

SYLVIA'S CORNER

THE POLYNESIAN DILEMMA

It was late afternoon when we heard the knock on the door. There stood two very sweet female Mormon Missionaries. One of the girls was from Tonga. It was easy for me to tell, because I had lived in Hawaii for eight years. When I first moved there, I lived in the city of Haluula, next to the city of Laie, where both the Polynesian Culture Center and the Hawaiian Mormon Temple are located.

My ex-husband was and still is a practicing Mormon, and one of Polynesian descent. I guess that you could say that I have a first-hand knowledge about the Church's appeal to the various people of Polynesia, and it breaks my heart. I love these people.

I am basing this information on two things. First, my personal knowledge of the situation, and secondly, on information that I viewed in videos entitled *The Gods in Paradise* by Dr. John Boyd. How does the church appeal to the people of the beautiful South Seas Islands?

There are two ways:

First, they appeal to their pride. The Mormon Missionaries tell them that they are descendants of Lehi. Who was Lehi? According to the Mormon Concordance, he was a Hebrew prophet from the tribe of Manasseh that the Lord led out of Jerusalem in 600 B.C. He led him out with his family to America, and according to them, he was the ancestor of both the Nephites and Lamanites spoken of in the Book of Mormon. How appealing this must be to the Polynesian people. Where the church has been discriminatory to the blacks, as well as to other people of dark skin, these people have been singled out as being "special" and told they are Jewish. What an appeal to pride?! I remember my "ex" speaking about this.

In my own personal experience, however, my "ex" was told in his Patriarchal Blessing that he belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, not the tribe of Manasseh. I really find this curious!

In the ancient Polynesian religions, there were many gods. Can you see how a religion that says that you can become a god would impress these people? It goes right along with what a lot of them already believed-especially those that adhered to their old traditions and were trying to preserve their culture. This appeals to their ideas about eternal destiny.

The Mormon Church also offers to educate these people at a reduced cost. They send the brightest and best to B.Y.U., (Brigham Young University). There are two campuses, one in Laie, Hawaii, and one in Provo, Utah. In my "ex's" case, he attended B.Y.U. in Utah. He didn't complete his education there, however. I remember him telling me that he became too homesick for the Islands.

Regarding the educational opportunities offered these young people, many help to pay their way by performing at the Polynesian Culture Center. Many of them are very musical, and work by either dancing, singing, or playing musical instruments. Others exhibit various crafts, such as lei making, basket weaving, etc.

If a person lives on one of the outlying islands, it is quite enticing when they are offered the opportunity to leave the place where they were born, and go to another place in the big wide world to either become a Missionary for the Church or to receive that higher education. Many islanders are attracted to their offer of work permits to the U.S.

In addition, Mormons appeal to a sense of power. These islanders have come from a history of monarchy, and when they are told that they can become priests in the Mormon organization, this gives them a feeling of importance.

They also are attracted to the aspects of family life associated with the Church. Family is very important to the Polynesians. In the islands, there are many athletic people, and the Church has built many gyms and has organized many games in order to appeal to their physical needs.

Another thing that perks the interest of the Polynesian

DILEMA CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

sians is the promise of new revelations. In the case of the Hawaiians, which are the islanders that I know the most about, the ancient Hawaiian people believed in the Huna religion where their Kuhunas or Witch Doctors came from. You can imagine how a prophet that gives continual prophecies or revelations would appeal to that!

In some of the islands, the Mormon Churches are more spectacular looking than some of the other Christian or Catholic ones, again appealing to a sense of pride.

Many of the people in these islands, to their credit, live very simply. The Mormons have seen this and entice them with the Church welfare system and offers of food and clothing. In Samoa, they even offered to put in a sewer system for residents.

Because many of the islanders believe in passing along a verbal history to the next generation, genealogy is very acceptable to them. They also seem to have no problem accepting baptism for the dead.

It breaks my heart to see how these beautiful people have been deceived, and would ask you to pray for them, that their eyes and ears would be opened to the true gospel of the real Jesus Christ.