

Marjorie Newton, *Southern Cross Saints: The Mormons in Australia. Mormons in the Pacific Series*. Laie, Hawaii: Institute for Polyneesian Studies, Brigham Young University-Hawaii, 1991. Pp. 283, illus., bibliography, index. US\$12.95.

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The Mormon pattern of religious growth seems quite different from that of most Christian denominations. In nineteenth-century Australia Mormon missionaries struggled desperately, and the Australasian mission was abandoned for a mission to the Maori of New Zealand. Since 1945 Mormon conversions in Australia have increased dramatically, in sharp contrast to the decline in the traditional churches. So a study of the Mormons raises interesting questions, and Marjorie Newton's analysis of the Latter-day Saints in Australia makes a contribution not just to Mormon historiography, but also to Australian religious history. She writes as an Australian and as a Latter-day Saint, and her account of the Australian mission is interpreted by sophisticated contemporary Mormon views of their history; but this is no narrow denominational history, for she sees the church in the general context of the religious tone of her country.

The book, like the thesis on which it was based, is organized on a thematic basis. Chapters focus on such topics as missionary methods, converts, and the gathering of Zion. The reader at times hankers for a more chronological approach, and waits until chapter 7 for the story of Mormon nineteenth-century development. Given the huge changes in Mormon impact after World War II, thematic comparisons between the 1850s and the 1960s sometimes seem strained.

The strength of Newton's work is its analyses of members, based on the detailed records of the Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City. These data are carefully compared with those of other churches and other areas of Mormon missionary work, and our understanding of those who emigrated to Utah in the nineteenth century is greatly extended. The church was so small in the nineteenth century that its age structure and family patterns can only be compared cautiously with others, but Newton recognizes this.

Newton tentatively interprets the Mormon's experience of Australia as comparable to that of other churches, and its struggles as a by-product of Australian godlessness. This is well-said, although it does not really explain the contemporary growth. Arguably Australian Mormons in the nineteenth century were part of the sectarian, millenarian, and

revivalist traditions, although the church was far removed from traditional Christianity. In the twentieth century they detached themselves from these associations. Newton prefers to emphasize the American character of the church as what made it different; and her section on Australian Mormons' frustrations with this must be read for sheer enjoyment. I'm not convinced that American links were the key factor; the Jehovah's Witnesses, who are comparable in many respects, were shunned and were successful above all for their heterodoxy, not their Americanness.

The book is beautifully presented with a number of attractive photographs, endnotes, and an excellent index. Altogether it is a very useful work.