

decline, of what is without doubt the most astounding religious phenomenon to be found during this century within the bounds of Christendom.

Our backward glance will cover a period curiously close to exactly fifty years—1843–93. For though the vile beginnings may be traced to Kirtland, O., and to 831, yet the formal “authorization” of “celestial marriage” dates from the famous “revelation” given to the “saints” in Nauvoo in 1843. And the origin of Mormon polygamy is to be attributed to a threefold cause: first, to a religious fanaticism which knew no rational bounds; next, to an absurd conception, or exegesis, of the Scriptures whereby what was permitted to the Hebrew saints was made the obligation, at least the privilege, of the saints of our times; and, finally, the accompaniment in the “prophet” and divers of his most influential followers of morals which recognized no law but selfish, carnal desire. By these prominent “elders” polygamy was practised in secret and increasingly for years, and then at length, to regulate the perilous innovation, and to prevent scandal and rebellion among the faithful, the “revelation” was duly coined and promulgated, in a quiet way, to all such as could be trusted, but to all the world besides for years was denied on all occasions and with language as forcible as could well be framed. Such utterly shameless paltering in a double sense has never been indulged outside the Mormon “church.”

Next, by a calamitous happening, soon after ensued the exodus from Illinois to Utah, and more than twenty years of isolation and independence, freedom from interference and from observation even, with the Rocky Mountains and a thousand miles of the “Great American Desert” between them and any legal control. Hence all manner of vagaries and insane projects found unparalleled opportunity to live, thrive, and unfold themselves. Fixed thus in his secure nest, with the number of his helpless followers wondrously increased by an influx of converts from Great Britain, in 1852 Brigham Young felt strong enough to defy all opposition, and so proclaimed polygamy, defended it from reason and Scripture, and sent out a cloud of elders into all lands to advocate this “restored” boon, this institution so indispensable to humanity’s weal. Meantime at home means most unscrupulous and inhuman were employed to compel assent and obedience, and for several years (1854–58) the so-called “reformation” ran its frenzied and infernal course, with “blood-atonement” teaching and practice as one of the prominent features, and the Mountain Meadows massacre as one of the horrible results.

It was in these same days of stark madness that the hierarch Brigham presumed to play the rebel against Federal authority, and so an army was sent to bring him to terms. Though the immediate result was a miserable *fiasco*, yet from this time forward Congress undertook to frame measures to end the iniquity and shame. Thus in 1862 soldiers were sent to occupy Fort Douglas, in the immediate vicinity of Salt Lake, and have remained there to this day. It was in the same year also that the first bill against