



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

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At a meeting of the LDS Quorum of the Twelve in 1860, one of the church's senior apostles 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."

Whenever the quorum discussed Elder Pratt's controversial sermons and writings, the conversation could become heated. As documented by Gary James Bergera in a surprisingly suspenseful account, Pratt's encounters with his brethren ultimately affected not only his seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve but also LDS doctrine, policy, and organizational structure.

"Despite being the more careful scriptioner, Orson Pratt was no match for Brigham Young in tactics and ability to persuade. The hapless Pratt was outmaneuvered time and again by the intimidating senior apostle--the latter convincing the church's ruling quorum to side with him on crucial points of doctrine and practice. Bergera's careful scholarship--drawing on diaries, personal papers, and other extant documents--provides fresh insights into the attitudes and behavior of these two men." --Newell G. Bringhurst, author, Brigham Young and the Expanding American Frontier

"Bergera confronts head-on one of the most pervasive and unnecessary myths in Mormon culture: that church leaders are monolithically unified. As he traces the ins and outs of Pratt's and Young's relationship in fascinating detail (a tragic story in Pratt's case), larger issues in Mormonism are illuminated: the roots of anti-intellectualism and authoritarianism, the development of succession to the presidency, and the meaning and early impact of some of Young's teachings which were quietly discarded at his death--all carefully and exhaustively traced." --Todd Compton, author, In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith

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