

felt no need to address the objections that Mormon scholars might raise. She was on her way out of the faith and wanted to address the larger world. She played to its prejudices while disregarding believing scholarship" (282). He then quickly aims an elbow at the ribs of those "believing writers" who "do the opposite" and "play to Mormon prejudices while rejecting the larger world" (282).

Before reading *Believing History*, I was, as a student of both early American material culture studies and Mormon Church history, familiar with Bushman's *The Refinement of America* and *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*. I had never read any of the previously published essays now anthologized in *Believing History*. Those who, like me, have found it impossible to keep up with all of Bushman's writing on the subjects of Mormon history, culture, and thought will find this collection of essays informative and revealing. *Believing History* also includes previously unpublished commentaries by Bushman introducing each chapter, as well as a prefatory essay and his afterword titled "Reflections on Believing History." These new notes are refreshingly honest self-assessments of his work and help the reader tie together an otherwise disparate grouping of loosely related papers.

On the other hand, those who crave what could be termed "hard-hitting" analyses of Mormon Church history and doctrine might be disappointed. You might be one of these frustrated readers if you are someone who would rather read an essay called "Was Joseph Smith a Racist?" as opposed to Bushman's 1998 essay "Was Joseph Smith a Gentleman?" (217-31). Nevertheless, even if you are a convinced "unbeliever" and skeptical about Joseph Smith and Mormonism, Bushman's views in *Believing History* are worthy of respect. At the same time, faithful Mormons who read *Believing History* might occasionally feel that metaphorical elbow in their ribs and come away with a better understanding of the messiness and complexity of Mormon history and the Mormon experience in the modern world.

The Open Canon and Innovation

Gary James Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), xi + 312 pp.

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Gary James Bergera's book, *Conflict in the Quorum*, is a well written and fascinating account of Orson Pratt, one of Joseph Smith's original Twelve Apostles, that highlights some of his disagreements with Church leaders (including Joseph Smith and Brigham Young) concerning new revelations and the meaning of sa-

cred scripture. His initial skirmishes with Joseph Smith centered on the secret doctrine and practice of plural marriage. Pratt disagreed with the practice's introduction in Nauvoo, was "cut off from the Quorum" (43), and was not initially included in the Holy Order. When he did become a member of the Holy Order, his wife, Sarah, did not join him. She did not become a member of this elite group, and Pratt did not marry his first plural wife (Charlotte Bishop) until after the death of Joseph Smith (47-48). When Brigham Young became *de facto* Church president, Pratt balked at his plan to reorganize the First Presidency but finally conceded the point at the Kanesville "marathon" conference in 1847 (64-81). Nevertheless, after Young became Church president, Pratt continued to disagree with him with respect to some of his doctrinal teachings.

Bergera is a careful writer, with the result that his book contains a good synthesis of the origins and theological underpinnings of plural marriage, as well as the usual references to secondary sources. These sources demonstrate that Smith's initial instructions and personal behavior concerning this doctrine upset some of his more puritanical followers, including Pratt. Smith, and some of his closest associates, later denied that the Prophet made some of the statements that various witnesses claimed he had. In any event, it is evident that Church leaders understood the volatility of the new teaching as well as the danger of linking it with a duty of obedience to the Church's hierarchy.

While Pratt and Smith were eventually reconciled, Bergera's study suggests that the relationship between Pratt and Young was always problematic. Pratt's first rift with Young involved Young's plan to reorganize the First Presidency. Bergera's tendency to "block quote" from the minutes of meetings is at times a hard slog but perhaps Bergera's point is that attending the meetings would have been an even harder slog and that one can understand the developing dispute only by reading the minutes of these marathon meetings. One does feel the tension among the participants while reading the minutes. Nevertheless, I believe that Bergera should have provided more context and analysis of the proceedings.

One wonders whether part of Pratt's disagreement with Young was not only his belief that reorganization conflicted with Smith's original intent but also the more practical reality (apparently shared by a few of the other apostles) that the Twelve's prerogatives would be weakened when a new First Presidency was created. Obviously, the Twelve recognized that Joseph Smith would remain the paramount figure in Church history and that all future leaders would build on the foundation he had established. In this context, Pratt was not initially prepared to accept Brigham Young as Smith's literal successor.

Ironically, when Brigham Young was sustained as Smith's successor and later decided to publicly announce the practice of polygamy, he chose Orson Pratt to deliver the message. The man whom Young referred to as a "philosopher" explained the theological justifications for the controversial doctrine, which still im-

pacts the image of the Church, and threw down a gauntlet which prevented the Mormon Church from entering the religious mainstream until well into the twentieth century. Four years after the announcement, the newborn Republican Party condemned bigamy as one of the "twin relics" of barbarism, and shortly thereafter two of Utah's territorial judges suggested that polygamy could be prosecuted under the common law. President James Buchanan sent federal troops to Utah to quell the "rebellion" which consisted mainly of a political struggle to control the territory and its domestic institution. Not surprisingly, the federal government eventually won the battle in this political contest of wills.

When Brigham Young was removed as territorial governor and was stripped of the last vestiges of *de jure* secular authority, he became more sensitive when his religious authority was challenged. One of the more interesting themes that Bergera pursues (by quoting word for word the discussions which took place) is the dichotomy between Pratt's willingness to issue public apologies for being "out of harmony," while at the same time continuing to publicly disagree with Young's specific teachings.

Even while some Church leaders were advancing the notion that the prophet's teachings were unassailable, Pratt was offering up specific examples to demonstrate that they were not. While Pratt admitted that, when "President Young speaks by the power of the spirit there is frequently such a flood of revelation that he has not time to explain every particular" (97), Pratt also argued in favor of "a more literalistic and absolutist approach to scripture than Young's dynamic theology" (106).

Nevertheless, Bergera cites examples of both Young and Pratt engaging in creative theology. While Pratt advised elders "never to advance an idea before the world, which we cannot substantiate by revelation" (94), he would occasionally "stretch" the definition of "revelation" and introduce "philosophical underpinnings" (89). But when his teachings conflicted with Young (even on the doctrine which linked Adam and God), the Church president prevailed because he was the only one authorized to define doctrine for the Church despite the fact that some pronouncements were perceived by many as not entirely consistent with the revelations of Joseph Smith or with biblical teachings (128).

Bergera's account of Orson Pratt is an important book even if the substantive issues about which Pratt and his Church leaders argued have long been resolved. Polygamy is no longer a doctrine or practice of the LDS Church (Pratt's initial negative reaction reflects the official contemporary Church position), there is no longer any question concerning the process of succession, and there seems to be no disagreement that the LDS prophet is the final interpreter of Church doctrine. But Bergera's study suggests that one of the slippery slopes of an open canon (as demonstrated by the controversy over Brigham Young's teaching of the Adam-God theory as well as some of Orson Pratt's own teachings) is