

Chapter 3

Generosity of Soul: Reminiscences of Life among Polynesians

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On November 14, 1846, on the eve of his departure, Addison Pratt, my third-great-grandfather, wrote in his journal a poignant summary of his first mission to the Society Islands in the South Pacific. Speaking of his work with fellow missionary Benjamin F. Grouard, he records:

We have withstood the frowns of poverty, the opposition of men and devils, and the abusive negligence of the church and our friends in America (as we have received but 3 letters from there since we left), and . . . hunger, traveling over the sharp coral rocks and slippery mountains with our toes out of our shoes, and our knees and elbows out of our clothes, liveing a part of our time on cocoanuts and raw fish and sleeping on the ground, for the sake of obeying the Savior's commands and preaching the gospel to the natives of the South [Pacific] Islands. . . . As often we felt that our Heavenly Father was our only friend left, and then would we seek some lone retreat when we could bow down before our God, upon the coral sands in the shade of some lone coconut tree and pour out our complaints before

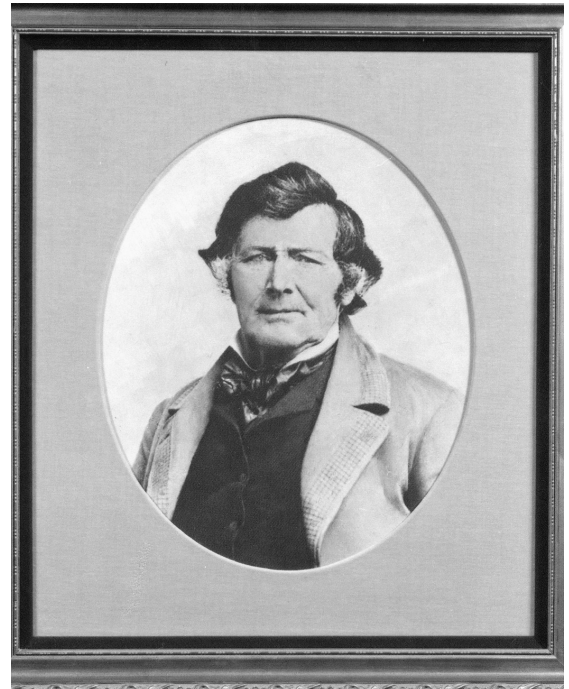


Fig. 1. Addison Pratt, Eric Shumway's third-great-grandfather

Courtesy of Church Archives

him. And he has never forsaken us, but has blest our labours and through him we have jointly baptized over a thousand natives, besides a goodly number of Americans and Europeans. And now I leave [Elder Grouard] in the field to sustain it by the help of the Lord, while I beg my way to my family and the boddy [sic] of the church.¹

It is difficult to conceive in our present day the trials and heartache of Grandpa Pratt's life in Tahiti, cut off and so far away from his family and the main body of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Yet he was sustained by an abiding testimony in the restored gospel, his own integrity, and the warm generosity of soul among the Polynesians he served. Their love and friendship provided much of the solace he needed in moments he felt most forlorn and abandoned by family and the Church. Early in his mission he records, "These islanders have a custom of making friends with each other, and with strangers, and they adhere to this bond with a firmness that bespeaks a nobleness of soul, that I think Europeans are stranger to."²



Fig. 2. Isileli Kongaika (left) and Viliami Toluta'u standing in front of Viliami's sculpture of George Q. Cannon and Jonathan Nāpela at BYU–Hawai'i
Courtesy of BYU–Hawai'i

For over forty years, in a different time and a different century, my wife, Carolyn, and I have lived and served among the multiethnic peoples of the Pacific and Asian nations. Our lives have been greatly enriched by their friendship and their "nobleness of soul." We have been healed by their prayers of faith, nourished by their food, instructed by their wisdom, amused by their humor, amazed at their generosity, moved by their sacrifice, and comforted by their tender condolences. Indeed, as with Grandpa Pratt, generosity and nobleness of soul are the character traits we have come to admire most among many of the Polynesians of our acquaintance. The following experiences accent and illustrate these traits.

Tender Condolences

When my ninety-one-year-old mother passed away in 2001, I prepared to leave Hawai'i for the funeral in Provo, Utah. The night before my departure, two Tongan faculty members came to our home to pay their respects to our family and to our mother. I had known Isileli Kongaika and Viliami Toluta'u for many years. Both were alumni of Brigham Young University–Hawai'i. Isileli had been our bishop in Tonga and then followed me as president of the Tongan Mission. He is now serving as vice president of Student Affairs at BYU–Hawai'i. Viliami had been a bishop on campus and had become renowned as a sculptor both domestically and internationally. Carolyn and I love and respect these men.

They addressed me in the Tongan language. The tone of their conversation was sweet and lighthearted. They spoke high praise of their own mothers and alluded to the widely known Tongan saying *fie lau, he na'ake mohe ofi* (little wonder [you are successful], for you slept close [to your mother]). In the Tongan way of thinking, this saying deflects praise away from successful persons and assigns it to their mother who reared them. As the two were leaving, they put a card in my hands, embracing Carolyn and me warmly.



Fig. 3. Kime and Fale'aka Kinikini
Courtesy of the Kinikini family

I pondered their visit. Opening the card, I found a one-hundred-dollar bill and expressions in Tongan that illuminated again the depth of a friendship that links love and duty to generosity, and finally to conscience—all of which are at the heart of what we in Hawai'i affectionately call the "aloha environment":

'Oku mau ongo'i 'a e taufa kuo tō tonu 'i ho loto fālē (we feel deeply this deadly storm that has struck your inner household).

'Oku mau fie kaungā mamahi mo'oni mo ho famili he mole 'a e fa'ē fita'a ko 'eni (we want to be companions in sorrow with you and your family in the loss of your most remarkable mother).

'Oku mau lave'i pē 'oku 'i ai pē ho'o koloa ke fua 'aki ho'o kavengá (we realize fully that you have your own means and money with which to bear this burden).

Ka 'oku mau lau 'eni ko e faingamālie ke fakahā 'emau 'ofa moe fie kaungā mamahi (but we consider it an honor and an opportunity to express our love and our desire to be fellow mourners with you).

'Oku mo'oni 'etau lea Tonga, "Ko e si'i pē kae hā" (our proverbial saying in Tongan is true, "Such a small thing [we offer] but it reveals [the deepest love of our hearts"])).

This token of friendship from these two good men struck a grateful chord of appreciation in all of our family. The gift was a powerful, irreducible symbol of this truth—"out of the abundance of the heart, the soul giveth."

Moving Sacrifices

Driven by what seems to be an innate compulsion to be hospitable and giving, many of our Polynesian friends have shown over and over again that their happiness in human relationships is anchored more in giving to others than in getting for themselves. There is a conspicuous delight in giving to make others happy even when times are hard for them.

For example, I remember visiting Kime Kinikini at the Holy Cross Hospital in Salt Lake City.

He was in the final throes of cancer and was suffering terribly. Our appearance in the room was a surprise. Kime's wife, Fale'aka, leaped from her chair, embraced us, and led us to the bedside of her dying husband. It was profoundly moving to see this radiant and loving man in such visible distress. Kime was too sick to even smile but was able to make a sign that he wanted a blessing, which I was honored to give.

We reminisced about our association over the years and about Kime's father and mother, Tēvita Muli and Le'o. As an older man, Muli had been my missionary companion for several months in Tonga in 1961. After saying our last good-byes, we left the room knowing we would not see Kime again in this life. Fale'aka followed us all the way out to the car, weeping and expressing gratitude for our visit. As we were about to get into the car, she pressed into my hand what I thought was a piece of paper. "If you don't need this," she said, "I believe you know someone who does. Kime wants me to give it to you." She turned to go back into the hospital while I stared at a crisp one-hundred-dollar bill in my hand. Suffering his death agony, when all things of this life seem to be blurred into insignificance, Kime still wanted to give his friends a token of his undying friendship.

How could we take this money from a poor woman about to become a widow? The more burning question was, How could we not receive with humble gratitude this emblem of consecrated friendship? In this case we felt it was better to receive. To resist or make a fuss over the gift would have violated the purity of the consecration. We knew the gift was not about money but about friendship. It was not for us but for someone we knew who, like Fale'aka, might be in distress.

For Tongans, not to be generous makes them aliens in their own culture. How often have I heard, "*I homau anga faka-Tonga, 'oku tapu 'aupito ke te kaipō*" (in our Tongan custom, it is forbidden to eat in the dark). This bit of ancestral wisdom was given to me early in

my first mission to Tonga, 1959–62, by Tongan mothers. In other words, share. Share the food you have, whatever you have. Do not hide it to eat by yourself. Be generous. To be accused of *kaipō* (eating in the dark) is a grievous insult indeed. Nothing stings more than the label of *kaipō* unless it's *nima ma'u*, or closed-fisted stinginess.

Nourishing Gifts

Every gift carries with it the assumption that it will be shared with others in order to *tauhi vaha'a* (keep up relations [with your neighbors]). After I became the president of BYU–Hawai'i in 1994, the Tongan community sponsored a *lū'au* in my family's honor. Besides the lavish gifts of food prepared for the guests, many fine mats, bolts of *tapa* cloth, afghans, and Tongan quilts (*monomono*) were brought in with great fanfare and piled up in front of our highly decorated table. An amazed Caucasian guest whispered to me, "Wow, you are going to need to add rooms to your home in order to store all these treasures." He stared at me in disbelief when I explained that these gifts were given not to keep but to give away. As a Tongan sister explained in a more formal speech, "These offerings will help you fulfill your presidential functions, so when you want to reward someone or say thank you, you have something uniquely Polynesian to give. It gives us great pleasure to help our president become more presidential in that he has something to give away."

Twenty years earlier, when we were building our home in Lā'ie, a wonderful older Samoan friend, Sepi Fonoimoana, affirmed this same principle. He came by one day to admire the house that was being built by literally dozens of volunteers who would just stop and ask to be put to work.

"Is this going to be a Polynesian home or a foreigner's home?" he asked, half smiling.

"A Polynesian home, of course!" I answered.

“Good,” he said, “I’ll bring by a fine breadfruit tree start and plant it for you in the backyard where the soil is good.”

“*Fa’afetai*,” I said, fascinated by his friendly insistence. “I love breadfruit, and our kids will learn to like it too.”

“Oh, this tree won’t be just for you,” he answered, “it will produce much more than you can eat. But that is its value. It will feed many families, especially those who don’t live on as fertile soil as you, or have no room to plant in their own yard.”

Well, Sepi planted the breadfruit tree, making me understand that it was the staff of life, the original Polynesian “giving tree.” If the fruit is given away, the tree will keep bearing. There is no food like it. Not only does the tree grow with very little toil, the fruit can be boiled, baked, fried, pounded into poi, or even buried and preserved in a fermented state and eaten in times of famine.

Sepi has since passed away, but his promises came true. For many years our tree produced abundantly, and for all of those years people we did not even know asked to pick the fruit. We said yes to everyone.

One day on the Provo campus, I chanced to meet a young Samoan football player for Brigham Young University, originally from Honolulu. When he heard my name—Shumway, from Lā’ie—he was delighted to tell me that on many Saturdays

when he was growing up, his parents would drive to Lā’ie and ring our doorbell. Then he would climb the tree in our yard and pick what he called their “Sabbath food.”

Yet there were times of so much abundance that the fruit would rot and fall from the tree for lack of harvesting. To avoid this, I frequently harvested several bagsful and gave them away to our Pacific Island students in married student housing.

“How do you know who the needy ones are?” Carolyn often asked.

“Easy,” I said, “I offer a silent prayer that I encounter the needy ones simply walking through the housing complex.” It never failed. One Saturday afternoon, when I offered one young Polynesian husband some fruit, tears welled up and he said, “I was just dreading having to go home and tell my wife I was unsuccessful in getting any food for our Sabbath. But what a Sabbath dinner these will make!”

I have learned that in Polynesia, sharing food is a way of saying, “Here, take this food that you may have life and health.” Without the gift of food, words are empty. With the gift, words are sometimes unnecessary.

The act of giving in Polynesia affirms one’s own identity at the very moment it binds you to your fellow human beings. It heals wounded relationships. It is a way of asking and receiving forgiveness. By sharing you become like the “giving tree” of Polynesia, laden with breadfruit, inviting others to partake.

In Tonga, as in other island countries, no matter how big or small the food gift may be, a baked taro in a banana leaf or a table full of roasted suckling pigs with fish and regal yams (*kahokaho*), it is nearly always accompanied by the same speech of exaggerated self-deprecation: “*Kātaki, ‘oku ‘ikai ke ‘i ai ha me’a ia ‘e ma’u, koe ki’i fo’i mā papanaki pē, ka ko hono ngata’anga ia ‘o ‘emau ‘ofa*” (please be patient, I have nothing worthy to give you, just a little piece of bread cut off at the edges, but it expresses the fullness of our love for you).



Fig. 4. Left to right: Daughters Kelela, Vesta, Mama'o, and Mele with their mother, Ahoika Ha'unga
Courtesy of Ahoika Ha'unga

Abundant Blessings

Again, generosity and sacrifice are closely related in Polynesia. For example, obeying the law of tithing and receiving its attendant blessings are seen as a natural condition of living as a Church member and as a Polynesian. This is especially true in South Polynesia. Recently one of our BYU–Hawai‘i graduates Mele Ha‘unga Hansen told a wonderful story that illustrates this concept.

When Mele was three years old, her mother and father were students at BYU–Hawai‘i living in married student housing. One day in a pickup rugby game on the front field, her father, Semisi Ha‘unga, was severely injured. Paralyzed and suffering from a broken neck, Semisi languished for several weeks and died, leaving his wife, ‘Ahoika, and four small daughters. The sadness was almost too much to bear, but ‘Ahoika remained

faithful and optimistic. Eventually she had to return home to Tonga with her children. She worked for the Latter-day Saint Church Schools, which paid her a modest salary. A widow and single parent with several children, ‘Ahoika eked out a living. Mele gave the following account:

I remember one day in Tonga, Mom called a family council and told us children that we had just enough money from that particular paycheck to pay tithing and the monthly bills, but there was no money for food. I remember complaining to Mom: “Why can’t we use the tithing money for food. Heavenly Father has plenty of money. Your tithing is so small compared to what He has. Does God want us to starve to pay tithing money He doesn’t need?” But Mom was adamant. “It’s His money,” she said. “He may not need it but we need to pay it. It is our need, not God’s, to pay tithing.”

Mele spoke of the prayers of her widowed mother and the anxiety of the children, when suddenly their father’s brother appeared at their home; he was not a member of the Church. He was laden with foodstuffs from his garden plot—yams, sweet potatoes, green bananas—and a roasted pig. There was also corned beef and bread. The sight of all this food made a deep impression, but it was their uncle’s story that moved them most. He said, “I was working in my plantation today. At noon I lay down to rest under a tree. I slept and saw your father walking toward me. When I saw him, I knew instantly why he had come to me. You were hungry and without food.”

Thus the widow’s faith was vindicated in front of her children. ‘Ahoika, still a widow, represents the millions of devoted Latter-day Saints all over the world whose faith and trust in paying their tithing make sacrifice joyful. Her generous, believing nature is part of her cultural as well as her spiritual heritage.

How well I remember another widow, Elikapeka Ke‘ahi of our Hau‘ula Second Ward, back in 1968. In her late seventies, this sweet Hawaiian sister was alive with laughter and goodness. Earlier in her life, her first husband had contracted Hansen’s disease and was banished



Fig. 5. Elikapeka Ke‘ahi was born September 5, 1891, in Na‘alehu, Hawai‘i, and died July 30, 1995, in Honolulu, Hawai‘i.

Courtesy of Haunani Nash, granddaughter

to the leper colony at Kalaupapa, Moloka'i. For fourteen years she cared for him there. When he died in 1928, she married Kaulahao Ke'ahi, a blind leper, who introduced her to the gospel. Then he passed away. Now twice a widow, Sister Ke'ahi lived with her daughter Annie Kauhane and husband, Sam, who took care of her. Though frail and poor, Sister Ke'ahi was rich in personality and testimony. She taught our Hawaiian language Sunday School class.

One Sunday morning our stake president notified me about our ward's stake building fund assessment, which was needed as soon as possible. The amount seemed excessive, and as a bishopric we pondered as to how we would meet the assignment. Prayerfully, we decided to hold a special meeting in which we asked certain key members of the ward who had means to assist us in meeting this stake assessment. The Sunday after the meeting, I met Sister Ke'ahi in the hallway at the chapel. She said she must talk to me immediately. I brought her to my office where she unleashed what I called at that time a "royal Hawaiian scolding." She said, "Because I am poor does not mean I cannot give something. Don't rob me of the blessings of sacrifice. What if I am old and poor? Doesn't the Lord need my help as much as anyone else's?" I sincerely apologized and asked how much she would want to participate. "I'll give a hundred dollars. I can save it in six months."

I suspected that Sister Ke'ahi had no income of her own, but I thanked her sincerely. Exactly six months later, she took me by the hand and led me to my office, where she took from her little purse five new twenty-dollar bills. As she gave me the money, she said again with a twinkle in her eye, "Bishop, I hope you learned your lesson. Don't ever rob members of the opportunity to make a sacrifice for spiritual blessings."

Thus, like the widow of Zarephath who sustained the prophet Elijah (see 1 Kings 17:9–16), 'Ahoika and Sister Ke'ahi were witnesses to Heavenly Father's blessings upon the generous and

the obedient. Theirs was a conscious generosity of soul supported by an unwavering faith, despite the tribulations in their life. Poverty did not narrow their vision or constrict their feelings. Rather it made their gifts more precious, even more holy, and free from the contamination of greed, fear, or publicity.

Offering Comfort

Another aspect of generosity of soul is the reverence with which one subordinates one's own needs to the comforts and convenience of another, particularly a person considered to be of rank or importance. Queen Sālote of Tonga manifested this trait in 1953 at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in London. As with many monarchs and heads of state, she participated in the coronation ceremonies, including the grand procession of royalty. It was a cold, gloomy day. Tens of thousands of excited spectators stood in the rain along the procession route to catch a glimpse of all their majesties from around the world. Unfortunately the steady drizzle had forced the royal entourage in the procession to seek cover by bringing up and securing the hoods of their carriages. In so doing they became virtually invisible to the public view—not so with Queen Sālote of Tonga. She refused to cover up but rather rode in full view of spectators. Though completely wet, she smiled and waved to the adoring crowd, who responded with loud applause. Newspapers, radio, and television stations praised the radiant six-foot-one-inch Tongan queen for her deeply moving regard for the British queen and her people. She said:

I was so caught up in the warmth of the people and the feelings of grace flooding my heart from the recent ceremony that I could not bear to be excluded from any part of that day, good or bad. . . . I just suddenly got the feeling that I wanted to join the people in the happiness of the day, and my Tongan heart was excited and foolish. But I am still thankful that I was soaked with rain on that significant day. . . . I did not notice what others were doing: I was too busy doing what I

thought I should do . . . whether I was noticed or not. I was only happy because of the . . . warmth that the people felt for their sovereign.³

The media heralded Queen Sālote's action in the most laudatory terms, but she deflected the praise by suggesting that in the Tongan way of life it is impossible to seek one's own comfort if it would disappoint or discomfort someone else.

Again and again I have witnessed this trait among Tongans brought up in the traditional Tongan fashion. They go to nearly any length to secure your comfort and to avoid anything that would create the opposite. I shall always remember the generosity of Pousima Afeaki, a gracious, articulate parliamentarian and chief (*matāpule*), whose career as a lawmaker and orator was legend. He was the quintessential Tongan gentleman. My last conversation with him was on July 4, 1988, during a military parade at the palace field in Tonga. Pousima was full of gaiety and laughter. His son Viliami had been my counselor in the mission presidency. Although not a member of the Church, Pousima was proud of his son and honored the Church.

As we sat together, I suddenly noticed Pousima's speech begin to slur and he started to lean to one side and slump down in his chair. He looked at me with pitiful eyes and uttered the words: "Please forgive me for being such a nuisance to you. I fear I have ruined your day." Before I could react in my surprise, several men sitting around us had caught Pousima in their arms and laid him tenderly on the ground, calling for a doctor in the crowd. In the rush and excitement that followed, I heard the words spoken by an attendant, "Ko e pā kālava" (it's a stroke).

The press of the crowd made it difficult for me to approach the fallen figure of my friend. I went to the hospital a few hours later to inquire about his condition. He lay on the hospital bed. His eyes were beginning to glaze over. He could not speak, but I believe he recognized me and again mouthed the words, "Fakamolemole, fakamolemole" (please forgive, please forgive).

Pousima passed away shortly thereafter, and I was left to ponder on the sweet generosity

of a man who in his last moments of life worried that he should be the cause of my distress on a day meant to be a day of celebration.

Giving Forgiveness

Forgiving a trespass is perhaps one of the greatest examples of generosity of soul. Although certainly not unique among Polynesians, the capacity to reconcile and forgive is at the core of that kind of generosity that emulates Christ's redemption of humanity. Especially when unjust suffering has been inflicted is forgiveness the most moving and Christlike. Last fall I witnessed another crowning moment in which the generous act of forgiveness transformed bitterness and sorrow into joy, peace, and friendship.

Two young Polynesian students (I will call them Joan and Jan) came to our home late at night. Joan was almost hysterical with grief and anger. They came to tell me of an unfortunate exchange of words with another girl from their country that ended in a stinging insult leveled at Joan. Somehow Joan's "adversary" knew that she was an illegitimate child raised by her grandparents. With gratuitous malice she had said mockingly, "Go ask your mother whose lineage you belong to. Stupid girl with no father."

Insults do not come any worse than that in most countries. Joan retreated in anger and humiliation. She said to me, "I knew who my father was, but my mother and he had not been together since I was born. My father has seldom acknowledged my existence. I have carried the burden of illegitimacy all my life, although my grandparents have always loved me and been kind to me. Others have not been so kind."

I listened to Joan's tearful account, responding only with questions, including what she would like me to do. She said she only wanted advice. She feared that she might do something that would get her suspended from school. She mainly wanted to vent.

The conversation came to a close with the inevitable questions. "What do *you* think you should do? What would the *Lord* want you to

do?” Still very tearful, both girls, especially Joan, gave warm, enlightened answers: “Simply ignore the insults, don’t spread my hurt feelings to others, keep my tears to myself, don’t retaliate in any form, refuse to allow the conflict to escalate, pray sincerely for my adversary, and go to her and ask forgiveness, even if I am the one wronged and wounded.”

Just before the girls left the house, we knelt in prayer together. Joan offered the prayer. It was a prayer for all time. She spoke of her gratitude for the Savior, the gospel, and for the principle of repentance. Tears and words flowed together in sweet expressions of love. Like so many prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit, hers was contrite and brokenhearted. Speaking of her adversary, Joan said “I love her, Heavenly Father, and I know you love her. Please bless her. Please forgive her and help me to forgive her, and please forgive me of my feelings toward her.” The prayer was both sincere and redemptive.

Two days later I saw Joan on the sidewalk between the women’s dorms. I beckoned her over and asked how things were going with her “adversary.”

“Perfect,” she beamed, “I went to her and asked her to forgive me. Everything is resolved.”

The impulse to strike back when we are offended is often so compelling that few of us can resist some form of retaliation, and even fewer proactively seek reconciliation and offer forgiveness. Jan and Joan are barely out of their teens, but that evening in our home, and later in the reconciliation with their adversary, they demonstrated a spiritual maturity I find rare even among many older Latter-day Saints. Again, we were humbled by this generosity of soul from two enlightened Polynesian girls.

A Parable of Prideful Giving

Of course, as in all cultures, there is in Polynesia a “dark side” to giving and sharing. Unfortunately, pride and the spirit of competition can color and even corrupt the natural impulses to be generous, especially in public displays of giving. In Tonga, for example, these displays are frequently

orchestrated by fundraisers of various kinds and motives. They can turn into giving frenzies accompanied by dancing and handfuls of dollars thrown wildly into the air. Sometimes on these occasions families are teased into giving more and more by appealing to their pride rather than their generosity. Like many of their fellow human beings, Tongans are afflicted with *ta’e fie tō* (devoid of desire of being defeated)—that is, determined to be on top. Especially when the giving frenzy is encouraged by chiefs and denominational ministers with shouts of *mālie* (bravo) and *mālō e ‘ofa* (thanks for your love) is public giving propelled to new and sometimes absurd heights. It is a form of cultural coercion.

Ta’e fie tō and *fie hā* (longing to be seen) have caused more than one head of a family to mortgage his future and that of his children in one grand burst of giving with *māfana* (passion). Ironically, this kind of lust for applause is memorialized in a favorite Tongan saying, *Tangi ke vikia, kae ‘au e kaingá* (longing/crying for praise, but the family drifts toward destruction).

As a citizen of Polynesia closely associated with island cultures, I too have been afflicted with elements of *fie hā* and a longing for public approval among my Polynesian friends. I have also suffered the humiliation of being exposed as a failure at the very moment I was expecting high praise. The following is an account (call it a parable) of my one and only attempt at *kumala* (sweet potato) farming. The experience illustrates perfectly the proverbial Tongan warning against ever boasting of success until success is fully evident: *Hifo ngahелеhele, hake pā ‘e hē* (go down quietly and inconspicuously [to do your fishing], then come back bragging and laughing [if you were successful]). You never go fishing with fanfare or making noise as if you are a great fisherman. The same is true about your gardening.

In 1976 when we moved into our new home on Naniloa Loop in Lā‘ie, Hawai‘i, I was anxious to make our backyard into a large Polynesian garden with sweet potatoes, taro, bananas, passion fruit, *pele* (Tongan spinach), and tapioca. Securing sweet potato cuttings from a Tongan

friend, I planted the leafy stems in twenty-five separate mounds of built up soil, as I had seen my Polynesian friends do. I watered and waited faithfully for several weeks. The result was a prodigiously lush canopy of sweet potato plants that filled the spaces between the mounds.

The leaves were so prolific and luxuriant, my sweet potato patch caught everyone's attention. Word went through our village that Shumway, the *pālangi* (white man), had a fine stand of sweet potatoes. Tongans and Samoans alike would stop by to gaze and praise. I loved the attention. It went to my head. Soon I was inviting people to come and see my patch of sweet potatoes. With every Tongan I encountered in a conversation I would somehow turn our discussion to my sweet potato patch. Tongans especially were profuse in their compliments. "*Fielau ko Faivaola koe, lava me'a 'i tahi, toe lava me'a 'i 'uta he mā'ui'ui ho'o ngoué*" (little wonder that your chief's title is Faivaola. You're both successful on the sea or on land, such is the lushness of your garden plot). I was overjoyed by this adulation. My ears were attuned to any compliment that may have come my way.

I remember well the morning I walked out into the garden to harvest my first sweet potatoes. It was the right time and I imagined a huge crop. In fact, I had promised a number of my Polynesian friends that I would be right over that day with their *'inasī*, their own basket of sweet potatoes. I dug up the first mound. To my surprise, there wasn't a single potato, only pitiful little roots dangling in my hand. I dug up the second mound, a third and fourth—nothing. As I stood in disbelief among all that lush leafy cover, I could feel the burning sensation of shame and embarrassment in my face. Slowly it dawned on me that I had the most beautiful and most worthless sweet potato patch on the North Shore.

What had gone wrong? Was it the fertilizer, the soil? Or was it Providence teaching me some resounding lesson? "Don't count your sweet potatoes before the harvest." "He who brags loudly (or softly) will be exposed accordingly." Most of us are all too willing to cash in on a little praise whether there is justification for it or not. When we allow ap-

pearance to masquerade for the real thing we put everything at risk—integrity, identity, reputation, and sometimes our very lives. Thus tutored, I have since tried to cultivate humility and let my Polynesian friends cultivate and harvest sweet potatoes.

Conclusion

As Carolyn and I contemplate our priceless associations with the peoples of the Pacific, we rejoice in their "larger heart [and] kindlier hand."⁴ Our lives with them have been "knit together in unity and in love one towards another" (Mosiah 18:21). Perhaps, if there is a visible symbol of that special bond, it is Viliami Toluta'u's heroic sculpture at BYU–Hawai'i depicting George Q. Cannon and Jonathan Nāpela in another sacred moment in the dawn of the restoration of the gospel. The monument celebrates two great gospel pioneers in Hawai'i who together translated the Book of Mormon into the Hawaiian language. Toluta'u captures Elder Cannon in an attitude of preaching, holding up the Book of Mormon. Nāpela stands in a posture of praise and celebration with both arms raised to heaven. These two men of different nations, different races, kindreds, tongues, and people were brought together to complete one of the first translations of this sacred scripture into a foreign language (1854). As brothers in the gospel, equal before God, they shared the same testimony. Their hearts were knit together in love and unity. Their work was a manifestation of the prophetic destiny of the Church that would spread across the world. Elder Cannon taught Nāpela the gospel. And in turn, Nāpela opened his generous heart and his home to embrace both the gospel and this Caucasian missionary.

It is that same full embrace of loving generosity that comforted Grandpa Addison Pratt in Tahiti over 150 years ago. It is the same generosity of soul that continues to nourish and sustain our family today, not simply in warm friendships but also in powerfully instructive ways that have tutored and changed us to be better individuals and a better



Fig. 6. President Eric Shumway (*Faivaola*) receives the honored cup during a Samoan kava ceremony in 1993 presided over by Sāmoa's head of state, Mālietoa.
Courtesy of Vernice Wineera

family. Because of these Polynesian acquaintances, we are more generous ourselves with each other and to people outside the family. They have been great examples of faith and humility and love. Our daughter Heather said it well when as a young, sometimes exasperated teenager in Tonga and wanting a little more freedom to find her way and to be herself, she observed: "You know, Daddy, that my friends back in Hawai'i have only one set of parents. But look at me in Tonga. As the mission president's daughter, I have one thousand Tongan fathers and one thousand Tongan mothers who are ever so anxious to teach me and tell me what I ought to do and what I ought to be." Thus as we have tried to serve them, they have served us and helped us establish our own legacy of generosity that will sustain us throughout generations.

Eric B. Shumway is the current president of Brigham Young University–Hawai'i and an Area Authority Seventy. He has served in Hawai'i and Tonga in many academic and Church positions, including mission president of the Tonga Mission.

Notes

1. Addison Pratt, *The Journals of Addison Pratt*, ed. S. George Ellsworth (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 299–300.
2. Pratt, *The Journals of Addison Pratt*, 185.
3. Elizabeth Wood-Ellem, *Queen Sālote of Tonga: The Story of an Era* (Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press, 1999), 244.
4. Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Ring Out, Wild Bells" from "In Memoriam A. H. H." number 106, line 30.

