The Crusades Against the Masons, Catholics, and Mormons: Separate Waves of a Common Current

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The tradition-upsetting election of Senator John F. Kennedy as the first Catholic President of the United States provides a remarkable contrast to the crusade against Catholics a century ago.

The theme of this article is that the anti-Catholic movement, which reached its zenith in the 1850's, was not unique. It reveals common features with the anti-Masonic crusade, which flourished in the early 1830's, and with the anti-Mormon movement of the 1870's and 1880's. A comparison of these movements suggests the existence of a subsurface current of American thought which, particularly in the nineteenth century, could erupt in a geyser of hostility upon a tight-knit minority.

The Anti-Masonic Party

The immediate origin of the anti-Masonic Party was the abduction of William Morgan in Batavia, New York, in 1826. Morgan was a disaffected Mason, who had threatened to reveal the secrets of the movement. The subsequent fear that the judges and juries which were to try Morgan's alleged abductors, and also the Legislature of New York, were under Masonic influence led to the formation of a political party designed to destroy the power of Masonry.

The anti-Masonic Party promptly achieved surprising success, electing fifteen members to the New York Assembly in the fall of 1827, more than the twelve assemblymen elected

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*For a different comparative treatment of these three movements, see David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and anti-Mormon Literature," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLVII (September, 1960), 205-24.
by the Adams Party, the National Republicans. In the Presidential election year of 1828, most anti-Masons supported Adams, who was not a Mason, against Jackson, who was a Mason. The coalition produced sixteen electors in favor of Adams as against twenty for Jackson. The anti-Masons and the Adams party could not agree on a gubernatorial candidate, but their combined votes for their separate candidates exceeded the votes for Van Buren, who was elected.

In the New York Legislature the anti-Masons elected four senators and seventeen assemblymen. The anti-Masonic leaders included many who intransigently opposed Masonry by conviction as well as many shrewd political leaders, who were often more pliable. Among the prominent political leaders were Thurlow Weed and William H. Seward in New York, and Thaddeus Stevens in Pennsylvania.

Following the election of 1828, the radical anti-Masons were subordinated to the practical politicians and the party became in effect an anti-Jackson party of discontent, partly concealed by the outward show of anti-Masonry, with its fervent verbiage and proscriptive declarations. The party became established in other states, and in New York came within a hair of electing its candidate for governor Francis Granger in 1830. In the presidential election year of 1832 the anti-Masons and national Republicans again failed, after a strenuous effort, to turn New York against Jackson and his State candidates. Internal conflicts became more conspicuous after this loss and the party suffered an overwhelming defeat in 1833. After this blow many of the leaders and members of the Party were translated into the new Whig Party.

Much of the anti-Masonic strength grew out of the political vacuum created by the weakness of the Adams party and the resentment of many western New Yorkers at the Democratic opposition to the Erie Canal. There was in addition, however, a mistrust and fear of the power of secret societies, such as the Freemasons, which attracted enthusiastic support for the party, and gave it much of its fervor. The attacks upon Masonry cen-

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tered upon the theme that free institutions and their spirit were threatened by the invisible concentration of power in such secret societies. There was special objection to Masonic oaths as "profane" and "shockingly unchristian," particularly the oath to "aid and assist a companion" Mason in any difficulty "whether he be right or wrong." Strenuous objection was also raised to the oath: "I swear to advance my brother's best interests by always supporting his military fame and political preferment in opposition to another." Such oaths were attacked as superseding the obligations of citizenship and destroying political equality. It was believed that such secret mutual support had established a private government more powerful than, and actually in control of, civil government—the judiciary as well as elective legislative and executive positions. Consequently, Masonry was regularly labeled "subversive."

A further element of the criticism of Masonic power was its alleged control of the press, and the establishment of free newspapers was called for. A final criticism of Masonic power was its alleged control over the lives of its members and its alleged persecution and destruction of the rights of nonmembers. Furthermore, Masonry was called odious to a free people because it assumed titles and dignities and created an aristocracy incompatible with democracy.

Virtually every one of these anti-Masonic arguments was subsequently used against the Mormons with the modification that only Mormon oaths, and not Mormon membership, were supposed to be secret. The anti-Mormon arguments, however, were supplemented by the attacks upon polygamy, the foreign birth of many Mormons and the charge that the Mormon consolidation of power was of a theocratic type, violating the separation of church and state. Finally, the allegation of a state within a state was more flagrant in the Mormon case because

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4 Ibid.
7 McMaster, *op. cit.*, V, 118.
the anti-Mormons could point to a specific federal law which the Mormons deliberately rejected, the anti-polygamy law.

The common element of anti-Masonry and anti-Mormonism was the attack upon the power of a dynamic consolidated, corporate group in what was, at least theoretically, an individualistic society. Even without the benefits of polygamy and the other additional targets of the anti-Mormons, the anti-Masonry attacks produced a widespread response and attracted able political leaders. This suggests that there was a subsurface, but widespread, element of the American character, ready to erupt in hostility against what appeared to be a threatening corporate domestic body, and it seems partially to corroborate the conclusion that much of the substance of the anxiety about the Mormons was the concern about the strength of their independent cohesive unity.

Not only was the basic hostility toward the Freemasons similar to that toward the Mormons later on, but the supporters of the two movements were the same types of people. The common sources of support for the two crusades were New England, the rural areas, and the Protestant ministers. For example, McCarthy has concluded that although there were exceptions, anti-Masonry was essentially a New England movement, the party finding greatest strength in New England, New York and the path of New England emigration. The movement was called by Democrats "a Yankee concern from beginning to end." The whole New England belt, "from Boston to Buffalo fairly teemed with anti-Masonic newspapers." It was similarly true that the opposition to the Mormons was spearheaded by New Englanders. George Q. Cannon even narrowed the region further and expressed his wonder that so many of the unyielding enemies of the Church came from Vermont, some of them having emigrated to other states, which they represented in Congress. New England was clearly the most solidly anti-Mormon section of the country, as evidenced by a regional analysis of House and Senate votes on Mormon issues in 1882.

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8McCarthy, op. cit., p. 547, citing Pennsylvania Reporter, September 17, 1830.
9McMaster, op. cit., p. 120.
McCarthy notes, as another peculiarity about anti-Masonry, that "everywhere throughout the country the anti-Masons boasted of their strength in the rural districts and acknowledged the strength of Masonry in the cities." Similarly, the vote analysis on the Mormon issue revealed that outside of the South the few votes cast in favor of the Mormon position were generally cast by Democrats from urban constituencies, whereas the rural areas overwhelmingly favored harsh measures against the Mormons.

Even before the disappearance of Morgan, the Presbyterian Church had condemned Masonry. The activity of the Congregationalists was such that in New England anti-Masonry was looked upon as "nothing more than orthodoxy in disguise."12 Methodist leaders were unexcelled in aiding the anti-Masonic cause.13 Other sects which condemned the Masons included Baptists, Dutch Reformed, Mennonites, Dunkards and Quakers. Similarly a great part of the propaganda against the Mormons was carried on through books and sermons of Protestant ministers, and a good share of the pressure upon Congress came from resolutions adopted by Protestant congregations.

The Anti-Catholic Movement

Nurtured by anti-Catholic propaganda of previous decades, political American nativism burst forth in the 1840's. In addition to the hatred of the Catholic Church, the fear of the economic, political and social threat of immigrants generally was responsible for the movement. In 1842 new immigrants passed the hundred thousand mark, and five years later they had more than doubled.14 Between 1830 and 1840 the immigrants amounted to only about 3 per cent of the total population, but in the following decade they were nearly 7 per cent.15

The attacks upon the immigrants were as follows: they were depriving American workers of jobs, and depressing wages; they brought an increase in crime and bred lawlessness

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13McCarthy, op. cit., pp. 546-47.
12Ibid., p. 542, citing Adams' Diary, IX, 71.
11Ibid., p. 543.
15Ibid., p. 194.
by their feuds and riots; they were idle paupers and a public burden; they were intemperate and lowered the moral tone of areas where they settled; they were ignorant and despotically trained and, consequently, were unable to learn and contribute to the American form of government; they were heedless of civil restraint, promoting anarchy, radicalism, and revolution; they brought unprecedented political corruption, voting in blocs and bartering their votes for favors.16

The natives feared they would soon be ruled by foreigners, who only a few years before, scarcely knew America existed. The preponderance of the foreign-speaking immigrants were Catholic, and many Americans feared they were part of a papal plot to capture America by force of immigration. This fear had its primary origin in a series of lectures delivered by Friedrich Schlegel, adviser to Metternich, in 1828. His lectures were to the effect that Protestantism favored democracy while Catholicism supported monarchy; that European political upheavals were the result of the Reformation, and that the nursery of the destructive principles which threatened Europe was North America. It remained to be inferred that democracy should be destroyed in North America by founding Roman Catholic missions.

At the close of the lectures the Leopold Foundation was organized in Austria and spread to Hungary, Italy, Piedmont, Savoy and France. In the United States the Leopold Foundation was denounced as a plot to build the power of Rome in America by encouraging emigration of Roman Catholics to the United States.17 Once here, the Catholic immigrants were charged with continuing to owe primary loyalty to the priests, as was allegedly demonstrated by incidents where civil authorities could not quell Catholic mobs, but priests did so easily.

The belief that the Roman Catholics were a danger to America was accentuated, when, in 1840, they fought to obtain a share of public school money for their parochial schools. Lengthy agitation resulted from the school question.

16Ibid., pp. 194-99; A Native American, A Brief View of the Origin and Object of the Native American Party (Philadelphia: W. Sloanaker, 1844), pp. 4-7.
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The discontent aroused by the propagandists found its political expression in the organization of Native American Parties. Beginning in 1839 communities of the West and South began to form Native American associations, which gradually multiplied in numbers and influence. The Democrats were viewed as having bartered their birthright for foreign votes. The Whigs flirted with nationalistic ideas, but they refused to translate them into political action. Consequently, the native groups felt compelled to establish a party of their own as an alternative to the two parties.

In New York natives organized the American Republican Party in 1843, which polled an amazing eight thousand votes in the fall elections. In the spring elections in 1844, American Republican candidates were swept into office in New York, and the party organization was expanded into other areas. A national convention was called for September 1844, but it failed to establish a central organization. However, the Whigs sought American Republican backing for their national ticket of Henry Clay and Theodore Frelinghuysen in exchange for Whig support for local nativist candidates. As a result the nativistic ticket was completely victorious in New York City, and in Philadelphia, the other center where political nativism was well organized, three of the four Congressmen elected were advocates of American ideals.

Leaders of the American Republicans were encouraged by this success. They organized a national convention on July 4, 1845, changed the name of the party to Native American, and issued an address calling for support for their anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant efforts. However, new forces were already on the horizon which brought the eclipse of the nativistic party.

The party principles advocated by the American Republican party during its brief career were: (1) require twenty-one years' residency for naturalization (as required of the native born before receiving the right to vote), (2) restrict authority over naturalization to the federal courts, (3) reform party corruption. Other minor aims were agitated, including the restriction of public office to natives, continuation of the Bible as a schoolbook, prevention of all union between the church and

\[^{18}\text{Billington, op. cit., p. 200.}\]
state, reduction of street riots, and a guarantee of freedom of worship.\textsuperscript{19} The party accomplished little toward these goals, although New York did change its immigration laws in 1847 and the importation of pauper immigrants was restricted.

The Native Americans participated in riots in Philadelphia in 1844, resulting in bloodshed, property destruction, and church and home burning.\textsuperscript{20} This caused a wave of revulsion against the nativists, and their ranks were depleted. The country became absorbed in new issues while nativism entered several years of quiescence, from which it was to emerge with the development of the Know Nothing party.

The Know Nothing party had its origin in the establishment of a secret patriotic society, the Order of the Star Spangled Banner, in New York in 1849. The order was designed secretly to support the more nativistically inclined candidates of both major parties. In April, 1852, James W. Barker obtained control and the order grew rapidly having some influence in municipal elections that year, but operating still as a hidden political force.\textsuperscript{21}

In 1852 Franklin Pierce was elected President. Both Whigs and nativists attributed this Democratic victory largely to the foreign vote, which helped to stimulate further growth of the order. An efficient nationwide political machine was constructed with district, county, state and national councils operating variously in their own jurisdictions. The order continued its secrecy, partly to avoid the opprobrium attached to nativistic societies after the Philadelphia riots, and partly because fraternal societies and the Order of United Americans had demonstrated wide appeal for secret groups. Consequently, there were grips, passwords, signs, phrases of recognition, signals of distress, and other formulas charming to curious Americans. It was this secrecy and unwillingness of members to admit any knowledge of the activities of the order which caused Horace Greeley to dub the group the Know Nothing Party, which became its appellation.\textsuperscript{22}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 203.  
\textsuperscript{20}McMaster, op. cit., VII, 376-82; Billington, op. cit., 234.  
\textsuperscript{21}Billington, op. cit., p. 381.  
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To be admitted to the first degree of membership, American-born Protestants of Protestant families swore to use their influence to exclude foreigners and Roman Catholics from public office, to renounce other party allegiance, to support the nominees favored by the order for public office, and to work persistently for a change in the naturalization laws. Holders of the second degree were eligible for office within the order, and for public office as well.

Although members of the Know Nothings disagreed on many issues, they were united in their overriding hatred of Catholicism, even to the extent of admitting some foreign-born Protestants into the organization. In 1854 and 1855 the party achieved phenomenal success in striking down foreign-born and Catholic candidates from both parties' tickets. In many cases whole slates of men who had not been nominated were written in and elected.23 In support of the no-papery cause, about seventy-five Congressmen were sent to Washington.24 It was widely expected that the new American Party, as the Know Nothings were officially called, would win the presidency in 1856.

In addition to the growth of a sincere nativist movement, there were two other factors which contributed to the striking success of the party. The first was the party dispersion. The dozens of parties in the field in 1854 and 1855 included Democratic, Know Nothing, Anti-Nebraska, People's, Free Soil, Temperance, Rum-Democrat, Whig, Adopted Citizen, and even Know Something. The unity of the Know Nothings might have meant little in a normal election, but it was invaluable with such scattered opposition. Even more than the party confusion, the growing importance of the slavery question helped the Know Nothings to succeed. The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 stimulated a controversy to be settled only by the Civil War. The weaker of the traditional parties, the Whigs, died a speedy death during this storm, and many Northern Democrats opposed the Democratic popular sovereignty doctrine. This left a vacuum for many citizens, who drifted into the Know Nothing party, which was neutral on

23McMaster, op. cit., VIII, 212.
24Billington, op. cit., p. 338.
the slavery question and loudly promised to preserve the union.26

Equally influential in bringing the Know Nothing victories was the propaganda build-up of the previous decades which was at its height in the early 1850’s. The upper classes had been won to the cause by the American Protestant Society, the American and Foreign Christian Union, and church sermons. The lower classes had been recruited by inflammatory lectures, street preachers, and a persistent outpour of propaganda in newspapers and books.

However, the almost complete failure of the Congress or the state legislatures, controlled by the Know Nothings, to carry into effect the measures advocated by the anti-foreign and anti-Catholic propagandists contributed to a surprising decline of the Know Nothing organization.26 Other factors which contributed to the downfall of this once burgeoning party were violence and bloodshed—for which the Know Nothings received more than their share of the blame and stigma; criticism and ridicule of the party’s secrecy; and internal dissension.27 Finally, interest on the Catholic question was dissipated because of the focus of interest on the slavery question, due to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the tales of “Bleeding Kansas.” By the middle of 1855 the nation was divided into two warring camps, which the Know Nothing party, built on a basis of union and nationalism, could not survive. The nebulous fears of foreign influence and papal invasion were generally forgotten in the new crisis.

The anti-Catholic literature, which was so effective in building up prejudice against Catholics, centered on three broad allegations. These were: (1) that Catholicism was not Christianity but an idolatrous religion; (2) that popery was irreconcilable with American democratic institutions; and (3) that the Catholic Church had very low morality.28

In order to prove Catholicism to be unchristian, such doctrines as transubstantiation, worship of saints, purgatory, extreme unction, penances, and confession were vigorously at-

26Ibid., p. 390.
27Ibid., p. 407.
28Ibid., pp. 422-25.
29Ibid., p. 351.
tacked as unscriptural man-made doctrines designed to increase the power and wealth of the priesthood. Also attacked were the elaborate clerical garb, impressive ceremony of mass, feasts, processions, and holy water. Miracles were branded as superstition.

As part of the charge that this powerful religion was inconsistent with American free institutions, it was said that Catholicism was intimately connected with monarchy and that the papal system itself was despotic with the Pope, through the hierarchy, having power over the most humble worshiper. History was luridly painted to show that wherever Catholicism had been in power, liberty had vanished through the inquisition, the massacre of Protestants, and the index. It was charged that the hierarchy were compelled to swear to yield nothing to "principalities or powers," and that, for Catholics, the Pope's authority was superior to any political authority. Furthermore, it was alleged, once Catholics were in the ascendancy, they would grasp control of temporal authority for their own ends, and would stamp out science, free press, free speech, and religious freedom.

In regard to morality, the Catholics presumably were willing to lie, steal, or murder for the benefit of their religion—expecting to be forgiven through the confessional. The attack particularly centered, as in the Mormon issue, on alleged sexual immorality. The Catholic priests' and nuns' failure to marry was as hard to accept as the Mormons' plural marriages. Consequently flagrant novels depicted the plight of innocent Protestant girls who were snatched and placed in gloomy cells in a convent to supply the lecherous demands of the priests. One of these novels by Charles W. Frothingham sold forty thousand copies the first week of publication and went through five editions. Thus, priests were accused of using the confessionals to seduce both married women and young innocent girls. The nunnerys were regarded as popish brothels, and abortions and infant murders were popularly reported to have been carried out by the thousands. Billington concluded that

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29 Ibid., pp. 351-56.
30 Ibid., p. 360.
31 Ibid., p. 348.
"these accounts of Catholic immorality were accepted without question by perhaps a majority of the evangelical Protestants in America."

The American Party was supported more solidly in the Northeastern states than in any other section. In Massachusetts the Know Nothings in 1854 elected all of the State senators and all but two members of the State house of 376 members. They won a similar victory in 1855. A Know Nothing governor was elected with 63 per cent of the popular vote in the Bay State. In addition to Massachusetts, Know Nothing majorities were elected in Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and New York in 1854 or 1855.

Next to the Northeast, the border states gave the greatest victory to the American Party. In 1854 and 1855 it carried Delaware, Maryland, California, and Kentucky, and nearly added Tennessee and Virginia to this list. The people in the border states feared the effects of serious sectional conflict and were attracted to the American Party partly because it appeared to be a compromise party.

The South had few Catholics, and most of them were long established. However, the Southerners feared the increased political power which the North was attaining through immigration and resented the fact that many aliens were abolitionists. In addition, many of the rural inhabitants of the South were taught by their Protestant ministers to fear Catholics. The combination of this nativistic sentiment with the desire of many Southerners to settle the troublesome slavery question brought numerous near-victories for the Know Nothings throughout the South.

The least successful region for the American Party was the Northwest, partly because most of the immigrants who had settled there had become sober, hard-working farmers who believed the Know Nothing image of immigrants.

Comparison of Anti-Catholic, Anti-Mormon, and Anti-Masonic Movements

Although Catholicism and Mormonism were quite different

\[\text{\textsuperscript{21}}\text{Ibid., p. 366.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{22}}\text{Ibid., p. 396.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{23}}\text{Hamilton, op. cit., p. 4.}\]
in many respects, numerous charges against the two were similar. Both were thought to be balkanized groups within the American body politic. Both were thought to be composed primarily of immigrants of a slavish, ignorant type. The economic competition of Catholic workers was emphasized much more than that of immigrant Mormons. Both were thought to have primary allegiance not to the United States Government but to the heads of their churches. In the case of the Catholics, this charge was made all the more dramatic because the Pope was depicted as a foreign power with designs on control of the United States Government and suppression of American freedom. In the case of the Mormons, the prophet of the Church was located in the United States, and the Church was too small to be seriously depicted as threatening to control the national government. However, the Mormons were pictured as hostile to the government. The fact that they persisted in violating the federal anti-polygamy law was used as conclusive evidence of Mormon disloyalty.

Thus, because of the immigrant composition and because of church doctrine and organization, both Mormons and Catholics were thought to be opposed to American free institutions. Both groups were thought to violate the separation of church and state. However, this issue was of major consequence principally in the efforts of the Catholics to obtain public funds for their parochial schools.

Finally, although the spectacular polygamy issue, which was so helpful in exciting public hostility toward the Mormons, was not available to the anti-Catholics, the lack of marriage of the Catholic hierarchy was subject to similar abuse. The insinuation of lechery among the Catholic priests was as prevalent as the corresponding accusations concerning Mormon leaders. In addition, both groups were accused of other types of crime such as lying, stealing and even murder, for the sake of their faiths.

In both cases there was a feeling that American purity was being contaminated by these alien groups. The question asked about Catholic immigrants: "Can one throw mud into pure water and not disturb its clearness?"\(^{35}\) indicated the same kind

\(^{35}\)Billington, op. cit., p. 198.
of anxiety as was implied in the use of such epithets as "stain" or "cancer" in the body politic, in reference to the Mormons.

The anti-Masonic, anti-Catholic, and anti-Mormon movements each had distinguishing characteristics. Yet there was sufficient similarity among the arguments used in the consecutive attacks upon the Masons, Catholics, and Mormons to suggest that the three crusades were separate waves produced by a continuous underlying current in the stream of American thought. This often subsurface current seeks to preserve the purity of American institutions against any groups or influences which appear to be alien.

The conclusion that the staggering attacks variously leveled against secret societies, popery and its immigrant emissaries, and Mormonism came largely from the same stream of thought, is further substantiated by the similarity of the crusading groups in each case. There were three primary sources of support which were common to each crusade. These were Protestant ministers, New Englanders, and rural inhabitants. Furthermore, joint attacks were sometimes made on two alien institutions at a time. For example, popery and Freemasonry were denounced together as "schemes equally inconsistent with Republicanism."58 McCarthy concluded that the spirit of the opposition to Masonry "led naturally to the Native American doctrines of the future; indeed many of the prominent anti-Masons became leaders of that excitement."59

The Democratic Party traditionally stood by these "alien" groups, whereas the major opposition party tended to be allied with the American purists. The partial alliance was noted between the anti-Masons and Adams' National Republicans, as well as the fact that when the anti-Masonic party declined, many of its leaders moved into the new Whig party. It was the Whig party which flirted with the subsequent Native American movement, although the Whigs would not go so far as to adopt the Natives' platform. Finally, the Whigs and the American Party were important elements in launching the successful new Republican Party. After the slavery issue became paramount, it became impossible for the American Party to

58 McCarthy, op. cit., p. 544.
59 Ibid.
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continue to try to be a compromise party. In the North, Catholicism and slavery became linked, as illustrated by the following resolution: "That there can exist no real hostility to Roman Catholicism which does not embrace slavery, its natural co-worker in opposition to freedom and republican institutions." 38

The strong Native American orientation of the emerging Republican Party is shown by the fact that in 1856 there were elected to the United States House of Representatives 108 Republicans of whom seventy had been or were members of Know Nothing lodges. 39 Furthermore, Abraham Lincoln was nominated partially because he was the only candidate acceptable to the Know Nothings as well as to regular Republicans. In spite of a letter Lincoln wrote expressing disapproval of the objectives of the Know Nothings, he insisted that assiduous efforts be made to obtain their votes. 40 This objective was achieved and Hamilton went so far as to conclude: "The Know Nothings were clearly responsible for the election of Lincoln." 41

As has been noted, Protestant ministers and New Englanders were listed as two common sources of support for these purism crusades. Thus, it is significant that Hamilton attributes to "the numerous Protestant ministers, including Unitarians, in the Republican party" considerable responsibility for the integration of many of the Know Nothings into the Republican party in New England, and Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota which were "ideological extensions of New England." 42 It is also significant that subsequent high Republican office holders such as President Ulysses S. Grant and his two vice presidents, Henry Wilson and Schyler Colfax, had all been members of Know Nothing lodges. In further linking the opposition to allegedly un-American practices and groups, it is finally significant that former Know Nothing Republicans such as Schyler Colfax and Ulysses S. Grant also became leaders in the fight against the Mormons. It was also the Republican

38Billington, op. cit., p. 425. See also for example Facts for the People of the South; Abolition Intolerance and Religious Intolerance United; Know-Nothingism Exposed (Washington: Union Office, 1855).
40Ibid., p. 9.
41Ibid., p. 20.
42Ibid., p. 7.
Party, that was so heavily impregnated with Know Nothing influence, which in 1856 linked polygamy and slavery as the twin relics of barbarism which had to be attacked. And finally, it was the Republicans (with their nativistic tinge) who pursued the anti-Mormon crusade in Congress in the 1870's and 1880's, whereas the Democrats of that period were considerably less anxious to employ the might of the Federal government to force Mormon conformity.

Why Did Anti-Mormon Crusade Succeed Where Earlier Crusades Failed?

Since these impulsive movements came from essentially the same source, the question can be raised as to why the anti-Masonic and anti-Catholic movements of the 1830's, 1840's, and 1850's failed to put into legislation a single one of their major objectives, whereas the anti-Mormons succeeded in enacting most of their principal objectives.

Both the anti-Masonic and anti-Catholic movements won phenomenal election victories. However, there appears to be an American tendency to react against purism as powerfully as the prescriptive prejudice itself was exerted, and to choke it out. Thus in both the anti-Masonry and anti-Catholicism cases, promptly after each movement reached its zenith of power, other forces dissipated and extinguished the prescriptively oriented organization—before either one had the time to establish and win its legislative goals. Considering these facts, the typical slowness of the legislative process may be desirable insofar as this slowness may protect minority groups against whom there may be a temporary wave of prejudice, which will subsequently subside.

In the case of the anti-Mormon campaigns there were also waves of prejudice which subsequently ebbed. Twice while George Q. Cannon was in Congress, anti-Mormon sentiment reached a crescendo resulting in enactment of anti-Mormon laws (1874 and 1882). Yet it is significant that, following the enactments, anti-Mormon sentiment died down and those who promoted the punitive legislation failed to be re-elected.43

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Several factors, which did not exist to aid the anti-Masonic and anti-Catholic movements, helped the anti-Mormons put their objectives into law. A difference of overriding importance was that the two earlier movements preceded the Civil War, whereas the anti-Mormon movement came after the Civil War—which radically changed the willingness of the nation to exercise federal power in attaining desired objectives.

For example, one of the legislative objectives for which the Know Nothings had had the strongest support was the prohibition of the immigration of foreign criminals, lunatics, and paupers. Yet when such a bill was considered in 1855 it was killed because of the sole objection that the Constitution had given Congress only the power to establish uniform rules of naturalization. The prohibition of classes of immigrants was among the reserved rights of the states, which could not be infringed by the federal government.

However, the Civil War was a triumph of nationalism over states' rights. The war created a national currency, a national banking system, a national army, and new national taxes. The jealous restrictions against the power of the central government were broken in a score of ways. Congress assessed a direct tax upon the states, raised a national militia within their borders, exercised full sovereignty in all the territories, gave homesteads to western farmers, endowed agricultural colleges in all the states, made large grants of land to a Pacific railroad and underwrote its bonds. An earlier National Republican could hardly have conceived of these national developments.44

Enactment of the Thirteenth Amendment vanquished the remaining conviction that such matters as slavery should be locally controlled. The effect of the Civil War in promoting subsequent federal intervention has been depicted as follows:

A war is a test of the utmost strength, and the utmost strength is brought to bear. But after the war, the muscles and sinews which have been strengthened and tested by the great effort, which in fact have been called into being by that test, remain ready and eager for new uses. Seldom are these new powers allowed to atrophy: there are too many people who

want them used, and the old resistance against their employment is weakened. ⁴⁵

This increased willingness to use federal power, after the Civil War, was vital to the enactment of punitive anti-Mormon legislation. Closely allied was the fact that harsh measures were justified on the grounds of stubborn Mormon disobedience to the federal anti-polygamy law, which had been declared constitutional by the Supreme Court—this with memories of nullification still fresh in mind.

Another important element which favored the anti-Mormon crusades in contrast with the anti-Masonic and anti-Catholic crusades, was that most Mormons lived in territories which were much more subject to federal control than were states. Had Utah been a state, the more cumbersome constitutional amendment process would undoubtedly have been required in case the federal government attempted to abolish polygamy. One more factor which made the Mormons vulnerable to federal legislation was the national fascination with and hostility toward polygamy, which facilitated the outpouring of inciting propaganda, leading to congressional action. Finally, the lack of any significant voting group of Mormons or their friends which could retaliate made them vulnerable. This is in contrast to both the Masons and the Catholic immigrants, who represented significant power blocs which could fight their attackers with considerable effect.