

F. Edward Butterworth, *Roots of the Reorganization: French Polynesia*. Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1977. Pp. 266, illustrations, maps, bibliography. Paper \$8.00.

I was delighted when I learned that F. Edward Butterworth had written a book about the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (RLDS) in French Polynesia. Because so little has been published about either the Reorganized church or the Utah-based Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and their missionary endeavors in the Tahitian area, and because the missions of both churches had a common beginning, this volume could have added significant insights into the histories of the two churches, as well as adding a new dimension to Christian mission history in general. To my disappointment, it does not adequately meet any of these expectations.

By experience Mr. Butterworth is well prepared to write the history of the RLDS in French Polynesia. In addition to having spent nine years as mission president there (between 1964 and 1974), he has also published four other books about the islands, the most important being *The Adventures of John Hawkins*. He knows personally or has corresponded with many of the RLDS missionaries to French Polynesia during this century. Through interviews with descendants of early Tahitian church members, he has learned about events that date back to 1844. His book demonstrates his familiarity with church history sites and the geography and hydrography of Tahiti, Tubuai, and the Tuamotu Islands. He is at home with terms relating to boats, ships, and the sea.

Butterworth's stated purpose for writing this work is to "bring into focus an otherwise forgotten chapter in the history of the Restoration in Polynesia." (Foreword, p. 9) But he largely fails to do so because he evidently has not clearly selected the audience to whom he wishes to address himself or a consistent literary style. On the one hand, the book has the feel of a novel, and at times it reads like one. On the other, it has some of the trappings of a scholarly monograph. Perhaps Mr. Butterworth has attempted to appeal to all audiences. His book will probably find its greatest readership among the general members of his own church. More serious scholars, however, will generally find the volume less satisfactory.

*Roots of the Reorganization* does have several favorable features. It is profusely illustrated with photographs, some of them old and rare. Mr. Butterworth has also provided many maps that show not only the shapes of the islands, but also the locations of villages, cities, chapels, passes in reefs, etc. They are evidently his own productions. Perhaps the book's strongest point is Butterworth's inclusion of information about Tahitian members of the RLDS church. It can be difficult for a writer of mission history to learn much about the lives and contributions of the local people.

The book includes many interesting accounts of and incidents from RLDS history in Tahiti. Readers who accept it at face value will find it faith-promoting and at times even inspiring. Those readers who are looking for scholarly interpretation and analysis, however, will be disappointed; and scholars who demand careful documentation will be frustrated. Butterworth uses his own footnoting and bibliographic system, one that is difficult to follow and that is of little use to the reader. Two examples will illustrate this point. The notes and bibliography are combined in one section in the back of the book. Butterworth uses the following format: "1. *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 5, pp. 602-740; Vol. 6, pp. 882-1087." The reader is left wondering where and when the periodical was published, and what specific pages the author is actually referring to. Note number eleven is confusing. It reads: "11. Private collections and personal interviews: a. Saney Richmond, Papeete, Tahiti. b. Frank Thatcher Lincoln, Berkeley, California. . . ." And so on through letter z. Some of the people interviewed or collections employed (we are left to wonder which) have place names included as above, but others have only the name of a state or no location at all. Normal scholarly procedure would require the name of the source, what type of source it is--private collection or interview--where the collection is housed, or where and when the interview took place. A close look at the notes and bibliography reveals that many

of the items listed are actually only picture credits. The book needs a separate credit list for illustrations.

*Roots of the Restoration* could have been markedly improved by careful editing. Chapter endings sometimes leave the reader hanging. Transitions from subject to subject are frequently abrupt; and organizational problems abound. For example, for no apparent reason, Butterworth drops an eight-page (pp. 151-58) explanation concerning the Tahitian royal line into his section on the 1890s. This material belongs earlier in the book, around page 35, when Butterworth is explaining related items. The book also lacks some useful parts, such as a table of contents and index.

Butterworth begins his survey of LDS missionary work in French Polynesia at Nauvoo, Illinois, where the first Mormon missionaries to the Pacific received their calls in 1843. He traces their voyages to Tubuai, Tahiti, and the Society Islands, and eventually to the Tuamotu archipelago. He describes the missionary successes of Addison Pratt and Benjamin F. Grouard and the failure of Noah Rogers, and then explains the reasons for the closing of the Society Islands Mission in 1852. To that point the RLDS and LDS share a common history, for the Reorganized church was not formally incorporated until 1860. Butterworth's story continues with some insights into the religious history of the Tahitian saints during the period in which there were no foreign missionaries there (1852 to 1873). He emphasizes the work and contributions of John Hawkins, an elder in the church who was converted in the islands. (Addison Pratt briefly visited Tahiti in 1856 as an emissary of the Utah-based LDS church, but Butterworth either did not know this or chose to ignore it.) Following Pratt's final visit in 1856, seventeen years passed before representatives of either the RLDS or LDS churches visited French Polynesia. Mr. Butterworth tells of the unplanned visit of Charles W. Wandell and Glaud Rodger in late 1873. They were bound for Australia as RLDS missionaries; but because of a leak in their ship, they found themselves for a brief time in Tahiti. Wandell and Rodger reestablished contact with the Tahitian saints, as members of both churches were called, and later wrote to RLDS headquarters suggesting that missionaries be sent to care for the French Polynesian flock.

In 1879, William Nelson arrived as an RLDS missionary. He rebaptized many people and baptized others for the first time. He also organized the Tahitian saints into ecclesiastical bodies. For five years Nelson traveled from island to island teaching about the Reorganized church. Sometime during 1884, RLDS Apostle Thomas W. Smith arrived in Tahiti

for a three-year ministry. He, like Nelson before him, travelled widely throughout the islands, especially in the Tuamotus. From his time on, there was a steady influx of RLDS missionaries. They were almost always married couples. Butterworth provides a running account of their activities until about 1930. He then covers the period from 1930 until his own arrival in Tahiti in 1944 in a short paragraph. The period since 1944 is inadequately treated in a series of photographs.

This book unfortunately contains small errors of fact throughout, but I will confine myself to what I consider its most serious problem, that of omission. What an author leaves out is often a more important indication of his perspective than what he puts in; and in this case the greatest weakness of the book is in what Butterworth chooses to ignore. He avoids certain crucial disagreements between the RLDS and the Utah-based Mormons almost as if they did not exist. Though one senses that he is concerned about the problem, he has failed to meet it head-on.

The issues, to put it simply, are plural marriage and church authority. Butterworth's book would be of greater value had he taken on these issues directly. He could have claimed simply that his church's missionaries arrived back in French Polynesia first, and that since Brigham Young had led his followers into apostasy, an apostasy that he says included both Pratt and Grouard, as well as the other early missionaries, the RLDS missionaries in effect saved the Polynesian saints from the same error. This is evidently what he believes--why not say so? He could have avoided a good deal of side-stepping and made his whole book more creditable.

Apart from these matters of historical accuracy, the book could have been more useful if Mr. Butterworth had included some statistical material, such as the total numbers of members and groups at various times. It would probably interest most readers to know that in 1895 the RLDS were dominant on nine islands, the LDS claimed a majority of the people on eight islands, the Roman Catholics controlled seven islands, and the Protestants had most of the people on only one island. (These members are from LDS reports, but the RLDS could have arrived at the same or a similar breakdown through the use of membership statistics and the government census.)

More disappointing than the lack of statistics is the absence of any information about the current status of the RLDS in French Polynesia. IS the church growing, declining, building schools, sending missionaries from there to other fields? Is it self-supporting and locally controlled? How well is the church getting along with the government? Information of this

kind should have been included. The author undoubtedly knows more than he has told us about such matters.

It is unnecessary to go on. As I have said, Mr. Butterworth has produced a book that will be useful for general RLDS church purposes. Libraries may also want to acquire it, as will specialists in mission history, for it provides the only history of what the RLDS have undertaken in French Polynesia. But a thorough and careful analysis of the history of the Reorganized church in Tahiti remains to be written and is sorely needed.

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