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## EDITORIAL

*David M. Morris*

*Editor*

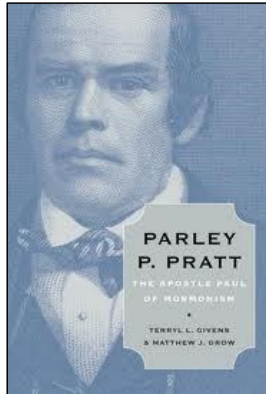
Since 2007, we have published one volume a year filled with scholarly articles, as well as book reviews. We will of course continue to do this, however, we will begin to publish book reviews directly, to the website and make a selection for each volume. This is to respond to the now numerous books and publications that are coming out.

In this issue, we are excited to publish a lengthy consideration of Mormon identity by Wilfried Decoo, as well as Armand Mauss' article 'From Galatia to Ghana'. Following which, we are able to publish, 'Sacred Secrecy and the Latter-day Saints' by Douglas J. Davies as well as articles by Alan Goff and Kirk Caudle. A number of book reviews also appear, all of which are available on <http://www.ijmsonline.org>. A special appreciation is extended to the contributors for their kindness in making available their submissions.

We, as always, extend our appreciation to those who took time to blind peer-review articles and review books fairly and as formatively as possible. As an editorial board we hope you will enjoy the contents of this issue.

If you wish to make a comment or suggestions on its improvement, please feel free to email us at [editorial@ijmsonline.org](mailto:editorial@ijmsonline.org)

BOOK REVIEW: PARLEY P. PRATT: THE APOSTLE PAUL OF  
MORMONISM – *RONAN JAMES HEAD*



**Title:** Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism

**Author:** Terryl Givens and Matthew Grow

**Publisher:** Oxford University Press

**Year:** 2011

**Pages:** 592

**Binding:** Hardback

**ISBN-13:** 978-0195375732

**List Price:** £22.50

Mormon apostle and pioneer Parley P. Pratt is not the first Latter-day Saint to be called the “apostle Paul of Mormonism.” That honour has been given both to his brother Orson Pratt and to Brigham Young. Given that it is a striking subtitle of Givens and Grow’s book, it seems to be a reasonable point on which to begin this review of an important new work of Mormon biography.

Givens and Grow admit that there are important and obvious differences between Paul and Pratt: Paul was an educated Jew, Pratt a “self-taught back-woodsman”; Paul was a “champion of celibacy,” Pratt a “promulgator of polygamy” (5). For the authors, these basic differences do not have the weight of certain archetypal similarities, however. Givens and Grow believe both men had (5):

1. “[A] deep sense of the divine importance of their apostolic calling”;
2. “[A] bold, blunt, outspoken style that led to frequent controversies”;
3. Frequent clashes with their religious colleagues: “Paul clashed with Peter, Pratt dissented at times from both Smith and Young”;
4. A religious devotion before their conversion;
5. A deep commitment to their new cause, “driven by a belief in an on-coming millennium.”

The authors make this comparison, and indeed make it a subtitle to their book, for three stated reasons (5–8):

1. Paul and Pratt are responsible for systematising and popularising their founder's teachings. Both thus illustrate a "crucial stage of any new religious movement: the creation, explication, and popularization of a theological system."
2. Paul and Pratt were tireless proselytizers, contributing to the expansion of their new religions, their stories serving as "a window" onto the early expansion of their faiths and, in some ways, on the intersection of religion and the ordinary people they met.
3. Both Paul and Pratt "revelled in opposition and persecution," personifying the culture of persecution often present in new religions.

One could focus on where Paul and Pratt differ beyond what Givens and Grow already offer—certainly Paul has ended up being far more influential on human history than Pratt will almost certainly ever be, and Pratt did not offer so radical a turn away from his religion's founding as Paul did (the de-judaising of Christianity). However, as a frame for telling Pratt's story, I think it serves a useful purpose. In this biography we are not simply presented with a chronological description of Pratt's life. Instead, we are introduced to Pratt as writer, missionary, and martyr, three roles important to nascent Mormonism. Therein the book rises above Pratt's own autobiography. By incorporating Pratt's own primary observations and giving them narrative purpose, *Parley P. Pratt* becomes a first-rate work of historiography.

Given the venue of this review, we ought naturally to be drawn to Pratt's British missions and Pratt's place in Mormon missionary history. Susan Easton Black has noted the emphasis on the "American gospel hero" in the histories written about British Mormonism.<sup>1</sup> The story of the apostolic missions is generally told as the story of Heber C. Kimball, Joseph Fielding, Brigham Young, and Wilford Woodruff. Givens and Grow provide no exception, for the American Parley P. Pratt is here the "Apostle to the British." Theirs is a biography of Pratt, not a history of the British Mission, so this is unavoidable, but still, another mark is entered into the "American gospel hero" column in Mormon history.

Despite this unavoidable continuation of a type, we do find fresh insights along the way. The description of the “temperate” Joseph Fielding vs. Pratt the aggressive defender of Mormonism (186) offers a glimpse into the different personalities of the Mormon apostles who are too often—especially in hagiographic accounts—painted with the same somewhat two-dimensional brush. In Pratt we also get a view of evangelism that isn’t just the treading of the British countryside. Pratt’s role as a writer of tracts and editor of the *Millennial Star* is given ample and necessary attention, as is his importance as a hymnist (179–181).

David M. Morris has noted another bias in Mormon history: “Too frequently attempts by scholars to discuss British Mormonism results in publications that mainly deal with the periods 1837–1838 and 1840–1841 that corresponds with the first two apostolic missions. Subsequently, well-rehearsed and repeated accounts neglect a rich seam that is still waiting to be mined.”<sup>2</sup> The most interesting tale of Pratt the missionary is thus one that is relatively little known (not being part of the 1837–1838/1840–1841 missions): the scramble to secure the allegiance of the British Saints after the death of Joseph Smith. The 1845 mission to England and Scotland is given some attention, although I would have liked more.

One is voyeuristically drawn to the description of Pratt’s murder in Arkansas (Chapter 14). The writers avoid sensationalism and ably situate it in the wider culture of anti-Mormonism. Whatever Pratt’s innocence or guilt as a seducer of women (he would have vehemently denied the accusation but it is easy to see how Mormon missionary polygamists provoked such suspicion), the reaction of the American press in condoning the murder is remarkable and offers another view of Mormonism as “the most despised religion of nineteenth-century America” (p.390). The authors’ own ultimately favourable view of Pratt is no doubt influenced by their own Mormonism, but no effort is made here to sweep difficult issues under the carpet.

In the figure of Parley P. Pratt the tale of 19th century Mormonism is told and we are fortunate that Givens and Grow have proven to be such able biographers. Pick an issue—the Book of Mormon, polygamy, the European missions, the succession crisis, Utah Territory—and Pratt’s life has something interesting to say. Givens and Grow say it well.

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Easton Black, 'A Profile of a British Saint 1837–1848', in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: The British Isles*, ed. by Donald Q. Cannon (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History), p.103.

<sup>2</sup> David M. Morris, 'Book Review: *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History, Volume 7: The British Isles*,' in *IJMS*, 1 (2008), pp. 176–183.

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