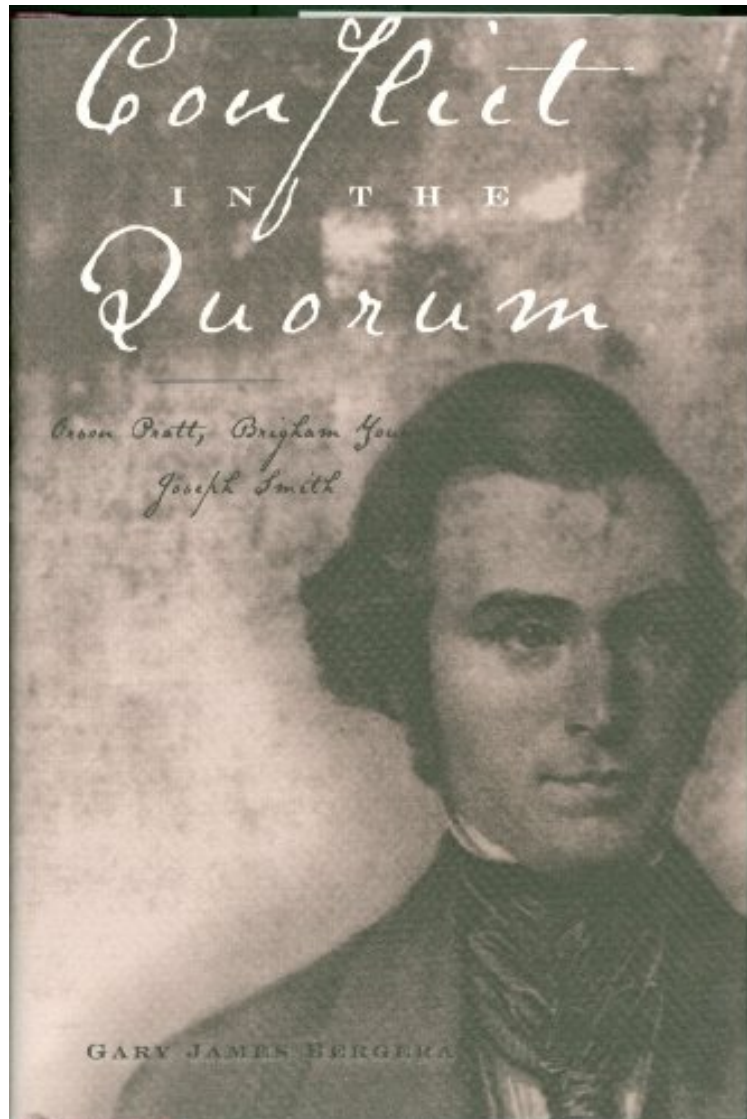


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## Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith

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**From Signature Books : Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Well written and very detailed!By Phil StoverA very detailed book with many many references. It is not a light read. I enjoyed it because of its historical detail and that it clearly

explained the theological differences between the members of the quorum. I loved the insights into their discussions and debates. It can also be said they were remarkably tolerant of each other. I liked that insight - it made them more human. A very good read! 16 of 17 people found the following review helpful. Closed-Minded Mormons Need Not Apply By Kenny Kemp I read this book with particular interest as I am a descendant of Orson Pratt and have long heard the stories about Orson's conflicts with Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. I was not disappointed. Neither did I feel it was a hatchet job designed to denigrate Smith or Young or elevate Pratt. Rather, it is an even-handed recounting of the good old days when men were men as well as being religious leaders: they could argue, bicker, and even apologize and accept their "erring" brother as a brother still. Definitely a different world than the squeaky-clean PR that passes for doctrinal discussion in the LDS church today amongst its leaders. Pratt's conflict with Smith was the classic schism of early Mormonism: Is polyandry of divine origin? Suffice it to say, whatever his initial reservations, Pratt eventually became a believer in the Principle and resumed his leadership in the Church. To this day, we do not know exactly what Joseph Smith said or revealed to Pratt to overcome his (Pratt's) reservations. Like Bergera, I choose not to speculate. Pratt's decades-long debate with Young over the nature of God is another fine example of how reasonable minds can differ . . . and do. Both men were honorable in the dispute (though Pratt rates higher, in my opinion, because he was so often rebuked (and publicly!) by Young and made to apologize in front of the entire Church in conference. Not many men would do so, and it's a testament to Pratt's loyalty to the Kingdom and not his own remarkable intellect that he did so on more than one occasion). Young comes off as the lesser light in their argument and throws his weight around more than he should have, but again, who can definitively answer the question: Is God progressing? Or is He static, perfect from all eternity to all eternity? A weighty matter, to be sure, and one Pratt challenged Young to rectify via revelation. To his credit, Brigham Young never falsely asserted any divine guidance in his view on the matter. Instead, he relied upon teachings he said he received from Joseph Smith during Smith's lifetime, teachings to which Pratt was not privy. All and all, "Conflict in the Quorum" is an interesting read about two powerful men doing their best as they see it. Inevitably, conflicts arise. I myself wish I lived in a day when such conflicts could be discussed openly at General Conference, no matter the outcome. Obtaining knowledge is a messy business, but nevertheless important. As Joseph Smith said, "The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth." Lots of both in this readable book. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. If only we could practice so much faith while maintaining our own identity like they did before perhaps more would feel the By Quinn A clear and precise view of the imprecise practice of receiving revelation. If only we could practice so much faith while maintaining our own identity like they did before perhaps more would feel the spirit

At a meeting of the LDS Quorum of the Twelve in 1860, one of the church's senior apostles, Elder Heber C. Kimball, complained that Brother Orson Pratt has withstood Joseph [Smith] and he has withstood Brother Brigham [Young] many times and he has done it tonight and it made my blood chill. It is not for you to lead [the prophet], Kimball continued, but to be led by him. You have not the power to dictate but [only] to be dictated [to]. Whenever the quorum discussed Elder Pratt's controversial sermons and writings and his streak of independent thinking, the conversation could become heated. As documented by Gary James Bergera in this surprisingly suspenseful account, Pratt's encounters with his brethren ultimately affected not only his seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve but also had a lasting impact on LDS doctrine, policy, and organizational structure. There is not a man in the church that can preach better than Orson Pratt, Brigham Young told the twelve apostles on another occasion. It is music to hear him. But the trouble is, he will preach false doctrine. Pratt responded that he was not a man to make a confession of what I do not believe. I am not going to crawl to Brigham Young and act the hypocrite. I will be a free man, he insisted. It may cost me my fellowship, but I will stick to it. If I die tonight, I would say, O Lord God Almighty, I believe what I say. You have been a mad stubborn mule, Young replied. [You] have taken a false position. It is [as] false as hell and you will not hear the last of it soon. Not infrequently, these two strong-willed, deeply religious men argued. Part of their difficulty was that they saw the world from opposing perspectives. Pratt's a rational, independent-minded stance and Young's a more intuitive and authoritarian position. We have hitherto acted too much as machines as to following the Spirit, Pratt explained in a quorum meeting in 1847. I will confess to my own shame [that] I have decided contrary to my own [judgment] many times. I mean hereafter not to demean myself as to let my feelings run contrary to my own judgment. He issued a warning to the other apostles: When [President Young] says that the Spirit of the Lord says thus and so, I don't consider [that] all we should do is to say let it be so. For his part, Young quipped that Pratt exhibited the same ignorance as any philosopher, telling him it would be a great blessing to him to lay aside his books. When Pratt appealed to logic, Young would say, Oh dear, granny, what a long tail our puss has got. Ironically, Orson Pratt would have the last word both because Young preceded him in death and because several of Young's teachings and policies had proven unpopular among the other apostles. One of Young's counselors said shortly after the president's death that some of my brethren even feel that in the promulgation of doctrine he [Young] took liberties beyond those to which he was legitimately entitled. Meanwhile, Pratt continued to hold sway with some of his colleagues. His thoughtful ultra-literalistic interpretations of scripture would also influence such later church leaders as Joseph Fielding Smith and Bruce R. McConkie. Bergera's nuanced approach avoids caricatures in favor of the many complexities of personalities

and circumstances. It becomes clear that the conflict in which these men found themselves enmeshed had no easy, foreseeable resolution.

Historians of the American West who include the Mormon experience in their studies usually focus on settlement patterns, water rights, relationships with Native Americans, the Mountain Meadows Massacre, church and state conflicts, and plural marriage. Mormonism is depicted as a monolithic corporate structure that leaves little room for theological speculation and freedom of thought. Writers tend to believe that when the Lion of the Lord (Brigham Young) roared, all the thinking had been done and Utah grew silent. Only the sounds of church members rushing to fall into step filled the mountain air. Gary James Bergera relates a different story as he details the theological conflicts that raged between Brigham Young and Orson Pratt. Was Mormonism, according to Pratt's argument, to become a religion primarily bound to scripture or would it continue to find its fundamental strength in the living oracles who led the church, the position espoused by Brigham Young? Church members were aware of many of these conflicts. Accounts were published in Mormon newspapers and church leaders addressed subjects regarding Pratt's and Young's disagreements in public meetings as well as in the private gatherings of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. At the time, more church members sided with Young than Pratt, but in the twentieth century, Mormon leaders found many of the theories of Pratt more acceptable than those of Young. As Bergera points out, "reliance on Pratt has continued to be pervasive and unmistakable in Mormonism to the present" (p. 282). Pratt's difficulties with Joseph Smith and Brigham Young began in Kirtland, Ohio, where he and Joseph Smith argued over the pronunciation of a Hebrew word. They disagreed, too, over aspects of plural marriage and Pratt's belief that Joseph Smith had "made advances towards apostles' wives, including his own companion, Sarah" (p. 19). Pratt's conflicts with Smith's successor, Brigham Young, included disagreements over such theological issues as Young's Adam-God doctrine, Young's idea of the eternal progression of God, and on worshiping the attributes of deity. Bergera's primary sources are minutes of meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, diary entries of participating parties in the conflicts, and the words of the combatants themselves. (Historians today are denied access to the minutes, an important trove of primary source material.) While Young clearly convinced other church leaders that even apostles were required to seek his approval before teaching or publishing new ideas, Pratt won the war of words. It can be effectively argued, as Bergera does, that today many of Pratt's theological ideas are supported in the writings of Mormon apostles, while those espoused by Young are believed to be flawed. Those convinced that leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have always been "monolithically unified" and afraid to speak their minds will find this book not only surprising but interesting as well. Bergera's volume whets the appetite of those interested in Mormon doctrine and points to the need for someone to research and write a multivolume history of Latter-day Saint theology. There is, I believe, a trove of documents available to historians in Mormon archives to make such a study possible. "The field is white, ready to harvest," to borrow a phrase often used in the Doctrine and Covenants, a book both Young and Pratt agreed was scripture. --Kenneth W. Godfrey, *Western Historical Quarterly*

The conflicts between Apostle Orson Pratt, Joseph Smith, and Brigham Young revolve around the key concepts of apostolic authority, theological harmony, and the role of continuing revelation within the governing body of the LDS church. The Pratt-Smith conflict emerges with the introduction of plural marriage and an alleged illicit affair of Pratt's wife Sarah in 1842. Bergera argues effectively that the 1842 allegation was a response to Sarah's rejection of Joseph Smith's advances. Pratt, his world shattered over the incident, voluntarily withdrew from the church for a time. This led to the misconception that he had been excommunicated. The alleged excommunication would provide Brigham Young with the legitimization needed to realign the governing body in 1875. The first major Pratt-Young conflict began in 1847 with the reorganization of the First Presidency. Pratt contended it was the right of the apostles to lead the church and not a separate quorum or individual. The debates continued for the next two decades over doctrinal issues. Bergera argues effectively that the heart of the conflict lay in Pratt's intellectual reservations over Young's consolidation of power and Young's theological teachings. It was Pratt's striving for a consistent, harmonizing, literal hermeneutic rather than blind acceptance of charismatic authority that led to the difficulties. Bergera's work provides a valuable tool for researchers by including transcripts of previously unpublished apostolic council minutes surrounding the Pratt-Young conflicts. Bergera has made a welcome and significant contribution to the field of Mormon studies. --Kurt Widmer, *Religious Studies From the Inside Flap*

"There is not a man in the church that can preach better than Orson Pratt," Brigham Young told the twelve apostles on one occasion. "It is music to hear him. But the trouble is, he will ... preach false doctrine." Pratt's response was that he was "not a man to make a confession of what I do not believe. I am not going to crawl to Brigham Young and act the hypocrite. I will be a free man," he insisted. "It may cost me my fellowship, but I will stick to it. If I die tonight, I would say, O Lord God Almighty, I believe what I say." "You have been a mad stubborn mule," Young replied. "[You] have taken a false position ... It is false as hell and you will not hear the last of it soon." It was not infrequently that these two strong-willed, deeply religious men argued. Part of the difficulty was that they did so from opposing perspectives--Pratt's a rational and independent-minded stance and Young's a more intuitive and authoritarian position. "We have hitherto acted too much as machines ... as to following the Spirit," Pratt explained in a quorum meeting in 1847. "I will confess to my own shame [that] I have decided contrary to my own

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About the Author Gary James Berger is managing director of the Smith-Pettit Foundation in Salt Lake City, former managing director of Signature Books, and former managing editor of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought