored a pro-compromise position.¹⁴³ In the Senate roll calls on "compromise issues," the Whigs and Democrats had respective party unity scores of 60.9 percent and 59.4 percent. In the House, the voting pattern was much the same. The Whigs and Democrats achieved party unity scores of 50 percent and 55 percent respectively.¹⁴⁴

Once the trend toward sectionalized voting had begun, it was difficult to stop. With the extreme sectional antagonism on slavery questions clearly revealed, many congressmen found it harder to remain attached to a party program on social reform issues when that party opposed their section's interest on the slavery issue. Consequently, with party loyalty weakened, Congressmen tended to look toward local or personal interests as a major basis for their decision

¹⁴²Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., p. 118. A party unity score is the average percentage of congressmen voting for the party position on an issue.

making.¹⁴⁵ The two parties had not sectionalized by 1852, for they could still coalesce, though to a lesser degree than previously, on questions relating to peace, social reform, and even sometimes on slavery. The seeds of sectionalism had, however, been planted.

The Era of Sectionalized Parties

From 1852 to 1860, questions relating to slavery were to dominate the Congressional scene. Following the trend of the previous years toward sectionalization on slavery issues, the political parties realigned and ceased to be national parties. The new sectionalized parties clearly subordinated their interests in matters relating to social reform to the slavery question. Furthermore, the new parties, while increasingly devoting more of their time to the slavery question, became more and more sectionalized throughout the years between the Thirty-third to the Thirty-sixth Congresses. The era of sectionalized parties had clearly arrived.

The increasing sectionalization in the American political arena evidenced itself through the change in party alignment which began during the Thirty-third Congress. The new alignment of the parties along sectional lines resulted from purely political decisions made by party leaders. After

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 135.

the realignment, the remaining two parties, the Democrats and Republicans, exhibited considerable party cohesion. The restored party unity also conformed to the sectional nature of the parties.

The sectionalization of the parties began during the congressional elections in the second session of the Thirty-third Congress. As a result of the antagonism aroused over the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Republican party came into being. In fact, the new party was to send the largest delegation to the Thirty-fourth Congress of any of the parties.¹⁴⁶ The Republicans were usually northern deserters from either the Whig or the Democratic parties. Alexander best summarized the impact of the Republicans upon the sectional make-up of the parties in the Thirty-fourth Congress.

The success of the newly organized Republican party in sweeping upper North Whigs into its fold in the congressional elections of 1854 was startling. Even more significant, however, was its success in attracting former Democrats. The New England and Northern Northwest delegations to the Thirty-fourth House were more than six-sevenths Republican . . . Without any appeal in the South, the Republicans claimed 45 percent of the House membership. The Whigs mustered less than 20 percent of the House, and even more ominous, nearly three fourths were from the South. . . . Democrats, like the Whigs, were predominantly a southern party in this Congress, for two thirds were from the southern sections.¹⁴⁷

The sectionalization of the parties continued throughout the decade. In the Presidential election of 1856, James Buchanan, the Democratic candidate, led in the popular vote

¹⁴⁶Alexander, p. 90.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 91.

of the South and trailed behind both the Whig and Republican candidates in the northern popular vote.¹⁴⁸ All the Republicans in the Thirty-fifth Congress were from the North, and the few Whigs were all from the South. The Democratic Party was controlled by southerners.¹⁴⁹ In the Thirty-sixth Congress, the Northeast was totally Republican, and no Republicans, of course, were from the South. All but two of the twenty-five Whigs were from the South. With the exception of a few Western and border state representatives, the Democratic delegation to the House was almost totally southern.¹⁵⁰

In the midst of the tendency toward sectionalization, the parties clearly subordinated questions relating to social reform to those relevant to slavery. In the Thirty-fourth Congress, for example, the House had fourteen roll calls on economic items and eighteen on issues relating to slavery.¹⁵¹ On all issues involving social change, the Thirty-fifth House held twenty-four roll calls. On the single issue of slavery, they held thirty votes.¹⁵² Since congressmen spent more and more of their time dealing with slavery, this issue, rather than the subordinated questions of social reform, tended to determine the realignment of the parties.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 97. ¹⁴⁹Ibid. ¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 104.

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 91. ¹⁵²Ibid., p. 97.

The realignment of parties was based in large part upon political expedience, not upon agreement concerning programs of either "negative" or "positive" liberalism. After the Thirty-third Congress, the leaders of the Whig party in the North decided that the southern wing of their party "was less an asset than a liability" as slavery became the most important national issue.¹⁵³ Despite continued agreement with their southern colleagues on social programs, the northerners in the Whig party deserted en masse to the Republican party. The attempts by leaders in the Democratic party to retain unity and moderation on the slavery question in the face of increased sectional tension proved to be political suicide for New England Democrats, and they virtually disappeared in the elections of 1854.¹⁵⁴ By 1856, most southerners, despite their ideas on economic and social questions, were in the Democratic party. In the North, the majority of the former Whigs and Democrats were Republicans. The slavery question had, in addition, become so important that former Whigs and Democrats in both of the sectionalized parties voted together on social issues despite disagreements in order to retain unity on the all-important slavery roll calls.¹⁵⁵ Party cohesion had returned to the political

¹⁵³Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 111.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

parties, but since the parties were no longer national, the restored unity merely increased sectionalization.

The Northern Philanthropists

Throughout the years from 1845 to 1860, a group of philanthropic reformers in the Northeast continued to grow in both size and political importance. During this time, most notable New England intellectuals were forwarding ideas which called for various social reforms.¹⁵⁶ Through thousands of lyceum addresses, political orations, sermons, and writings, they set forward their programs for bettering men's lives, programs which included, among others, plans to

. . . reform dress and diet in the interest of universal health, to uproot capital punishment and imprisonment for debt, slavery, intemperance, war, and prostitution, and to agitate for the full rights of women, the humane treatment of the insane and the criminal, and even for the overthrow of such venerable institutions as the family, private property, and the state itself.¹⁵⁷

These philanthropists were especially active in proposals concerning two specific social reforms: pacificism and anti-slavery. These Northern humanist reformers differed from most Americans in the nature of their concern over these questions. First, the philanthropists stressed objections to war and slavery on moral rather than upon economic or political grounds. They objected to the Mexican War, for example,

¹⁵⁶Parrington, 351.

¹⁵⁷Curti, The Growth of American Thought, p. 369.

on the same grounds that they objected to all violence, that it was in violation of Christianity.¹⁵⁸ Most Americans, however, defended the war for economic reasons.¹⁵⁹ The reformers attacked slavery on moral grounds, but Calhoun responded to the objections which the majority of Northerners harbored against the institution. Hence, Calhoun's defense stressed the economics of slavery.¹⁶⁰ Finally, even though some Americans concurred with the reformers and indicted war and slavery on moral grounds, the philanthropists still differed from even these conscientious citizens. Most Americans who opposed war and slavery on moral grounds were content with their beliefs and nothing else, but the reformers wanted positive action and legislation.¹⁶¹

Although they were a small group, the reformers grew in strength and came to greatly influence the politics of the Northeast. Massachusetts provided an excellent example of how the philanthropists influenced politics. In this state, the reformers made the Free Soilers into a successful third party. In 1853, the Free Soilers forced a constitutional convention upon the conservative elements of Massachusetts.

¹⁵⁸Merle Eugene Curti, The American Peace Crusade, 1815-1860. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1929), pp. 103-104.

¹⁵⁹Curti, The Growth of American Thought, p. 423.

¹⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 443-445.

¹⁶¹For example, see Curti, The American Peace Crusade, p. 68.

This proved to be a disaster to the Whigs even though the new reform constitution was never ratified.¹⁶² Finally, the success of the Massachusetts reformers was evidence of the "growing body of northern sentiment opposed to the further expansion of slavery."¹⁶³ The reformers obviously had some appeal to public opinion, at least in the Northeast.¹⁶⁴

In fact, the Northern reformers formed the backbone of the Free Soil party which, in the election of 1848, pulled 10.2 percent of the popular vote in the Presidential election. During this same election in New England, the Free Soil party accounted for 19.6 percent of the ballots cast for President. Although the Free Soil party received only 14.3 percent of the popular vote in New England and only 5.4 percent of the vote nationwide in the Presidential election of 1852, the Northern reformers had by that time elected a number of representatives and four senators: John P. Hale, Salmon P. Chase, Ben Wade, and Charles Sumner.¹⁶⁵ These men were

¹⁶²See James Schouler, "The Massachusetts Convention of 1853," Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, XVIII (2nd series; November, 1903), 30-48.

¹⁶³Paul A. Goodman, "David Donald's 'Charles Sumner' Reconsidered," The New England Quarterly, XXXVII (September, 1964), 380.

¹⁶⁴For a report of the equivalent group in New York where they were equally successful, see Benson, pp. 108, 138.

¹⁶⁵David Donald, Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 219. See Silbey, p. 88.

all to be leaders in the formation of the Republican party in 1854.

Hence, the Northern reformers were an influential splinter group in American politics. They were interested in the problems which concerned other Americans, but they seemed to have a different frame of reference in looking at those questions. Armed with a certain moral terrorism, these philanthropists were less inclined to compromise than were most Americans.¹⁶⁶ They possessed the same faith in democracy as did other Americans, but they were more extreme in their application of their faith to everyday politics. They definitely constituted a differing and distinguishable group in American politics.

The Audiences

As this chapter indicated, an orator during the fifteen years preceding the Civil War had great opportunity and great limitations. The Antebellum period was definitely one in which rhetoric was a viable tool of social influence. Most Americans subscribed to a number of common beliefs, to the "American democratic faith." As David Donald noted, Americans agreed on approximately 90 percent of their ideas and institutions.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, they employed a common set

¹⁶⁶See Goodman, 380.

¹⁶⁷See Lincoln Reconsidered (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 216.

of rituals and symbols to celebrate their common faiths. Even when two ideas threatened to conflict, such as the belief in the sanctity of property and in progress as a natural law, the people of the Antebellum period seldom sensed the possibility of dissonance. In addition, the common people admired orators, were interested in politics, and generally cognizant of the day's rhetoric, spoken and written. If rhetoric consists of adapting the common ideas of men to those of other men, the Middle Period was certainly a time for oratory.

By way of limitations to the orator, however, Americans did have some vital disagreements in the mid-nineteenth century. As inference from Congressional voting showed, concerning social reform, most Americans supported one of two programs prior to 1852, "positive" or "negative" liberalism. Their differences were real and strongly felt, as the partisan struggles between the Whig and Democratic parties indicated. This partisanship and disagreement between the parties was also to be found on questions relating to war. Obviously, the American people could not agree upon when to be how aggressive on what issues, as the strife among Whigs and Democrats illustrated. Finally, and eventually most important, Americans could not agree on slavery. Eventually, this one question was to subordinate all others and to result in the sectionalization of the political parties.

That Americans felt strongly about slavery was evident from the disruption of two national parties which had previously represented the polarized views of Americans on questions of social reform and peace. In the end, the abolition of the national parties may have been a major cause of the Civil War.

Finally, there were fringe groups in America, one of the most important being the philanthropist reformers of the Northeast. This group, although they were concerned about the same things as other Americans, had a different frame of reference for looking at the same problems. They eventually became politically influential on the slavery issues, thus illustrating the extremism which plagued American thought just prior to sectional war. When the North began to think of slavery in moral terms more so than in political or economic terms, the attitudinal difference between North and South was much more pronounced.

In all, the orator of the Middle Period who addressed himself to the topics of social reform, peace, and slavery spoke to five audiences. On social reform, one group favored positive government action, the other as little government action as possible. Some Americans were more aggressive in matters relating to territorial expansion than were others. The aggressive groups aligned with those desiring "negative liberalism," or as little government as necessary. The

non-aggressive groups aligned with the "positive liberalism" forces. Hence, the questions of social reform and peace produced two audiences. The slavery question, however, cut across the boundaries of these two audiences and resulted in the sectional audiences of North and South. Finally, the philanthropist reformers produced a fifth audience, a group interested in the same issues but with a moral frame of reference slightly alien to the outlook of the other four audiences. An orator from any one of these groups, and especially from the fifth, could communicate with the other groups, but in the Middle Period, the success of his persuasion was by no means guaranteed.

CHAPTER IV

THE RHETORIC OF PRINCIPLES

The Critical Problem

One problem facing the student of Charles Sumner's use of oratory as an instrument of public influence is universal to all speech criticism. A rhetorician's task is to evaluate "how propositions and audiences are connected" in given instances of human verbalization.¹ He must investigate how people "identify," how they become "consubstantial" through rhetoric.² The speech critic, being a specialized rhetorician, confines himself to the study of a peculiar form of rhetoric, that is, to the criticism of public address. Hence, the obvious prerequisite of successful speech criticism is to distinguish oratory from other forms of rhetoric. The elemental problem of speech criticism, then, is one of definition. The definition accepted, in turn, determines the nature of the appropriate critical method.

¹Albert J. Croft, "The Functions of Rhetorical Criticism," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLII (October, 1956), 286.

²See Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), p. 43.

The Traditional Definition

The traditional definition of oratory dictates that a speech is an "oral communication"³ which is tactically designed to achieve certain results with a specific [and rational] audience on a specific occasion."⁴ This view of speech is a result of interpretation of Aristotle's dictum that "rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion."⁵ All questions of the correctness of interpretations aside, most critics of public address assume, as do Wayland M. Parrish and Marie Hochmuth, that "a speech is an utterance meant to be heard and intended to exert an influence of some kind over those who hear it."⁶ As a result of Aristotle's preference for logical content, most traditional critics suggest that speeches consist principally of "discovering arguments," of employing "the impelling fact, the reasoned argument."⁷ Consequently, they couch their discussions of emotional or

³See Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird, Speech Criticism (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1949), p. 21.

⁴Edwin Black, Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), p. 33.

⁵Rhetorica I. ii. 1355^b.

⁶American Speeches (New York: Longmans, Green & Company, 1954), p. 3.

⁷Marie Hochmuth, "The Criticism of Rhetoric," in A History and Criticism of American Public Address, ed. by Marie Hochmuth (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1960), III, 4.

ethical content in terms such as "argument," "appeal," and "proof." Thus, traditional students of speech imply probative value even when none is present.⁸ These various aspects of the traditional definition of a speech make it unsuitable for the study of mid-nineteenth-century oratory for two reasons.

First, as the previous chapter suggested, Americans of the Middle Period often reacted to written material as if it were a direct confrontation between speaker and listener. Hence, the printed form of a public address acted during the mid-nineteenth century "as a stirrer primarily of common sentiments between a speaker (rather than a writer) and a listener (rather than a reader)."⁹ As a result, the speeches of the day were not always oral in form, and they were seldom restricted to a specific audience. The tenets of orality and immediacy found in the traditional definition of a speech were, therefore, unduly restrictive in reference to the 1840's and 1850's.¹⁰

Second, and also suggested by the previous chapter, rationality was not always a primary characteristic of audiences of the Middle Period. The most widely accepted

⁸Black, pp. 33-34.

⁹Daniel J. Boorstin, The Americans: The National Experience (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 307.

¹⁰Supra, p. 81.

social or germinal values of the day, the "American democratic faith," were just that: faiths commonly accepted by the people without extensive thought or dialectic. Although these faiths were unequal in importance and frequently contradictory, the American people employed them as a code of propriety in both private and public affairs.¹¹ Although audiences of the Middle Period no doubt often accepted proposals on a reasoned or logical basis, beneath their logical acceptance lay a meta-system of values which was somewhat irrational.

The flaw in any blanket assumption of rationality on the part of Middle Period audiences became most evident in consideration of the debate over the slavery question. The sectionalization of the political parties and the drastic changes in Congressional voting patterns suggested the intensity and high degree of ego-involvement of most Americans' attitudes on the question. The Americans of the mid-nineteenth century "continued to talk," wrote J. Jeffery Auer, "down to the very eve of conflict, in public meetings, conferences, and conventions, believing that they could substitute argument for war."¹² They eventually discovered that, in spite

¹¹Supra, p. 79. See also, Ralph Henry Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought (2nd edition; New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1956), pp. 12-26.

¹²Antislavery and Disunion, 1858-1861, ed. by J. Jeffery Auer (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), p. vii.

of or because of their belief in "natural justice" and "human liberty," the intensity of attitudes concerning slavery did not permit "calm and rational discussion."¹³ The assumption of rationality, as well as those of orality and immediacy, found in the traditional definition of a speech invalidates its use in understanding the public address of the Antebellum period.¹⁴

A Tempocentric Definition

Obviously, the best definition of a speech ought to inculcate those features of public address common to a specific era. It should, in other words, be tempocentric. For the purpose of this study, therefore, a speech is a prose composition of varying length, written or spoken, which leaves the auditor or reader with a sense of direct confrontation with the author, and which intends to result in consubstantiation through the verbalization of common values, opinions, or emotions.¹⁵ This definition, in part, determines the course of the following examination of Charles Sumner's public speaking in two ways.

¹³Avery Craven, "The Civil War and the Democratic Process," Abraham Lincoln Quarterly, IV (April, 1947), 292.

¹⁴These criticisms of the traditional definition of speech are certainly valid for other than the Middle Period. See Black, p. 34.

¹⁵This definition is suggested, but differs importantly from, that proposed by Richard Murphy, "The Speech as Literary Genre," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLIV (April, 1958), 119.

The Problem of Textual Authenticity

First, the preceding definition of what constituted a speech event in the mid-nineteenth century relieved the critic from a considerable portion of the difficulty in determining the textual authenticity of Sumner's addresses. Since the preceding definition of oratory compensated for the equivalent responses of audiences in the Middle Period to both the spoken and written texts of speeches, no great bonus promised to result from undertaking the difficult task of determining exactly what Sumner said to his immediate audiences. Such an undertaking in the case of Sumner's speeches was, in any event, almost impossible to achieve. Laboriously writing out each of his addresses in complete detail, Sumner usually spoke from memory. He did not, however, always deliver all that he had memorized and planned to say. Hence, a perusal of the original manuscripts of the speeches in Sumner's papers did not guarantee discovery of what he actually said.¹⁶ To make such a perusal even less promising, the Senator used the original manuscripts for the changes he usually made before he allowed his addresses to be published. Furthermore, he typically made even more

¹⁶The Charles Sumner Papers are in the Houghton Library of Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

deletions and additions to the original text as later editions of his speeches appeared.¹⁷

Consequently, the subsequent criticism of nine representative and significant addresses by Charles Sumner is based upon printed texts of his speeches. The conclusion that textual authenticity results from these printed sources rests upon three factors. First, the various texts of Sumner's printed speeches have been cross-referenced. Examples employed in this study appear in substantially the same form in two or more different sources. Second, an important fact is that all revisions of Sumner's speeches are the work of his own hand.¹⁸ Any edition of his speeches is justly considered his own persuasive effort. Third, since written and spoken texts of speeches resulted in comparable effect upon the audiences of the Middle Period, any printed edition of Sumner's orations resulting from his own effort is by definition textually authentic.¹⁹ The definition of a speech employed in

¹⁷For a complete discussion of these problems in the case of "The True Grandeur of Nations," see Carl A. Dallinger, "Inventio in the Speeches of Charles Sumner," (unpublished M.A. thesis, Department of Speech, University of Iowa, 1938), pp. 5-29.

¹⁸Dallinger, p. 6.

¹⁹This writer has not seen any of Sumner's original speech manuscripts. Care has been taken, however, to always obtain at least the earliest printed manuscript of the speech for purposes of cross-referencing. The assumption is made that the earliest printed text varied less from the actual spoken text than did any later editions.

this study, therefore, permits the critic to exclude lengthy consideration to matters of textual authenticity in the remainder of this examination of Charles Sumner's oratory.

The Critical Method

Second, the definition of what constitutes a speech employed in this study determines the critical method focused upon Sumner's nine speeches. The extension of the speech event to include readers as well as auditors adds a new dimension to the rhetorical problem of a speaker. By extending the audience membership, the chance of including in the audience those who cannot respond rationally to the speech increases. Hence, the critic must now observe the effects of the speech upon the reader for whom the speech may or may not be designed.²⁰

To assist the critic in this enlarged task, the critical method employed in this study is a mixture of traditional and non-traditional rhetorical theory. The Burkian concept of stylistic strategies supplements the Aristotelian enthymeme.²¹ As a result, the critic is able to go beyond the traditional bounds of persuasion to study the "whole field

²⁰Implicit within the traditional construct of speech criticism is the assumption that all speeches are accountable only for effects upon audiences the speaker intended to hear them. See Black, pp. 33-34.

²¹Supra., pp. 18-19.

of motivational language, conscious and unconscious."²²

The remainder of this chapter, therefore, consists of an analysis of Charles Sumner's enthymemes, strategies and forms, and rhetorical effects resulting from his speeches on social reform, pacificism, and slavery.

Sumner on Social Reform

Throughout the years from 1845 to 1860, Charles Sumner harbored an interest in social reform. On July 25, 1843, Sumner delivered his address, "The Law of Human Progress,"²³ before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Union College. This speech was a summary of his thinking on reform, and in particular, it enumerated the broad principles underlying his concept of the nature of social change. In a speech entitled "Justice to the Land States, and Policy of Roads,"²⁴ delivered before the Senate on January 27, 1852, the newly

²²Daniel Fogarty, Roots for a New Rhetoric (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 76.

²³See Charles Sumner, "The Law of Human Progress," in The Works of Charles Sumner, II (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1872), 89-138. Sumner's collected works are hereafter cited simply as Works. See also The Law of Human Progress (Boston: William D. Ticknor & Company, 1849). A cross-referencing of these two texts uncovered no great differences between the two in either style or content. Later references are to the 1849 pamphlet edition.

²⁴U. S. Congress, Senate, Senator Sumner speaking for the Iowa Land Bill, 32nd Congress, 1st sess., January 27, 1852, Congressional Globe, XXV, Appendix, 134-136. This text was cross-referenced with "Justice to the Land States, and Policy of Roads," in Works, III, 12-32. The two texts were identical. Later references are to the text found in Works.

elected Bay State Senator attempted to apply the principles enumerated in his earlier reform address to the practical affairs of government. In addition, he intended this latter address to be a "model of rhetoric, an example of the proper style and argument for congressional oratory."²⁵

These two speeches, though unlike in purpose, were amazingly similar in several ways. Sumner's enthymemes in both speeches were obviously derived from the tenets of the "American democratic faith." Furthermore, the major strategies found in the two orations were the same. "Justice to the Land States," however, was not nearly so successful as was "The Law of Human Progress." Due to the unsuitability of its enthymemes and strategies, "Justice to the Land States" did not significantly increase Charles Sumner's political influence.

Enthymematic Development

In both "The Law of Human Progress" and "Justice to the Land States," Charles Sumner based his enthymemes upon each of the three major tenets of the "American democratic faith."²⁶ He obeyed the dictates of Aristotle in "The Law

²⁵David Donald, Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), p. 213.

²⁶Not all of the enthymemes in these speeches are analyzed. Consideration in this study goes only to the major enthymemes, those rhetorical syllogisms to which Sumner devoted most of his attention.

of Human Progress" in that he did not carry his reasoning "too far back" so as to "cause obscurity."²⁷ In addition, Sumner did not include all the steps that led to his conclusions.²⁸ In "Justice to the Land States," although his enthymemes remained elided, Sumner did approach obscurity in the justifications for his conclusions.

"The Law of Human Progress"

Sumner's "The Law of Human Progress" was a speech solely concerned with the principles of social reform. Unencumbered in this graduation day address by any necessity for dealing with practical matters, Sumner found himself free to expound upon his conceptualization of "Christian Progress," its history, character and "the duties it seems to enjoin."²⁹ The future Senator employed three major enthymemes in accomplishing his task.

First, Sumner concluded that progress was a part of the fundamental law. Drawing upon the common beliefs and knowledge of his audience, he began the body of his speech by linking the Christian religion with social reform. "Christianity," declared Sumner, "is the religion of Progress. There is no single element of feature, which it possesses, so peculiar and distinctive as this."³⁰ To further illustrate

²⁷Rhetorica II. xxii. 1359^b20-30. ²⁸Ibid.

²⁹The Law of Human Progress, pp. 5-7.

³⁰Ibid., p. 11.

his point, he referred to the Sermon on the Mount and other Bible scriptures. "Long before philosophy had deduced from history the Law of Human Progress," he announced, "the Gospel had silently planted it in the human heart."³¹ Concurrent with his emphasis upon religion, Sumner also noted that progress was part of the natural law. He described progress as one of the "general laws, governing the courses of nature."³² Thus, by illustrating the presence of both natural and divine forces, the future Senator was able to conclude that social progress was a part of the fundamental law. As Sumner himself noted:

Man, as an individual, is capable of indefinite improvement. Societies and nations, which are but aggregations of men, and finally, the Human Race, or collective Humanity, are capable of indefinite improvement. And this is the Destiny of man, of societies, of nations, and of the Human Race.³³

Charles Sumner's second major enthymeme in "The Law of Human Progress" concluded that obedience to the fundamental law, to the law of human progress, required the betterment of men as individuals. Again he found support for his propositions in the religious belief of his audiences. All men, Sumner submitted, were a part of the "Brotherhood of Mankind," or in other words, of society.³⁴ Furthermore, displaying the typical nineteenth-century respect for the capacities of the

³¹Ibid., pp. 12-13.

³²Ibid., p. 7.

³³Ibid., p. 28.

³⁴Ibid., p. 29.

individual, he added that each individual was capable of unlimited improvement, intellectually through education and morally through the Christian religion.³⁵ Hence, the fundamental law, Sumner reasoned, required the betterment of individual men's lives.

Finally, the future Senator from Massachusetts submitted that social reform must occur at a gradual rate. No doubt because of his own respect for private property and individual rights,³⁶ he suggested that "men grow and are trained in knowledge and in virtue; but they cannot be compelled into reforming society."³⁷ However, he next qualified his appeal to moderation by reminding the audience that progress was a fundamental law and that they must guard against assuming that "whatever is is right."³⁸ Sumner's final major enthymeme in the "Law of Human Progress," like the first two, rested soundly upon popular opinions of the day.

Clearly, Sumner's enthymematic development in this speech was superior. Confining himself to a discussion of broad principles, he did not stray into proposals for practical or specific changes in his audiences' lives. Furthermore, he did not pedantically develop a complete syllogistic chain

³⁵Ibid., pp. 26, 35. ³⁶Donald, p. 36.

³⁷The Law of Human Progress, p. 36.

³⁸Ibid., p. 37.

for any one of his major conclusions. Rather, he let his audiences supply much of the content leading to his conclusions from their own beliefs. Unfortunately, he was not to observe this sound practice in "Justice to the Land States."

"Justice to the Land States"

During the debate over the Iowa Land Bill of 1852, a proposal granting free lands to that state to finance railroad construction, Senator Sumner delivered his second congressional address, "Justice to the Land States." This speech was an attempt on his part to translate several of his principles of reform ennumerated in "The Law of Human Progress" into practical government policy. To do so, Sumner formulated two enthymemes, neither of which resulted in widespread support for his position.

To begin with, Sumner decreed that the principle of justice, of equity, required that the land grant be made.³⁹ By means of a lengthy argument composed of statistics and legal citations, the Senator supported the proposition that the federal government gained more from the exemption of public lands from state taxes than Iowa had appreciated from all land grants.⁴⁰ Then he alluded to the common belief of the day that the fundamental law regulated not only individual

³⁹"Justice to the Land States," p. 28.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 15-27.

behavior but also that of governments. Senator Sumner observed that "nothing can render the rules of justice in such a case less obligatory upon the Government than upon the individual."⁴¹ In this manner, he revealed the conclusion that the fundamental law, the law which required equity and justice in all affairs, mandated that the grant be made to Iowa to compensate for lost tax revenue.

The Massachusetts Senator's second major enthymeme in "Justice to the Land States" concluded that the land grant was a necessity because railroads added to the progress of mankind.⁴² He observed that railroads, by increasing travel and social intercourse, diffused religion and knowledge, the two necessary prerequisites for human progress.⁴³ Given the passage of the bill, Sumner was sure that Iowa would progress "according to natural laws."⁴⁴ Hence, the Senator concluded that

It will readily occur to all that the whole country must gain by the increased value of the still retained lands and benefited by the proposed road. But the advantage, though not unimportant, is trivial by the side of grander gains, commercial, political,

⁴¹Ibid., p. 29.

⁴²Sumner specifically mentioned the importance of railroads as disseminators of progress in The Law of Human Progress, pp. 39-40.

⁴³See Ibid., p. 26. Also "Justice to the Land States," p. 30.

⁴⁴"Justice to the Land States," p. 27.

social, and moral It would be difficult to exaggerate the influence of roads as a means of civilization.⁴⁵

Unfortunately for Sumner, neither the advancement of civilization nor justice for the state of Iowa was of major concern in the debate surrounding the bill.⁴⁶ Neither of his enthymemes, although they were closely related to popular beliefs of Americans, generated sizeable support or even interest in Sumner's position. In the 1850's, the major political parties, and hence the vast majority of Americans, favored a liberal system in which government played a role in promoting progress. The issues of the day centered around which level of government should do what and how quickly.⁴⁷ With all Americans favoring progress, Sumner failed to demonstrate that progress would not occur without the Iowa Land Bill, for the principle of land grants was already well established. Likewise, concerning justice for Iowa, no principle was involved. Previous land grants to that state clearly indicated federal willingness to compensate the state for lost revenue.⁴⁸ The real questions were practical in

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 30.

⁴⁶See the Debates on the Iowa Land Bill, . . . 27, 1852, Congressional Globe, XXIV, Appendix, 136-138.

⁴⁷See Lee Benson, The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 86-109.

⁴⁸Sumner himself noted this fact later. See Sumner speaking for the Iowa Land Bill, Feb. 17, 1852, Congressional Globe, XXIV, p. 577.

nature: how much was to be given for what purposes? Hence, the Massachusetts Senator was obscure in his reasoning in that his enthymemes did not relate the abstract principles from which he began to the practical nature of his conclusions. Enthymemes based upon broad principles were fine for "The Law of Human Progress" when principle itself was the issue, but "Justice for the Land States" was a different problem entirely.

Strategies of Social Reform

The two speeches were, however, alike in that they each contained similar strategies. Both addresses exemplified Sumner's mastery of the strategy of form.⁴⁹ In addition, both speeches contained essentially the same contextual strategies. On the whole, these contextual strategies were better suited to "The Law of Human Progress" than they were to the purpose of "Justice to the Land States." Analysis of these two addresses disclosed that the Senator was adept at dealing rhetorically with principles but that he failed in transforming these principles into practical policy in such a fashion as to obtain public support for his proposals.

⁴⁹See Fogarty, p. 78. He defines forms as "certain innate and internal patterns of expectancy in the human psychological and psychobiological attitudes." See also, Kenneth Burke, Counter-Statement (2nd ed. rev.; Los Altos: Hermes Publications, 1953), pp. 31, 45-46.

Strategies of Form

In both "The Law of Human Progress" and "Justice to the Land States," Sumner's two major strategies of form were what Burke called "Conventional Form" and "Syllogistic Progression."⁵⁰ After a discussion of the strategies of form employed in these two orations, the critic can dismiss any further consideration of the Senator's use of arrangement as a persuasive strategy. In none of his speeches, either earlier or later, did Sumner ever deviate from his reliance upon these two strategies.⁵¹

With regards to "Conventional Form," Sumner always heeded the advice of his rhetorical mentor, E. T. Channing.⁵² He organized these two addresses, as well as all of his orations, in a manner common to the mid-nineteenth century. In particular, he divided his speeches into five parts: exordium, narration, proof, refutation, and peroration. In "The Law of Human Progress," for example, Sumner's exordium consisted of

⁵⁰Burke defines "Conventional Form" as that which "involves to some degree the appeal of form as form." In other words, it is the satisfaction that occurs within an audience when they hear a speech organized as they think and expect one should be arranged. See Counter-Statement, p. 126. At the same time, Burke defines "Syllogistic Progression" as "step-by-step, logical organization."

⁵¹See R. Elaine Pagel and Carl Dallinger, "Charles Sumner," in A History and Criticism of American Public Address, ed. by William Norwood Bragance (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1960), II, 356-357.

⁵²See Donald, p. 214.

a reference to man's past history, his present status, and future.⁵³ The narration was a brief exposition of the Christian and philanthropic motives necessary to guarantee progress,⁵⁴ and the division was a simple enumeration of the main points to follow.⁵⁵ In this speech, as was usually the case, Sumner's proof occupied roughly twice as much of his time as did his refutation.⁵⁶ Finally, the peroration was an emotional request that the audience heed what he had just said stated in conjunction with a brief summary.⁵⁷ Sumner's orations, then, invariably followed the same classical organizational pattern, a form which was common in the nineteenth century.⁵⁸

Sumner's use of "Syllogistic Progression" was also universal to all of his orations. Within the proof and refutation portions of his addresses, he typically highlighted his points by means of consecutive numbers or letters. Furthermore, he proceeded in his development of those points in a logical manner. In "Justice to the Land States," for example, Sumner (1) defined the issue, (2) spoke on the origin and nature of the land franchise, and (3) quantified the

⁵³The Law of Human Progress, p. 3.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 4-5.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 6-7.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 7-43.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 43-47.

⁵⁸Page1 and Dallinger, p. 356.

extent and value of the franchise.⁵⁹ This oration, like all of his speech efforts, was marked by extremely clear organization and internal structure.⁶⁰

Since Sumner used the same strategies of form throughout his orations, the critic need not dwell overly long on their import to his persuasive effects. Sumner never failed to organize his statements. He no doubt never surprised an audience with a new and novel form of disposition. His use of forms was apparently intended solely for the purpose of clarifying his position. He did not employ organization in any other strategic manner. His use of forms, then, was adequate and never brilliant. The remainder of this study, therefore, does not consider Sumner's use of strategies of form since they did not play an important role in any other orations different from that discussed above.

Contextual Strategies

Charles Sumner's use of contextual strategies, however, was more varied and important to his persuasive effect than were his strategies of form. In fact, an understanding of Sumner's contextual strategies in "The Law of Human Progress" and in "Justice to the Land States" is central to an analysis of his use of oratory as an instrument of social influence.

⁵⁹"Justice to the Land States," p. 14.

⁶⁰See Pagel and Dallinger, p. 357.

In Burkian terms, these two addresses were statements of the covenant of progress which Sumner was to invoke in most of his later addresses. They were, in other words, public prayers to the secular religion of progress which Sumner developed in his orations.⁶¹ As such, little surprise was forthcoming that the two major strategies in these addresses on social progress were those of religiofication and scapegoating.⁶²

Religiofication of Issues

The previous discussion of Sumner's enthymematic development of "The Law of Human Progress" and of "Justice to the Land States" illustrated the importance of religiofication as a strategy in the Bay State Senator's orations on social progress. Sumner made frequent reference to the Christian religion and scriptures throughout "The Law of Human Progress." When he noted that the concept of progress was the "most peculiar and distinctive" element of the Christian faith, Sumner was disclosing the basis for his persuasive strategies. "Christianity," he contended, "is the religion

⁶¹See Leland M. Griffin, "A Dramatistic Theory of the Rhetoric of Movements," in Critical Responses to Kenneth Burke, ed. by William H. Rueckert (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), pp. 456-478. Griffin presents the best interpretation of the importance of covenants and religiofication to Burke's system available.

⁶²See Ibid. Scapegoating is central to any Burkian analysis.

of Progress."⁶³ Progress--not God, Jehovah, or Christ--was the center of Sumner's secular analogue of the Christian religion. As with any religion, that which was central to the faith was that which was to be worshipped. Hence, he declared that the law of progress must be obeyed by all men.⁶⁴ The Iowa question, therefore, was not a simple issue of how much to and from whom. For Sumner, it was a question of principle, of whether or not his god, the fundamental law of progress, was to be obeyed. It was, as he stated, a "moral" issue.⁶⁵ The question at hand was one involving the covenant between progress and mankind.

A Burkian equation could easily be inferred from "The Law of Human Progress" and "Justice to the Land States." In these two speeches, God equalled the fundamental law, equalled the natural law, equalled social progress, equalled man's proper destiny, equalled justice, equalled money for railroads, education, and other social goods. As the entymematic analysis earlier disclosed, these terms or elements were all intertwined in Sumner's thought, and they were of apparently equal importance in his rhetoric. Hence, Sumner's views on progress were, in effect, statements of his own particular secular religion. By equating each of these terms,

⁶³The Law of Human Progress, p. 11.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 29.

⁶⁵"Justice to the Land States," p. 30.

the Senator from Massachusetts imparted a quality of religification to the important issues discussed in "The Law of Human Progress" and in "Justice to the Land States." To complete his analogue of the Christian faith, however, Sumner relied upon scapegoating as another major contextual strategy in both addresses.

Scapegoats of Progress

In his efforts to convert his private faith into a public belief, Sumner also employed scapegoating as an important strategy in his orations on social progress. That Sumner resorted to this strategy was not surprising. Just as the Christian religion required a Satan, Sumner's secular analogue of the Christian faith required a "Victim, a scapegoat, a Kill."⁶⁶ From the Burkian viewpoint, the choice of scapegoats in a given rhetorical act was of utmost importance. For Burke, rhetoric was "in the order of killing, of personal enmity, of factional strife, of invective, polemic, eristic, logomachy."⁶⁷ Perhaps the Bay State Senator viewed rhetoric in much the same way, for consciously or unconsciously, he relied upon scapegoating as a major strategy in both "The Law of Human Progress" and "Justice to the Land States."

⁶⁶See Griffin, p. 461.

⁶⁷See A Rhetoric of Motives, p. 19.

In both addresses, Sumner singled out the conservative elements of society as the victims of his rhetorical "Kill." As was noted earlier, he warned against siding with those who believe "whatever is is right" in "The Law of Human Progress."⁶⁸ Exhibiting vituperation far beyond that called for by the occasion, he urged that such conservatives were bigots of "science, of literature, of jurisprudence, of religion, of politics" and that their conservatism was a "pernicious prejudice."⁶⁹ In "Justice to the Land States," Senator Sumner became much more personal in his scapegoating. Throughout this speech, he attacked those Senators who opposed the Iowa Land Bill, legislators such as R. M. T. Hunter and Joseph Underwood, as acting "under the vulgar spur of local interest."⁷⁰

Social Progress and Identification

"The Law of Human Progress" and "Justice to the Land States" were carefully analyzed in the preceding sections even though they did not significantly increase Sumner's political power. In effect, they did not prove to be substantial sources of identification between Sumner and his audiences. A careful analysis of each speech was necessary, however, for two reasons. First, these two speeches set forth the basic advantages and problems Sumner was to have in other

⁶⁸See p. 37.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 40.

⁷⁰See p. 36.

orations. Second, these two addresses provided an excellent medium for demonstrating the peculiar suitability of the Burkian method to understanding Sumner's use of oratory as an instrument of social influence.

Neither "The Law of Human Progress" nor "Justice to the Land States" did much for enhancing Sumner's political influence. "The Law of Human Progress" was the more successful of the two in this respect, however. One author recorded that this speech received favorable reviews in newspapers throughout the North, even to the point of being reprinted as far away as Ohio.⁷¹ "Justice to the Land States" went unnoticed outside of the Senate.⁷² At this point in his career as an orator, therefore, Sumner was generally more successful when speaking to Northern audiences, particularly those which contained a sizeable proportion of social reformers. In addition, he was more influential when he confined himself to discussing broad principles rather than practical public policy. Why, we might ask, was this the case?

The answer lay in considering the rhetorical strengths and weaknesses of Sumner's speaking on social progress. Sumner's basic rhetorical strength was that he recognized that religion, even secular religions such as the "American

⁷¹Arthur Alphonse Ekirch, Jr., The Idea of Progress in America, 1815-1860 (New York: Peter & Smith, 1951), p. 258.

⁷²See Donald, p. 219.

democratic faith," fulfilled needs which were almost universally felt by Western man. When speaking to Northern social philanthropists, many of whom no doubt came from an environment shaped in the Puritan tradition, he could easily find converts to his secular religion of progress. When he addressed the nation as a whole, however, Sumner was unable to identify his programs with the desires of most Americans, even though he consciously or unconsciously chose to structure his demands into a universally felt set of religious motives. Why, then, did Sumner fail to persuade Americans to adopt his views of social progress even when he phrased his demands in terms commonly accepted by Americans as part of the democratic faith and even when he offered a new form of that faith through his strategies?

Burke's critical system provided a plausible answer to this question. Sumner did not, in his speaking on social progress, present his audiences with all the necessary elements of a secular religion. Burke noted that the paradigm of history included the following steps:

Here are the steps
 In the Iron Law of History
 That welds Order and Sacrifice:
 Order leads to Guilt
 (for who can keep commandments:)
 Guilt needs Redemption
 (for who would not be cleansed!)

Order
Through Guilt
To Victimage
(hence: Cult of the Kill).⁷³

Sumner stressed order in "The Law of Human Progress" when he insisted that social change must occur slowly. When he discussed the fundamental law and Natural law of progress, Sumner was concerned with a covenant between man and God. In attacking the conservatives in society, the Senator also provided his audiences with Victims or scapegoats.⁷⁴ What he did not succeed in doing, however, was to provide a sufficient motive for guilt or, consequently, for a felt need of redemption or action. As previously noted, Americans commonly felt that government should facilitate social progress. Hence, they could not become as emotional concerning the Iowa Land Bill or even the question of social progress in general as could Sumner. Having decided that government should act, Sumner's audiences did not identify with the suggestion by him that they had broken with their covenant with progress. Sumner's enthymemes simply were not suited to the attitudes of his audience concerning the state of social progress.⁷⁵

In the end, the American public of the mid-nineteenth century was simply much more practical than was the Senator

⁷³See The Rhetoric of Religion (Boston: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961), pp. 4-5.

⁷⁴Supra, pp. 72-73.

⁷⁵Supra, p. 66.

from Massachusetts, at least with regards to the question of social progress. They did not feel that a slight injustice or reversal from progress was the great wrong that Sumner felt. Sumner felt guilt at the slightest infringement upon social progress. Donald noted Sumner's intensity of feelings on this question in the following summary of the Senator's philosophy of progress:

As a first step a would-be philanthropist must make certain that he himself was uncontaminated by any legal or moral connection with the evils he wished to destroy. "Let us wash our hands of the great guilt" became the constant refrain of Sumner's speeches. Pure himself, the reformer must then stir up public opinion, "which insensibly operates every where [sic], like the gentle droppings of water and produces mighty results." Others would join him in proclaiming a "moral blockade" against the wrong, and, as "the soul of all effective laws is an animating public sentiment," the laws that tolerated evil would themselves be changed.⁷⁶

Although Sumner was just as unsuccessful in establishing a moral blockade against the evils of war as he was in the case of general social progress, he eventually succeeded in arousing public opinion on the question of slavery. The remainder of this chapter, therefore, centers upon explaining how he accomplished this task rather than upon a microscopic view of the enthymemes and strategies employed in each individual speech.

⁷⁶See pp. 105-106.

Sumner on War

During his career as a social reformer, Charles Sumner delivered two major addresses in which he defended the cause of pacificism. The first of these, "The True Grandeur of Nations," was the Boston Fourth of July Oration for the year 1845.⁷⁷ The event occurred in Boston's Tremont Temple before an audience of over 2,000 persons.⁷⁸ Four years later, on May 28, 1849, Sumner delivered his lengthiest peace oration, "The War System of the Commonwealth of Nations," to a meeting in Boston of the American Peace Society.⁷⁹

These two speeches were analogous to the two speeches on social progress discussed above on several points. First, "The True Grandeur of Nations" was a broad statement of abstract principles to which Sumner adhered regarding the desirability of pacificism. "The War System of the

⁷⁷See Charles Sumner, The True Grandeur of Nations (Boston: J. H. Eastburn, 1845). This edition has been cross-referenced with "The True Grandeur of Nations," in The Works of Charles Sumner, I (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1872), pp. 1-132. The author also consulted the notations on textual differences among various editions of this address found in Dallinger, pp. 142-185. Later references are to the 1845 edition.

⁷⁸Donald, p. 108.

⁷⁹See Charles Sumner, "The War System of the Commonwealth of Nations," Orations and Speeches of Charles Sumner (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1850), II, 5-105. Later references are to this text. This text was cross-referenced with "The War System of the Commonwealth of Nations," in The Works of Charles Sumner, II (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1872), 171-277; and with The War System of the Commonwealth of Nations (Boston: Pratt Brothers, 1869).

Commonwealth of Nations," like "Justice to the Land States," was an attempt to translate abstract principle into practical public policy. Second, "The True Grandeur of Nations" contributed much more to Sumner's political influence than did the lengthier address. Finally, both of Sumner's war speeches were similar to his addresses on social progress with respect to enthymematic development and to use of contextual strategies.

Enthymematic Development

As was the case with his speeches on social progress, Sumner's enthymemes in support of pacificism centered around progress as a portion of the fundamental law and around how justice demanded the end of war. Study of "The True Grandeur of Nations" and of "The War System of the Commonwealth of Nations" further highlighted how intertwined these concepts were in Sumner's thought. The failure of these two speeches to significantly contribute to Sumner's political influence outside the circles of Northern social reformers illustrated again that Sumner had failed to identify his ideas with those of a substantial portion of mid-nineteenth-century Americans.

A major enthymeme in these two addresses concerned Sumner's analysis of the nature of war's purpose. As he saw it, men fought wars out of a misguided attempt to secure justice. He concluded that war "contributes to no end, helps to establish no right, and therefore, in no respect determines

justice between the contending nations."⁸⁰ For him, there could be no justice from war because the waging of armed conflict necessarily involved a violation of the law of progress. To be sure, Sumner deplored the "shameless rapacity, brutal intemperance, savage lust, cruelty and murder" of wars.⁸¹ But Donald was correct in observing that Sumner most resented the monetary costs of war in time of peace.⁸² In "The True Grandeur of Nations," the future Senator included six pages of statistics to demonstrate the costs of American peacetime defense.⁸³ Hence, Sumner saw the costs of war as being inimical to financing philanthropic reforms and social progress. "Humanity," argued Sumner, "pleads for the poor from whom such mighty means are withdrawn."⁸⁴ He continued:

Economy, sick of the pigmy efforts to staunch the smallest fountains and rills of exuberant expenditure, pleads that here is an endless, boundless river, an Amazon of waste, rolling its turbid, unhealthy waters vainly to the sea.⁸⁵

Justice, i.e., adherence to the fundamental law, dictated that nations should redirect these wasted efforts to "the diffusion of the greatest happiness among the greatest number."⁸⁶ If man would only stop this senseless waste, he could build a new "Paradise" on earth.⁸⁷

⁸⁰True Grandeur of Nations, p. 19. ⁸¹Ibid., p. 12.

⁸²See p. 110. ⁸³See pp. 46-53.

⁸⁴The True Grandeur of Nations, p. 82. ⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 83. ⁸⁷Ibid., p. 86.

Although Sumner repeated the above enthymematic development in "The War System of the Commonwealth of Nations," he developed a new line of argument in this address.⁸⁸ Sumner argued for the submission of disputes between nations to a "Congress of Nations, and a High Court of Judicature organized in pursuance thereof."⁸⁹ He defined the Commonwealth of Nations as "the Fraternity of Christian States, recognizing a Common Law to regulate their relations with each other."⁹⁰ The tenets of this Law of Nations came from two sources: (1) the law of Nature and (2) the laws of Christianity.⁹¹ The Law of Nations was, then, a part of the fundamental law. Since Christianity required that men live in peace in order to secure progress,⁹² the disputes between nations should be solved peacefully before a court of Nations. Hence, in his addresses on peace as well as in his speeches for social reform, Sumner based his enthymemes upon the inter-relationships between progress, the fundamental law, and justice.

Although Sumner couched his appeals for pacificism in terms commonly found in the "American democratic faith," his enthymemes for peace did not significantly contribute to his political influence. "The True Grandeur of Nations,"

⁸⁸"The War System of the Commonwealth of Nations," p. 9.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 63.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 14.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid., pp. 8-9.

however, was more successful from this standpoint than was "The War System of the Commonwealth of Nations." To a certain extent, the earlier address was more successful because it was studiously unsuited to a mid-nineteenth-century Fourth of July celebration. Sumner gained some political influence from this address simply because his name became more widely known due to the furor that "The True Grandeur of Nations" aroused among Massachusetts conservatives.⁹³ In addition, as a survey of the letters Sumner received in response to this address indicated, "The True Grandeur of Nations" established the future Senator as a leading representative of the sizeable number of pacifists then found in New England.⁹⁴ "The War System of the Commonwealth of Nations," Sumner's application of his pacifistic ideas and principles to real international affairs, aroused little attention outside the ranks of the most active peace advocates.⁹⁵ As was the case with his speeches on social progress, Sumner's speech which dealt solely with principles was more effective than was his translation of those ideas into proposed policy.

⁹³See Donald, pp. 110-111.

⁹⁴See W. C. Ford, "Letters on Sumner's Oration on the 'True Grandeur of Nations,' July 4, 1845," Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, L (July, 1917), 249-307.

⁹⁵See Donald, p. 118.

Why did Sumner's addresses against war net him little increase in his political influence? Most mid-nineteenth-century Americans, as the previous chapter indicated, identified war, especially the Mexican War, with either progress through territorial expansion, economic necessity, or patriotic duty. Hence, most Americans could not identify with Sumner's assumption that war necessarily obviated chances for progress. In fact, most Americans thought just the opposite. Hence, Sumner's enthymemes were not well adapted to the audiences of mid-nineteenth-century America despite their frequent use of tenets of the "American democratic faith."

Strategies for Peace

In "The True Grandeur of Nations" and "The War System of the Commonwealth of Nations," as he had already done in the case of his speeches for social progress, Sumner employed the strategies of religiofication and scapegoating. In his war addresses, however, Sumner improved upon his formulation of these strategies.

If Sumner was attempting to construct a secular analogue of the Christian faith to support his beliefs in social progress, then peace was certainly a god-term of that new religion. In "The War System of the Commonwealth of Nations," however, Sumner added the dimension of redemption which was lacking in his religiofication strategies for social progress. Early in the address, the future Bay State Senator

equated peace to Christianity, the religion of progress.

He noted:

. . . if our aims are visionary, impracticable, Utopian, then the unfulfilled promises of the prophecies are vain; then the Lord's prayer [sic], in which we ask that God's kingdom shall come on earth, is a mockery; then Christianity is a Utopia.⁹⁶

At the close of the address, Sumner linked salvation to the furtherance of peace. He insisted that

. . . the image of Christ is not lost to the world . . . it appears in every virtuous deed, in every act of self-sacrifice, in every recognition of the Brotherhood of Mankind. It shall yet be supremely manifest, in unimagined loveliness and serenity, when the Commonwealth of Nations, confessing the True Grandeur of Peace, shall renounce the wickedness of the War System, and dedicate to labors of Beneficence all the comprehensive energies now so fatally absorbed in its support.⁹⁷

A similar form of the same strategy employed in "The True Grandeur of Nations" led Sumner to conclude that, given peace, "there is another Paradise, even on earth, which [man] may form for himself."⁹⁸

The future Senator's use of scapegoating in his speeches in support of pacificism was improved over that in his speeches for social progress in the sense that they were more intense in the peace addresses. Instead of satisfying himself with victimizing a vague group known merely as "conservatives," Sumner clearly outlined the military forces as

⁹⁶"The War System of the Commonwealth of Nations," p. 8.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 105.

⁹⁸See p. 82.

the scapegoat in his anti-war addresses. He described the Army as "a seminary of idleness and vice" who devoted themselves to the performance of "farcical and humiliating exercises."⁹⁹ The Navy was a "vain and expensive TOY."¹⁰⁰ He saw the militia as a useless group of youths who contented themselves to parade around in their "coats of blue, besmeared with gold."¹⁰¹

Although Sumner improved his use of religification and scapegoating, he did not achieve significantly more constancy with his audiences as a result. He had not yet found the appeal which would result in the guilt necessary to complete his secular faith of progress. He was soon able to complete his secular religion, however, when he addressed himself to the question of slavery.

Sumner on Slavery

Beginning in 1850 with his "Our Immediate Antislavery Duties," Charles Sumner began espousing his opposition to slavery.¹⁰² For roughly the next ten years, although he elaborated on these principles of anti-slavery in numerous

⁹⁹The True Grandeur of Nations, p. 59.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁰²See Charles Sumner, "Our Immediate Antislavery Duties," in The Works of Charles Sumner, II (Boston: Lee and Shephard, 1872), 398-424. This speech was delivered to the Free Soil party meeting at Faneuil Hall, November 6, 1850.

addresses, the basis for his opposition to the institution did not significantly change.¹⁰³ Aside from the above-mentioned speech, four of these addresses were most significant in substantially increasing Sumner's political influence. On August 26, 1852, Sumner delivered his first anti-slavery address in the Senate.¹⁰⁴ On February 21, 1854, Senator Sumner again spoke vehemently in opposition to slavery in his "The Landmark of Freedom: No Repeal of the Missouri Compromise."¹⁰⁵ Again, on May 19 and 20, 1856, Sumner spoke against slavery in "The Crime Against Kansas: The Apologies for the Crime; The True Remedy."¹⁰⁶ In the Senate on June 4, 1860, Sumner delivered his last major address against slavery, "The Barbarism of Slavery."¹⁰⁷ The enthymemes and strategies

¹⁰³Donald, p. 279.

¹⁰⁴See Charles Sumner, "Freedom National, Slavery Sectional," in Works, III, 87-196. Later references are to this text. This text was cross-referenced with Freedom National, Slavery Sectional (Washington, D.C.: Buell and Blanchard, 1852). Speech delivered before the Senate.

¹⁰⁵See Works, III, 277-332. Later references are to this text. This text was cross-referenced with The Landmark of Freedom (Washington, D.C.: Buell & Blanchard, 1854). Speech delivered before the Senate.

¹⁰⁶See Works, IV, 125-342. Later references are to this text. This text was cross-referenced with The Crime Against Kansas (Washington, D.C.: Buell & Blanchard, 1856). Speech delivered before the Senate.

¹⁰⁷See Works, V, 1-174. Later references are to this text. This text was cross-referenced with The Barbarism of Slavery (Washington, D.C.: Buell & Blanchard, 1860). Speech delivered before the Senate.

which Sumner employed in these addresses would eventually result in substantially increasing the Senator's identification with Northern audiences.

Enthymematic Development

In his attacks upon slavery, Charles Sumner employed five major enthymemes. As was the case with his addresses on other topics, he couched these appeals in terms common to the "American Democratic faith" of the mid-nineteenth century. By 1860, Sumner had managed to gain consubstantiality with many Northerners through his skillful adaptation of his ideas on slavery to the common opinions of others who opposed the institution.

One enthymeme of central importance to Sumner's rhetorical opposition to slavery involved his claim that the Founding Fathers of the United States had opposed slavery when they established the nation. To establish this argument, Sumner noted that the important early leaders of the United States supported the Tenth Amendment of the Constitution. In "Freedom National, Slavery Sectional," he specifically mentioned Thomas Jefferson and Samuel Adams.¹⁰⁸ Sumner apparently reasoned that these men applied strict constructionist principles to the Tenth Amendment just as he did with regards to slavery.

¹⁰⁸ See p. 126.

Given this enthymeme, as well as a bias toward strict constructionism, Sumner reasoned that the Federal government could not constitutionally admit slave states to the Union. Specifically, he concluded that

In all national territories Slavery will be impossible.

On the high seas, under the national flag, Slavery will be impossible.

In the District of Columbia Slavery will instantly cease.

Inspired by these principles, Congress can give no sanction to Slavery by the admission of new Slave States.

Nowhere under the Constitution can the Nation, by legislation or otherwise, support Slavery, hunt slaves, or hold property in man.¹⁰⁹

Hence, since neither he nor the Founding Fathers could find any support for slavery in the Constitution, slavery was to remain entirely a creature of localities and states. The Federal government could interfere in no way. To do so was unconstitutional and in opposition even to the Declaration of Independence.¹¹⁰

As a third line of enthymematic development, Sumner argued that the Missouri Compromise should not be repealed. Again, he turned to the Founding Fathers for support. Specifically noting Benjamin Franklin's distaste for slavery and his willingness to tolerate the institution only if the national government interfered in no way, Sumner suggested that toleration was all that could be expected from federal

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 129.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 127.

authorities. All of the protection offered slavery since Franklin's day was distasteful, but surely, the Massachusetts Senator reasoned, to further legislate protection clearly changed the character of the United States even more. He concluded:

Our Republic has swollen in population and power, but it has shrunk in character. It is not now what it was in the beginning, a Republic merely permitting, while it regretted Slavery,--tolerating it only where it could not be removed, and interdicting it where it did not exist,--but a mighty Propagandist, openly favoring and vindicating it,--visiting, also, with displeasure all who oppose it.¹¹¹

Another major enthymeme, the fourth, dealt with the relationship between slavery and social progress. He argued that the possession of slaves barbarized the owner. In addition to the resultant dehumanization and retardation of the owner's individual social development by the act of ownership alone, Sumner insisted that "where there are slaves . . . it is held disreputable for a white man" to work. Consequently, the Bay State Senator reasoned that Slavery opposed social development and progress in a physical sense. Through a lengthy statistical analysis in "The Barbarism of Slavery," Sumner concluded that the institution of slavery had significantly held the South behind the economic development rate of the free states.¹¹² He succinctly stated this

¹¹¹"The Landmark of Freedom," p. 318.

¹¹²"The Barbarism of Slavery," p. 46.

enthymeme by noting:

At every point is the character of Slavery more and more manifest, rising and dilating into an over-shadowing Barbarism, darkening the whole land. Through its influence, population, values of all kinds, manufacturing, commerce, railroads, canals, charities, the post office, colleges, professional schools, academies, public schools, newspapers, periodicals, books, authorship, inventions, are all stunted, . . .¹¹³

Finally, Sumner argued that it was the duty of all to oppose the expansion of such an institution. Not only did slavery work against the law of progress, but it directly contravened the laws of nature and of Christianity. Although Sumner thought the Union and peace should be preserved, he thought people throughout the North should demand "the overthrow of the Slave Power."¹¹⁴ He was careful to note that this defeat of the slavery elements in the government should come gradually and legally by way of the ballot.¹¹⁵

Unlike his other speeches on social reform, Sumner's addresses on slavery successfully combined principles with practical policies in such a way as to permit widespread identification with his rhetorical conclusions. Sumner's "Freedom National, Slavery Sectional" gained him considerable notoriety both in and out of the Senate.¹¹⁶ His "Landmark of Freedom" address won him support among the antislavery

¹¹³Ibid., p. 47.

¹¹⁴"Our Immediate Antislavery Duties," p. 421.

¹¹⁵Ibid. ¹¹⁶Donald, p. 236.

factions of the North.¹¹⁷ "The Crime Against Kansas" received widespread circulation throughout the nation and was widely praised by antislavery advocates.¹¹⁸ "The Barbarism of Slavery" proved so popular that it was included in the Republican platform of 1860 despite the wishes of the party leaders.¹¹⁹ Sumner's antislavery speeches permitted him to identify with

. . . the growing body of northern sentiment opposed to the further extension of slavery. Because he zealously and doggedly opposed the extension of slavery, articulating the moral and political idealism of his generation better perhaps than anyone else, Sumner became spokesman for those Americans unwilling to follow any longer the politicians and parties of compromise and evasion.¹²⁰

Strategies of Antislavery

Sumner's improved use of the strategies of religification and scapegoating no doubt contributed to his increased popularity in the North. In his addresses on slavery, Sumner was able to provide the one missing ingredient to his secular faith in progress. His constant referral of his audiences to the covenants of the Founding Fathers, of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence, and of the mid-nineteenth-century democratic faith itself no doubt

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 256.

¹¹⁸Ibid., pp. 288-302.

¹¹⁹Ibid., pp. 358-359.

¹²⁰Paul Goodman, "David Donald's 'Charles Sumner' Reconsidered," The New England Quarterly, XXXVII (September, 1964), 420.

contributed considerably to a feeling of guilt on the part of his audiences. As the previous chapter suggested, the slavery question was one upon which audiences tended to become ego-involved. With the greater intensification of attitudes on the slavery question came increasing guilt. When Sumner offered redemption in the form of progress if only slavery were not allowed to spread, many people were becoming more and more inclined to listen. "With his high seriousness," noted Donald, "Sumner seemed to true believers a reincarnation of some Old Testament prophet."¹²¹

After Sumner's return to the Senate following his brutal beating by Preston Brooks,¹²² he undoubtedly took on the role of a Christ-figure to many members of the anti-slavery faction. Having undergone a crucifixion, Sumner returned to the Senate to speak. Accordingly and with little questioning from the rank and file, his "Barbarism of Slavery" was placed into the Republican party platform, the sacred writings, almost perfunctorily.

Even Sumner's use of scapegoating now took on religious overtones. In "The Crime Against Kansas," the speech in which Sumner relied most upon this strategy, Sumner probably sounded very much like a prophet who was busy pointing out the sinners of slavery. In the speech, opposing Senators became "Don Quixotes" and "Sancho Panzas" of slavery.

¹²¹See p. 218.

¹²²Donald, pp. 238-302.

They were criminals who had broken the fundamental law. Each time they spoke in opposition to the forces of anti-slavery, he characterized each of them as a Senator who "switches his tongue, and again . . . fills the Senate with its offensive odor."¹²³ Sumner, then, provided his audiences with a secular religion based upon progress of humanity, a secular belief complete with comical Satans who were clearly defined. Hence, the Massachusetts Senator was able to identify with the "growing antislavery sentiment in the North," and he gained considerable consubstantiality by attacking slavery as a "moral evil" which threatened the basic covenants, the "integrity of the republic."¹²⁴ With the slavery issue, he was able to complete his secular religion of progress. He had at last found a source of guilt.

Conclusions

Charles Sumner was an extremely skillful speaker who gained considerable political influence through the use of his oratory. Relying upon enthymemes drawn from the common opinions of men of his day, i.e., the "American Democratic Faith," he was able to achieve considerable identification in the North with his ideas on slavery. He was most successful with this question partially because Americans felt more

¹²³See pp. 144, 255.

¹²⁴See Goodman, p. 386.

intensely about slavery than either social reform or pacificism. Because he recognized this fact and adapted his strategies of scapegoating and religification of issues accordingly, Sumner was able to rely upon oratory as a major source of his political influence. In the end, however, Sumner's success in using oratory as an instrument of social influence lay in his conscious or unconscious realization that the needs of most men are analogous to those filled by the Christian religion. With this realization, Sumner was able to formulate a secular analogue of the Christian religion which received widespread publication and attention. Consequently, Sumner received almost maximum exposure to those mid-nineteenth-century Americans who would not respond rationally to the newspaper reports of his speeches. He found an excellent means of getting his secular faith before the eyes of many people, thus increasing the number of believers he could reach.

CHAPTER V

RETROSPECT

On Purpose and Method

The purpose of this study was to answer the question: how did Charles Sumner's oratory aid and/or hinder him in acquiring immense political influence? The method of accomplishing this purpose was to: (1) reduce the texts of Sumner's speeches to syllogistic form, (2) determine whether or not the Senator made his lines of argument consubstantial with the thoughts of his auditors, and (3) explain and evaluate why and how Sumner failed or succeeded in achieving consubstantiality. The combination of purpose and method employed in this study affirmed the tripartite thesis which acted as a basis for exploration of Sumner's speaking. First, Sumner identified his reform proposals with ideas widely accepted by Americans in the fifteen years prior to the Civil War. Second, this identification through rhetorical techniques and strategies approached completeness only with Sumner's audience composed of Northern social reformers. Third, Sumner was never able to achieve substantial identification with a national audience, and thus, he failed to maximize the influence obtainable from his rhetoric.

Rhetorical Identification

Sumner was perhaps better equipped by life than were most mid-nineteenth-century Americans to become a consummate orator. His education was lengthy and extensive. During his travels, he met great numbers of important, interesting, and diversified figures of his day. As a young lawyer and student, he associated with the intellectual elite of New England. His mentors included William Ellery Channing, Justice Joseph Storey, and ex-President John Quincy Adams. Throughout his youth, he had heard most of the famous orators of two continents. He had received instruction in rhetoric from Edward T. Channing, one of the most important nineteenth-century American rhetorical theorists. Sumner himself was widely read, intelligent, and indefatigable in his pursuit of knowledge. As for character, he was best described as a complete humanitarian. He possessed a sincere desire to better the lot of mankind. His greatest personal fault was a certain vanity and rigidity of thought in all matters which threatened dissonance with his Utilitarian beliefs. Most important of all, however, Sumner had a thorough knowledge of those ideals and faiths which were held by most Americans of his era. Although he interpreted the "American democratic faith" differently than did most mid-nineteenth-century Americans, he was completely aware of the importance of such concepts as the fundamental law, individual respect,

and the uniqueness of America's mission to his fellow countrymen. Charles Sumner was, therefore, potentially one of the greatest American orators of the past century.

In addition, Sumner had the advantage of living in a time in which great problems and ideas flourished side by side on the American scene. Whatever else the Middle Period of American history was, it was a time suited to oratory. In the years before the Civil War, Americans were busy debating among themselves as to what should be the role of government in promoting social reform, whether their nation's foreign policy should be aggressive or peaceful, and what should be done about the "peculiar institution" of slavery. Yet, until at least the late 1850's, the "American democratic faith" was the underlying and unifying background to these debates. Identification between an orator and a large national audience was still possible. The enthymeme was still a viable instrument for settling questions of policy.

In addition to fortuitous preparation and to living in an era well suited to oratory, Sumner manifested one additional advantage which promised to make him a great political orator. Consciously or unconsciously, the Senator sensed that oratory could be made to fill needs universal to all Western man. All mid-nineteenth-century Americans were to some degree bound by personal covenant to their individual interpretations of the "American democratic faith."

Eventually that covenant, as well as any other, would be broken. In such an event, an almost unlimited resource for identification and for persuasion would be unleashed.

Sumner always sensed that the occasion would only demand a reformer, a man pure himself from not having broken the covenant, to awaken public opinion and to restore the covenant. Hence, Sumner remained "a slave of principle" who called "no party master."¹

Even with and partially because of these resources, however, Charles Sumner was only partly successful in identifying his proposals for reform with the beliefs of his audiences. He was successful in that his proposals were in the attitudinal clusters of most mid-nineteenth-century Americans and in that his terms of appeal were typical of the common thought of the day. Sumner clearly recognized what the issues of the Antebellum period were. He seldom spoke between the years of 1845 and 1860 unless his oration dealt with the question of social reform, peace, or slavery. In addition, he couched his appeals on these topics in terms derived directly from the "American democratic faith." Terms referring to progress, fundamental law, justice, respect for the individual, and patriotic feeling abound throughout the nine major addresses considered in this study. In his most

¹Charles Sumner, The Landmark of Freedom (Washington: Buell & Blanchard, 1852), p. 6.

important speeches on the three central issues of his day, Sumner's major enthymemes always centered around at least one of the major tenets of the "American democratic faith." Yet, Sumner derived little increased political influence from his speeches on the topics of social reform and peace despite his obvious success in relating his proposals to commonly held opinions of his auditors. In his speeches on these topics, his identification was only partial, never approaching the completeness necessary for persuasion.

Limits to Identification

Sumner's identification with the audiences to his speeches on reform was limited by his use of strategies. To begin with, he never manipulated strategies of form in an attempt to gain strategic advantage. More importantly, however, he unwisely constructed his two major types of contextual strategies: religiofication and scapegoating.

In his speeches on social reform, "The Law of Human Progress" and "Justice to the Land States," Sumner employed the religiofication which was characteristic of both his earlier and later addresses. The god-term of Sumner's secular analogue to the Christian faith was progress. For the future Massachusetts Senator, anything which threatened social progress was a violation of the fundamental law and, for that matter, of the law of the Christian God.

To balance the god-terms, Sumner utilized the strategy of victimage or scapegoating when he attacked the conservative elements of society. Although Sumner was never extremely vituperative against conservatives in either "The Law of Human Progress" or "Justice to the Land States," he did demonstrate considerable displeasure with their attitudes and in the latter address, he became quite specific as to who some of the representatives of the conservative elements were.

Sumner's audiences to his two addresses on social reform were in large unaffected by these strategies. Most mid-nineteenth-century Americans supported social reform and improvement. The real questions to be settled in this issue were those involving practical politics: questions such as what level of government should do what. Sumner, being always a man of principle, was much more concerned over any threat to social progress, no matter how small, than were his auditors. His audiences were unable to respond to the matters discussed in "The Law of Human Progress" and "Justice to the Land States" as did Sumner. The issue of social reform simply was not subject to successful use of religification and scapegoating because it was not an issue which generated substantial guilt in the minds of Americans of the Middle Period. Without guilt, there could be no completion of the secular religion of progress.

Essentially the same problem limited Sumner's attempts at identification and persuasion in his two major addresses in support of pacificism, "The True Grandeur of Nations" and "The War System of the Commonwealth of Nations." In these two addresses, Sumner again relied mainly upon the strategies of religiofication and scapegoating. He contended that war was bad because it hindered progress, and he denounced all military men as being useless members of society. His only change in his strategies was a qualitative one. He was more intense in his attacks upon the scapegoats in these two addresses than he had been in his denouncement of conservatives in the orations on social progress. In addition, he expanded his religiofication strategy to include promises of redemption, a paradise on earth, if only men would stop war.

As was the case with the speeches on social reform, "The True Grandeur of Nations" and "The War System of the Commonwealth of Nations" resulted in only limited identification between Sumner's ideas and those held by a small number of New England philanthropists. Again, Sumner had chosen an issue which did not generate guilt on the part of his audiences. Most mid-nineteenth-century Americans looked upon war either as a patriotic duty or as an economic necessity.

As a consequence, Sumner's speeches on social reform and pacificism had only limited impact upon his political

influence. Throughout the years when he was most vociferous in his support of these two causes, he remained a man of only local influence and importance. His decision to support the antislavery cause, however, soon changed all of that.

Successful Identification

On the question of slavery, Sumner was able to identify with a portion of the people in the North. This identification resulted from his successful use of the strategies of religification and scapegoating in five major addresses on slavery: "The Anti-Slavery Duties of the Whig Party," "The Landmark of Freedom," "Freedom National, Slavery Sectional," "The Crime Against Kansas," and "The Barbarism of Slavery." In these five orations, Sumner's use of religification and victimage were essentially the same as in his addresses on social reform and pacificism. Slavery was to be abhorred because it stopped human progress, and those apologists for slavery were to be despised. The limitation of slavery to only local support promised to create a new America, a better nation.

However, Sumner's identification with his audiences on this issue was far more encompassing than had been the case with his addresses on other reforms. On the issue of slavery, a substantial and growing number of Americans in the North were beginning to feel uncomfortable with the spread of

the slave interests. Whether economically or humanely generated, many citizens of the North felt guilty for letting the situation worsen. This feeling was so intense that the political parties which had resisted the stress resulting from sectional differences over land policy and the Mexican War succumbed to sectionalization. With this guilt and dissatisfaction, Sumner had found a break with the "American democratic faith" which completed his secular religion of human progress. He had found an issue and an audience with which he could approach complete identification.

On Political Influence

Historians recorded that Charles Sumner was one of the most influential public figures of his day, and this study suggested that a major source of Sumner's political influence was his oratory on reform. His addresses on social reform and pacificism made him a well-known figure throughout the Northeastern states.² The most important contribution to his political influence, however, was from his speeches on slavery. David Donald's thesis that Sumner's political influence was the result of chance was persuasive, but this historian seemed to ignore the importance of Sumner's antislavery addresses as a cause for his political success.³ Sumner was

²See Edward L. Pierce, Memoir and Letters of Charles Sumner (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1894), III, 32.

³See Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), pp. 382-388.

indeed fortunate that he lived in a time in which the number of people who were growing more and more to resent slavery was on the increase. However, Sumner's reputation as an orator, as a prophet who was pure from the sins of the slave institution and as a fearless spokesman for the cause of freedom, was the causal factor which turned the antislavery advocates to him as a leader of their cause. In other words, Sumner's oratory on slavery was a necessary, but not sufficient, factor in his ascendance to national political prominence.

However, Sumner's oratory also limited his political appeal. He never found a basis for appealing to the nation as a whole. He remained throughout his political career a sectional leader, not a national spokesman on the order of Henry Clay or Daniel Webster. He was capable of drawing support from the "American democratic faith" to support his proposals and to increase his identification with his audiences, but his identification remained always limited to those who accepted his interpretation of that faith. His political influence increased only when the supporters for his position increased in number. There is no substantial evidence, in addition, that his oratory was the cause of the increase in the number of his supporters. In this sense, therefore, Sumner's oratory made him available as a political leader; it did not make him a leader. In fact, his identification so completely with the Northern cause alienated

the South and, thereby, made it impossible for Sumner ever to become a national leader.

On Additional Justifications

In large part, this study is justified by the fact that it explains how Sumner used oratory as an instrument of political influence. In the end, however, the justification for any rhetorical criticism must come from what that work adds to rhetorical theory. This study contributed to rhetorical theory by illustrating the use of a comparatively new critical system, that of Kenneth Burke, in the study of nineteenth-century oratory. One conclusion to be drawn from this study was that the Burkian system, with its emphasis upon the non-rational aspects of the persuasive process, is a viable critical tool which deserves more use and adaptation to speech criticism.

In the particular case of Charles Sumner, the Burkian system permits the critic much greater understanding of why the Senator was a successful orator. The conclusions of neo-Aristotelian critics that Sumner was illogical in his use of reasoned appeal, unsubtle in his use of pathos, and a controversial orator does not really explain the basis for his rhetorical success.⁴ Such conclusions are descriptive and

⁴See R. Elaine Pagel and Carl Dallinger, "Charles Sumner," in A History and Criticism of American Public Address, ed. by William Norwood Bragance (New York: Russell & Russell, 1960), II, 751-756.

not critical. When Sumner's oratory is viewed against a non-rational scene permeated by a general cultural faith, the "American democratic faith," and by intense feeling over the slavery issue, new critical instruments are required which can explain how Sumner was able to systematically identify with these non-rational elements. The Burkian concept of the secular religion is such a tool.

The Burkian system, therefore, deserves further use in the exploration of nineteenth-century oratory. This is particularly valid for the study of other speakers prominent in America in the years before the Civil War. Its use in future research promises to disclose, as the neo-Aristotelian system does not, why Americans in 1861 deserted the enthymeme to take up the sword. What else besides teaching man how to avoid conflict could so well justify the discipline of rhetoric?

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