The epistles of John explicitly condemn as antichrists those with a lying spirit who deny that Jesus is the Christ and deny the physical resurrection. Antichrists are to be notably active in the last days (1 Jn. 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn. 1:7).

The Book of Mormon profiles many subtle and sophisticated aspects of antichrist characters, though the text explicitly refers to only one of them as antichrist.

Sherem (c. 540 B.C.) rejected the prophetic Christian teachings of the Nephite prophets, arguing that belief in the coming Christ perverted the law of Moses. He employed several archetypical arguments and methods, claiming that no one could know of things to come, including the coming of Christ. When confronted, Sherem asserted that if there were a Christ he would not deny him, but he knew “there is no Christ, neither has been, nor ever will be,” thus contradicting his own argument that no one could “tell of things to come.” Demanding a sign of divine power, Sherem was stricken by God, and then confessed that he had been deceived by the devil in denying the Christ (Jacob 7:1–23).

Nehor (c. 91 B.C.), a practitioner of priestcraft, preached and established a church to obtain riches and worldly honor and to satisfy his pride. He taught that God had created everyone, had redeemed everyone, and that people need not “fear and tremble” because everyone would be saved. Furthermore, he said priests should be supported by the people. Nehor attacked and killed a defender of the true doctrine of Christ, and was tried before Alma and executed (Alma 1:2–16). He was not executed for being an antichrist, but for having enforced his beliefs “by the sword.”

Korihor (c. 74 B.C.) was an extremist, rejecting all religious teachings, even to the point of not posturing either as a defender of traditions or as a reformer of corrupted religious practices. He was labeled “Anti-Christ” because he taught that there was no need for a Christ and that none would come. He described the religious teachings of the church as foolish traditions designed to subject the people to corrupt and lazy priests. In a dramatic confrontation with the Nephite chief judge, and with the prophet Alma, Korihor claimed that one cannot know anything that cannot be seen, making knowledge or prophecy of future events impossible. He ridiculed all talk of visions, dreams, and the mysteries of God. He called belief in sin, the atonement of Christ, and the remission of sins a derangement of the mind caused by foolish religious traditions. He denied the existence of God and, after demanding a sign as proof of his existence, was struck dumb. After Alma accused him of possessing a lying spirit, Korihor confessed that he had been deceived by Satan, had taught words and doctrines pleasing to the carnal mind, and had even begun to believe them himself (Alma 30:6–60).

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ANTI-MORMON PUBLICATIONS
Anti-Mormonism includes any hostile or polemic opposition to Mormonism or to the Latter-day Saints, such as maligning the founding prophet, his successors, or the doctrines or practices of the Church. Though sometimes well intended, anti-Mormon publications have often taken the form of inventive, falsehood, demeaning caricature, prejudice, and legal harassment, leading to both verbal and physical assault. From its beginnings, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members have been targets of anti-Mormon publications. Apart from collecting them for historical purposes and in response to divine direction, the Church has largely ignored these materials, for they strike most members as irresponsible misrepresentations.

Few other religious groups in the United States have been subjected to such sustained, vitriolic criticism and hostility. From the organization of the Church in 1830 to 1989, at least 1,931 anti-Mormon books, novels, pamphlets, tracts, and flyers have been published in English. Numerous other newsletters, articles, and letters have been circulated. Since 1960 these publications have increased dramatically.

A major reason for hostility against the Church has been its belief in extrabiblical revelation. The theological foundation of the Church rests on the claim by the Prophet Joseph Smith that God the Father, Jesus Christ, and angels appeared to him and instructed him to restore a dispensation of the gospel.

Initial skepticism toward Joseph Smith’s testimony was understandable because others had made similar claims to receiving revelation from
God. Moreover, Joseph Smith had brought forth the Book of Mormon, giving tangible evidence of his claim to revelation, and this invited testing. His testimony that the book originated from an ancient record engraved on metal plates that he translated by the gift and power of God was considered preposterous by disbelievers. Hostile anti-Mormon writing and other abuses grew largely out of the perceived need to supply an alternative explanation for the origin of the Book of Mormon. The early critics focused initially on discrediting the Smith family, particularly Joseph Smith, Jr., and attempted to show that the Book of Mormon was entirely of nineteenth-century origin. Later critics have focused more on points of doctrine, individual leaders, and Church operation.

**Early Criticisms (1829–1846).** Joseph Smith’s disclosure that heavenly messengers had visited him was met with derision, particularly by some local clergymen. When efforts to dissuade him failed, he became the object of ridicule. From the time of the first vision (1820) to the first visit by the Angel Moroni (1823), Joseph “suffered every kind of opposition and persecution from the different orders of religionists” (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 74).

The first serious attempt to discredit Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon was by Abner Cole, editor of the *Reflector*, a local paper in Palmyra, New York. Writing under the pseudonym Obadiah Dogberry, Cole published in his paper extracts from two pirated chapters of the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, but was compelled to desist because he was violating copyright law. Cole resorted to satire. He attempted to malign Joseph Smith by associating him with money digging, and he claimed that Joseph was influenced by a magician named Walters.

Alexander Campbell, founder of the Disciples of Christ, wrote the first published anti-Mormon pamphlet. The text appeared first as articles in his own paper, the *Millennial Harbinger* (1831), and then in a pamphlet entitled *Delusions* (1832). Campbell concluded, “I cannot doubt for a single moment that [Joseph Smith] is the sole author and proprietor of [the Book of Mormon].” Two years later he recanted this conclusion and accepted a new theory for the origin of the Book of Mormon, namely that Joseph Smith had somehow collaborated with Sidney Rigdon to produce the Book of Mormon from the Spaulding Manuscript (see below).

The most notable anti-Mormon work of this period, *Mormonism Unveiled* (sic), was published by Eber D. Howe in 1834. Howe collaborated with apostate Philastus Hurlbut, twice excommunicated from the Church for immorality. Hurlbut was hired by an anti-Mormon committee to find those who would attest to Smith’s dishonesty. He “collected” affidavits from seventy-two contemporaries who professed to know Joseph Smith and were willing to speak against him. *Mormonism Unveiled* attempted to discredit Joseph Smith and his family by assembling these affidavits and nine letters written by Ezra Booth, also an apostate from the Church. These documents allege that the Smiths were money diggers and irresponsible people. Howe advanced the theory that Sidney Rigdon obtained a manuscript written by Solomon Spaulding, rewrote it into the Book of Mormon, and then convinced Joseph Smith to tell the public that he had translated the book from plates received from an angel. This theory served as an alternative to Joseph Smith’s account until the Spaulding Manuscript was discovered in 1884 and was found to be unrelated to the Book of Mormon.

The Hurlbut-Howe collection and Campbell’s *Delusions* were the major sources for nearly all other nineteenth- and some twentieth-century anti-Mormon writings, notably the works of Henry Caswall, John C. Bennett, Pomeroy Tucker, Thomas Gregg, William Linn, and George Arbaugh. Most of these writers drew routinely from the same body of anti-Mormon lore (see H. Nibley, “How to Write an Anti-Mormon Book,” *Brigham Young University Extension Publications*, Feb. 17, 1962, p. 30).

Perhaps the most infamous manifestation of anti-Mormonism came in the Missouri Conflict, during which Governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued an extermination order. “The Mormons,” he wrote, “must be treated as enemies and must be exterminated or driven from the state, if necessary for the public good” (*HC* 3:175). This order led to the expulsion of the Mormons from Missouri and their resettlement in Illinois.

While incarcerated in Liberty Jail in 1839, Joseph Smith wrote to the Saints and instructed them not to respond polemically but to “gather up the libelous publications that are afloat; and all that are in the magazines, and in the encyclopedias, and all the libelous histories that are published, and are writing, and by whom” so that they could bring to light all misleading and untruthful reports about the Church (*D&C* 123:4–5, 12–13). This
Title page of E. D. Howe’s *Mormonism Unveiled* (1834), one of the earliest anti-Mormon publications. It advanced the theory that the historical part of the Book of Mormon was written by one Solomon Spalding. Courtesy Rare Books and Manuscripts, Brigham Young University.

procedure has been followed by Latter-day Saints over the years.

After the Saints moved to Nauvoo, Illinois, a principal antagonist was Thomas C. Sharp, editor of the *Warsaw Signal*. Alarmed over the Church’s secular power, he used his paper to oppose it. In 1841 he published *Mormonism Portrayed*, by William Harris.

Six notable anti-Mormon books were published in 1842. The first was *The History of the Saints; or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*, by John C. Bennett, who had served as Joseph Smith’s counselor in the First Presidency and was also the first mayor of Nauvoo. After he was excommunicated from the Church for immorality, he turned against the Mormons and published a series of letters in a Springfield, Missouri, newspaper. He charged that Joseph Smith was “one of the grossest and most infamous impostors that ever appeared upon the face of the earth.” Bennett’s history borrowed heavily from *Mormonism Portrayed*.


Called the “Anti-Mormon Extraordinaire,” the Reverend Henry Caswall published *The City of the Mormons*, or *Three Days at Nauvoo*. He
claimed that he gave Joseph Smith a copy of a Greek manuscript of the Psalms and that Smith identified it as a dictionary of Egyptian hieroglyphics. Caswall invented dialogue between himself and Smith to portray Joseph Smith as ignorant, uncouth, and deceptive. In 1843 Caswall published The Prophet of the Nineteenth Century in London, borrowing most of his material from Clark and Turner.

By 1844 Joseph Smith also faced serious disension within the Church. Several of his closest associates disagreed with him over the PLURAL MARRIAGE revelation and other doctrines. Among the principal dissenters were William and Wilson Law, Austin Cowles, Charles Foster, Francis and Chauncey Higbee, Charles Ivins, and Robert Foster. They became allied with local anti-Mormon elements and published one issue of a newspaper, the Nauvoo Expositor. In it they charged that Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet, guilty of whoredoms, and dishonest in financial matters.

The Nauvoo City Council and Mayor Joseph Smith declared the newspaper an illegal “nuisance” and directed the town marshal to destroy the press. This destruction inflamed the hostile anti-Mormons around Nauvoo. On June 12, 1844, Thomas Sharp’s newspaper, the Warsaw Signal, called for the extermination of the Latter-day Saints: “War and extermination is inevitable! Citizens arise, one and all!! Can you stand by, and suffer such infernal devils to rob men of their property and rights, without avenging them... Let [your comment] be made with powder and ball!!!” Two weeks later Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were assassinated in CARThage JAIL while awaiting trial on charges of treason.

Sharp defended the killing on the grounds that “the most respectable citizens” had called for it. Sharp and four others eventually were tried for the murders, but were acquitted for lack of evidence.

Many felt that the Church would die with its founders. When the members united under the leadership of the Twelve Apostles, anti-Mormon attacks began with new vigor. Sharp renewed his call for the removal of the Mormons from Illinois. By September 1845, more than 200 Church members’ homes were burned in the outlying areas of Nauvoo. In February 1846, the Saints crossed the Mississippi and began the exodus to the West.

Revenge was possibly a motive of some anti-Mormons, especially apostates. Philastus Hurlbut, Simonds Ryder, Ezra Booth, and John C. Bennett sought revenge because the Church had disciplined them. Alexander Campbell was angered because he lost many of his Campbellite followers when they joined the Latter-day Saints. Mark Aldrich had invested in a real-estate development that failed because Mormon immigrants did not support it, and Thomas Sharp had lost many of his general business prospects.

MORMON STEREOTYPING AND THE CRUSADE AGAINST POLYGAMY (1847–1896). Settlement in the West provided welcome isolation for the Church, but public disclosure of the practice of POLYGAMY in 1852 brought a new barrage of ridicule and a confrontation with the federal government.

The years from 1850 to 1890 were turbulent ones for the Church because reformers, ministers, and the press openly attacked the practice of polygamy. Opponents founded antipolygamy societies, and Congress passed ANTIPOLYGAMY LEGISLATION. Mormons were stereotyped as people who defied the law and were immoral. The clear aim of the judicial and political crusade against the Mormons was to destroy the Church. Only the 1890 MANIFESTO, a statement by Church President Wilford Woodruff that abolished polygamy officially, pacified the government, allowing the return of confiscated Church property. Voluminous anti-Mormon writings, lectures, and cartoons at this time stereotyped the Church as a theocracy that defied the laws of conventional society; many portrayed its members as deluded and fanatical; and they alleged that polygamy, secret rituals, and BLOOD ATONEMENT were the theological underpinnings of the Church. The main motives were to discredit LDS belief, morally to reform a perceived evil, or to exploit the controversy for financial and political profit. The maligning tactics that were used included verbal attacks against Church leaders; caricatures in periodicals, magazines, and lectures; fictional inventions; and outright falsehoods.

Probably the most influential anti-Mormon work in this period was Pomeroy Tucker’s Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism (1867). A printer employed by E. B. Grandin, publisher of the Wayne Sentinel and printer of the first edition of the Book of Mormon, Tucker claimed to have been associated closely with Joseph Smith. He supported the Hurlbut-Howe charge that the Smiths
were dishonest and alleged that they stole from their neighbors. However, he acknowledged that his insinuations were not “sustained by judicial investigation.”

The Reverend M. T. Lamb’s *The Golden Bible or the Book of Mormon: Is It from God?* (1887) ridiculed the Book of Mormon as “verbose, blundering, stupid, . . . improbable, . . . impossible, . . . [and] a foolish guess.” He described the book as unnecessary and far inferior to the Bible, and he characterized those who believe the Book of Mormon as being misinformed.

Of fifty-six anti-Mormon novels published during the nineteenth century, four established a pattern for all of the others. The four were sensational, erotic novels focusing on the supposed plight of women in the Church. Alfreda Eva Bell’s *Boadicea, the Mormon Wife* (1855) depicted Church members as “murderers, forgers, swindlers, gamblers, thieves, and adulterers!” Orvilla S. Belisle’s *Mormonism Unveiled* (1855) had the heroine hopelessly trapped in a Mormon harem. Metta Victoria Fuller Victor’s *Mormon Wives* (1856) characterized Mormons as a “horrid” and deluded people. Maria Ward (a pseudonym) depicted Mormon torture of women in *Female Life Among the Mormons* (1855). Authors wrote lurid passages designed to sell the publications. Excommunicated members tried to capitalize on their former membership in the Church to sell their stories. Fanny Stenhouse’s *Tell It All* (1874) and Ann Eliza Young’s *Wife No. 19* (1876) sensationalized the polygamy theme. William Hickman sold his story to John H. Beadle, who exaggerated the DANTÉ myth in *Brigham’s Destroying Angel* (1872) to caricature Mormons as a violent people.

Church leaders responded to these attacks and adverse publicity only through sermons and admonitions. They defended the Church’s fundamental doctrine of revelation and authority from God. During the period of federal prosecution, the First Presidency condemned the acts against the Church by the U.S. Congress and Supreme Court as violations of the United States Constitution.

**THE SEARCH FOR A PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATION** (1897–1945). After the Church officially discontinued polygamy in 1890, the public image of Mormonism improved and became moderately favorable. However, in 1898 Utah elected to the U.S. Congress B. H. Roberts, who had entered into plural marriages before the Manifesto. His election revived polygamy charges and further exposés by magazine muckrakers, and Congress refused to seat him. During the congressional debate, the Order of Presbytery in Utah issued a publication, *Ten Reasons Why Christians Cannot Fellowship the Mormon Church*, mainly objecting to the doctrine of modern revelation.

The election of Reed Smoot to the U.S. Senate (January 20, 1903) prompted additional controversy. Although he was not a polygamist, Smoot was a member of the **QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES**. Ten months after he had been sworn in as a senator, his case was reviewed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections. The **SMOOT HEARINGS** lasted from January 1904 to February 1907. Finally, in 1907 the Senate voted to allow him to take his seat. The First Presidency then published *An Address to the World*, explaining the Church’s doctrines and answering charges. The Salt Lake Ministerial Association rebutted that address in the *Salt Lake Tribune* on June 4, 1907.

During 1910 and 1911, *Pearson’s*, *Collier’s*, *Cosmopolitan, McClure’s*, and *Everybody’s* magazines published vicious anti-Mormon articles. McClure’s charged that the Mormons still practiced polygamy. *Cosmopolitan* compared Mormonism to a viper with tentacles reaching for wealth and power. The editors called the Church a “loathsome institution” whose “slimy grip” had served political and economic power in a dozen western states. These articles are classified by Church historians as the “magazine crusade.”

The advent of the motion picture brought a repetition of the anti-Mormon stereotype. From 1905 to 1936, at least twenty-one anti-Mormon films were produced. The most sordid of them were *A Mormon Maid* (1917) and *Trapped by the Mormons* (1922). The films depicted polygamous leaders seeking women converts to satisfy their lusts, and Mormons murdering innocent travelers in secret rites. Some of the most virulent anti-Mormon writings at this time came from Britain. Winifred Graham (Mrs. Theodore Corey), a professional anti-Mormon novelist, charged that Mormon missionaries were taking advantage of World War I by proselytizing women whose husbands were away to war. The film *Trapped by the Mormons* was based on one of her novels.

When the Spaulding theory of Book of Mormon origins was discredited, anti-Mormon proponents turned to psychology to explain Joseph Smith’s visions and revelations. Walter F. Prince
Harry M. Beardsley, in *Joseph Smith and His Mormon Empire* (1931), advanced the theory that Joseph Smith’s visions, revelations, and the Book of Mormon were by-products of his subconscious mind. Vardis Fisher, a popular novelist with Mormon roots in Idaho, published *Children of God: An American Epic* (1939). The work is somewhat sympathetic to the Mormon heritage, while offering a naturalistic origin for the Mormon practice of polygamy, and describes Joseph Smith in terms of “neurotic impulses.”

In 1945 Fawn Brodie published *No Man Knows My History*, a psychobiographical account of Joseph Smith. She portrayed him as a “prodigious mythmaker” who absorbed his theological ideas from his New York environment. The book repudiated the Rigdon-Spaulding theory, revived the Alexander Campbell thesis that Joseph Smith alone was the author of the book, and postulated that *View of the Hebrews* (following Riley, 1903) provided the basic source material for the Book of Mormon. Brodie’s interpretations have been followed by several other writers.

Church scholars have criticized Brodie’s methods for several reasons. First, she ignored valuable manuscript material in the Church archives that was accessible to her. Second, her sources were mainly biased anti-Mormon documents collected primarily in the New York Public Library, Yale Library, and Chicago Historical Library. Third, she began with a predetermined conclusion that shaped her work: “I was convinced,” she wrote, “before I ever began writing that Joseph Smith was not a true prophet,” and felt compelled to supply an alternative explanation for his works (quoted in Newell G. Bringham, “Applause, Attack, and Ambivalence—Varied Responses to Fawn M. Brodie’s *No Man Knows My History*,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 57 [Winter 1989]:47–48). Fourth, by using a psychobiographical approach, she imputed thoughts and motives to Joseph Smith. Even Vardis Fisher criticized her book, writing that it was “almost more a novel than a biography because she rarely hesitates to give the content of a mind or to explain motives which at best can only be surmised” (p. 57).

**Revival of Old Theories and Allegations** (1946–1990). Anti-Mormon writers were most prolific during the post-Brodie era. Despite a generally favorable press toward the Church during many of these years, of all anti-Mormon books,
novels, pamphlets, tracts, and flyers published in English before 1990, more than half were published between 1960 and 1990 and a third of them between 1970 and 1990.

Networks of anti-Mormon organizations operate in the United States. The 1987 Directory of Cult Research Organizations contains more than a hundred anti-Mormon listings. These networks distribute anti-Mormon literature, provide lectures that attack the Church publicly, and proselytize Mormons. Pacific Publishing House in California lists more than a hundred anti-Mormon publications.

A broad spectrum of anti-Mormon authors has produced the invective literature of this period. Evangelicals and some apostate Mormons assert that Latter-day Saints are not Christians. The main basis for this judgment is that the Mormon belief in the Christian Godhead is different from the traditional Christian doctrine of the Trinity. They contend that Latter-day Saints worship a “different Jesus” and that their scriptures are contrary to the Bible. Another common tactic is to attempt to show how statements by past Church leaders contradict those by current leaders on such points as Adam as God, blood atonement, and plural marriage.

A current example of ridicule and distortion of Latter-day Saint beliefs comes from Edward Decker, an excommunicated Mormon and co-founder of Ex-Mormons for Jesus, now known as Saints Alive in Jesus. Professing love for the Saints, Decker has waged an attack on their beliefs. Latter-day Saints see his film and book, both entitled The Godmakers, as a gross misrepresentation of their beliefs, especially the Temple Ordinances. A regional director of the Anti-Defamation League of B’Nai Brith and the Arizona Regional Board of the National Conference of Christians and Jews are among those who have condemned the film.

Though anti-Mormon criticisms, misrepresentations, and falsehoods are offensive to Church members, the First Presidency has counseled members not to react to or debate those who sponsor them and has urged them to keep their responses “in the form of a positive explanation of the doctrines and practices of the Church” (Church News, Dec. 18, 1983, p. 2).

Two prolific anti-Mormon researchers are Jer- ald and Sandra Tanner. They commenced writing in 1959 and now offer more than 200 publications. Their main approach is to demonstrate discrepancies, many of which Latter-day Saints consider contrived or trivial, between current and past Church teachings. They operate and publish under the name of the Utah Lighthouse Ministry, Inc. Their most notable work, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? (1964, revised 1972, 1987), contains the essence of their claims against the Church.

During the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s, the Church had a generally favorable public image as reflected in the news media. That image became more negative in the later 1970s and the early 1980s. Church opposition to the equal rights amendment and the excommunication of Sonia Johnson for apostasy, the Church’s position with respect to priesthood and BLAC KS (changed in 1978), a First Presidency statement opposing the MX missile, the John Singer episode including the bombing of an LDS meetinghouse, tensions between some historians and Church leaders, the forged “Salamander” letter, and the other Mark Hofmann FORGERIES and murders have provided grist for negative press and television commentary. The political leverage of the Church and its financial holdings have also been subjects of articles with a strong negative orientation.

A widely circulated anti-Mormon book, The Mormon Murders, by Steven Nafesh and Gregory White Smith (1988), employs several strategies reminiscent of old-style anti-Semitism. The authors use the Hofmann forgeries and murders as a springboard and follow the stock anti-Mormon themes and methods found in earlier works. They explain Mormonism in terms of wealth, power, deception, and fear of the past.

Church leaders have consistently appealed to the fairness of readers and urged them to examine the Book of Mormon and other latter-day SCRIPTURES and records for themselves rather than to prejudge the Church based on anti-Mormon publications. In 1972 the Church established the Public Communications Department, headquartered in Salt Lake City, to release public information about the Church.

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ANTIPOLYGAMY LEGISLATION

Bigamy is the crime of marrying while an undivorced spouse from a valid prior marriage is living. Because many prominent nineteenth-century Mormon men became polygamists under Church mandate, both their vulnerability to prosecution for bigamy and the legal attacks on the Church and its members for supporting plural marriage created a crisis for Mormonism during the 1870s and 1880s.

Bigamy was recognized as an offense by the early English ecclesiastical courts, which considered it an affront to the marriage sacrament. Parliament enacted a statute in 1604 that made bigamy a felony cognizable in the English common law courts. After American independence, the states adopted antibigamy laws, but they received little attention until the nineteenth century in Utah.

The United States government has constitutional power to enact laws governing territories, and under that authority Congress enacted the Morrill Act (1862), making bigamy in a territory a crime punishable by a fine and five years in prison. The statute was upheld in Reynolds v. United States (1879), although the defendant argued that the law violated the First Amendment guarantee of the free exercise of religion.

Few Mormons were prosecuted for bigamy because the government had difficulty obtaining testimony about plural wedding ceremonies. Rather, they were charged with bigamous cohabitation, a misdemeanor created by the Edmunds Act (1882). Proving cohabitation was easy enough, and over 1,300 Latter-day Saints were jailed as “cohabs” in the 1880s.

Antipolygamy legislation also put pressure on the Church by threatening members' civil rights and Church property rights. The Edmunds Act barred persons living in polygamy from jury service, public office, and voting. The Edmunds-Tucker Act (1887) disincorporated both the Church and the Perpetual Emigrating Fund on the ground that they fostered polygamy. Furthermore, it authorized seizure of Church real estate not directly used for religious purposes, and acquired in excess of a $50,000 limitation imposed by the Morrill Act. In the Idaho Territory a test oath adopted in 1885 was used to ban all Mormons (and former Mormons) from voting because of the Church’s position on polygamy.

In 1890 after the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the seizure of Church property under the Edmunds-Tucker Act in The Late Corporation of the Mormon Church v. United States and the Idaho test oath in Davis v. Beason, it became clear that plural marriage was leading toward the economic and political destruction of the Church. Shortly after these decisions, a revelation was received by President Wilford Woodruff, who then withdrew the requirement for worthy males to take plural wives and announced the Manifesto, formally stating his counsel to Latter-day Saints to abide by antibigamy laws (see D&C Official Declaration—1). The Manifesto ended the legal confrontation between the U.S. government and the Church.

Congress passed a final federal antibigamy provision in 1892, which excluded polygamists from immigration into the United States. This exclusion remains part of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Code.

Utah, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona incorporated antibigamy provisions into their turn-of-the-century state constitutions as required by Congress for admission to the Union. Idaho’s constitution not only outlawed bigamy but also bars polygamists and persons “celestially married” from public office and voting. However, that was interpreted in Budge v. Toncray by the Idaho court not...