



4-1-1965

His Wonders to Perform

Douglas H. Thayer

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq>

 Part of the [Mormon Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Thayer, Douglas H. (1965) "His Wonders to Perform," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 6 : Iss. 2 , Article 5.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol6/iss2/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *BYU Studies Quarterly* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

His Wonders to Perform

DOUGLAS H. THAYER*

The day everything really got started with Mr. Newton, at least for me, was the first Monday after school quit for the summer. I remember I was laying on the grass in the shade of our big lilac bush watching the afternoon clouds and waiting for my mother to call me and thinking about God. I had just finished gathering the eggs. My father had said just like he always does: "Hely, don't you think you'd better check for eggs outside the coop?" He never tells me to do things, just asks me. I know what he means though, so I always say yes. I like hunting nests in the weeds anyway because I get the old eggs for fights down at the pond when we go swimming. My father thinks I throw them in the trash.

My mother was baking a pie she wanted me to take over to Mr. Newton, who bought the Johnson place and had moved in just the two weeks before school let out. He's from Minnesota, but he isn't married, which my father keeps saying shows he's got good sense, and he isn't in the Church either. My mother was sending him the pie because he wasn't married. She said that morning at breakfast that even a man who didn't have enough gumption to get married before he was forty, which was how old she said Mr. Newton looked at least, still should have a decent bite to eat occasionally.

Because of school I hadn't been over to Mr. Newton's yet, and I'd kind of been looking forward to it. Of course I'd seen him. My mother had him out to church the Sunday after he moved in and then to our place for dinner. What I wanted to see was his turkeys, which my father told me were the biggest he'd ever seen. Mr. Newton is a dairy farmer just like us, but he keeps these turkeys as a hobby and shows them at fairs. My father told me and Moroni, that's my little brother, that Mr. Newton had won a lot of prizes in Minnesota.

After Mr. Newton went home that first Sunday, my father said it was pretty plain my mother was more interested in con-

*Mr. Thayer is an instructor in English and a member of the creative writing committee at Brigham Young University.

verting Mr. Newton to the Church than she was in just seeing he got fed a decent meal. I remember she introduced him as Brother Newton to everybody at Sunday school, when he wasn't even a member. She said we were all brothers and sisters, in the gospel or out, which sounded a little funny to me. Anyway I just started calling him mister.

Then, too, right after Mr. Newton moved in, my mother sent to my brother Nephi, who's on a mission down in Texas converting people, to get some tracts and pamphlets to use on Mr. Newton. My father says that ever since Nephi left that my mother has had the converting bug, but that she didn't have any gentiles to work on until Mr. Newton came into the valley. A gentile is what you are if you're not a Mormon. I know when I go to town with my father he always visits his friend Mr. Wolfstein, who owns the drug store. He says, "Well, how is my gentile friend today?" and then they both laugh, but they won't tell me why. Nobody ever tries to convert Mr. Wolfstein, though.

It was true about my mother trying to convert Mr. Newton. She was awfully nice to him. He got both drumsticks that first Sunday and all the pie he wanted. Moroni and me always get a drumstick each. That was the very first Sunday we didn't, and it was a big chicken too. When Mr. Newton took one leg my mother put the other one right on his plate. He said it was too much, but he sure ate both of them. Me and Moroni each got a wing and some of the white meat.

The very next Tuesday my mother sent my father over to Mr. Newton's with a cake, and my father said then that he knew the best way to a man's heart was through his stomach but he didn't know it was the best way to his soul too, and that it wasn't fair for her to mix food and religion. She put one of Nephi's tracts on top of the cake when she wrapped it up. She said then that the Lord moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform, which is something she always says, and Mr. Newton might just read the tract while he was sitting down to have a piece of cake and be converted. And besides she said it wasn't any sense keeping Nephi on a mission if we let opportunities right under our noses go to waste. My father said he didn't think Mr. Newton was going to waste, but then she said the field was white and ready for harvest and all you needed to do was thrust in your sickle, which is something else she is always saying.

My mother told my father it wouldn't hurt him to be a little more concerned about Mr. Newton's spiritual welfare and that he should spend less time talking to him about sports and farming and more time talking about the gospel. He said my mother did enough gospeling for the whole family. I was home from school sick that Tuesday, so I heard what they said.

Of course I believe in God and everything, but still I wanted to see what happened to Mr. Newton and how the mysterious ways of the Lord worked, and so that was why I was paying such close attention to everything that went on about Mr. Newton. Our Sunday school teacher told us that the Apostle Paul in the New Testament got knocked out on the way to Damascus and that was what converted him. I thought something interesting like that might happen to Mr. Newton. Then, too, I figured if Mr. Newton got converted that I would feel a little better about those mansions in heaven my mother is always telling Moroni and me we will get if we are good boys and live the gospel. It isn't so hard trying to be good if you know things are going to turn out all right in the end.

Well, that morning my mother finally called me and I stopped watching the clouds and got up from the grass. "Helaman! Helaman!" she called. My father always calls me Hely, but not my mother. Helaman was a great general in the Book of Mormon and she says it wouldn't be showing respect. Nephi and Moroni both get their names from the Book of Mormon too. My mother says it's to remind us of the great men of the past. My five sisters, though, they're all married; their names come out of the Bible. My mother says if she'd started out having boys instead of girls she would have named them all after the twelve sons of Jacob who led the twelve tribes of Israel in the Bible. My father just shakes his head when she says that.

My mother was at the sink peeling some carrots for supper when I got in the kitchen. I took a peeled one. She turned around. "You're not going over to Brother Newton's looking like a wild Indian," she said. She is always telling me and Moroni we have to be examples and that a candle shouldn't be hid under a bushel basket. I don't know what I have to be an example for. When I got back down from washing and with a clean shirt on, the pie was in a box on the table.

First, though, my mother got the brush out of the bathroom and straightened my hair. "Now you be sure and tell Brother

Newton we'll be by tomorrow morning at ten o'clock to take him to the funeral," she said. Old Brother Swenson had died the Friday school let out and we were all going to the funeral. She wanted Mr. Newton to go because old Brother Swenson was almost a hundred and came to Utah with President Brigham Young or somebody in a wagon train, and so some of the apostles from Salt Lake were coming to speak. Mr. Newton was going to hear all about the pioneers, which my mother had said at breakfast would be a grand thing for him. My father didn't say anything.

I remember the box was warm on the bottom. "Now be careful," she said. Moroni came in and wanted to go, but he couldn't.

It was kind of hard riding my bike with one hand and holding the pie so it wouldn't break with the other. My mother is great on funerals and goes to all she can. She says there's nothing like a good funeral to keep you humble and help you keep in mind what things are going to be like when you get on the other side. She talks a lot about crossing over and going beyond the veil and stuff like that. The way she talks about Uncle Ephraim, that's her brother who got killed in the war, and dead Grandpaw Jones and others, wondering how they're getting on and everything, you'd think they were still alive or something.

I know when Brother Callahan died she said she didn't know how the Lord could even let him in the lowest degree of glory because he'd been such a terrible rascal all his life, rascal being about the worst word to describe anybody she ever uses. She said it was going to be terrible for him when he had a bright recollection of all his sins, which is what happens to you in heaven unless you repent, which seems to be a pretty good idea of that's really what happens.

Robinson's dog barked at me when I went by but didn't come close enough to kick, which would have been kind of hard anyway, what with the pie. Then I got to Mr. Newton's. It's a big two-storied brick place painted white with a white picket fence around and big cottonwood trees with a swing in one. The Johnson's had nine kids, but they moved to California because Sister Johnson got sick and couldn't stand to live high up in the valley. After they left, my mother said it was a crying shame a big house like that didn't have a woman and children in it, because that was what it was built for.

Mr. Newton wasn't in the house, so I had to trail up through the yard past the barn and the corral. He was just going in the chicken coop with a bucket of water when I saw him. Then he saw me. "Why hullo there, Hely," he said.

"Hullo, sir," I said, which is what my mother always tells me to say. Then he asked me how I was, and I told him fine and that my mother was fine too and she sent the pie. He said that was nice and my mother was very kind.

"Come on in and see my turkeys," he said finally, pushing open the door.

It smelled like chickens but there was only turkeys, thirteen of them, which I remember seemed like kind of a funny number for anybody to have anything of. They sure were big and black and strutting around as if that was all they had to do. One was bigger than all the rest.

"That's Tom," Mr. Newton said, pointing to it. "Tom, Tom, Tom, Tom, Tom," he said, holding out his hand. You'd have thought he was calling a dog or something. But Tom didn't come. "Usually he comes," he said. Mr. Newton sure was proud of those turkeys, and of course that was what caused all the trouble later.

On the way back to the house we met Jed Black, who helps Mr. Newton. He said for Jed to start throwing down some feed to the cows, and he would be back out. Jed told my father that Mr. Newton was a good man to work for, though he sure didn't overpay, except he had a terrible temper sometimes. My father said he knew Mr. Newton pinched a dollar pretty hard before he let it go. Temper, he always says, shows character in a man. I don't think my mother knew about Mr. Newton's temper at the time. One thing for sure, I knew then I didn't want him mad at me. My mother says a big man like that can do a lot of work and doesn't get sick much.

When we got in the kitchen Mr. Newton took one of my mother's cake plates from the cupboard and put it in a sack. He said the pie sure looked good and he would have a piece before he went back outside. When he opened the cupboard I saw lots of canned stuff. I reminded him about the funeral just before I left.

"I'll be ready," he said, but he didn't sound too happy. I guess he figured if he kept the pie he would have to go.

That night at supper my father asked my mother to say the evening prayer. She asked that the Lord bless everybody of

course and give those strength who had cause to mourn or were called to bear life's inevitable tragedies, as she always calls them, and then she prayed special for Mr. Newton like she usually did, asking that his understanding might be quickened so he would see the light, join the Church and be exalted. She also prayed for Nephi to be directed to the honest in heart and bring many souls into the kingdom.

Just then my father coughed twice, which meant he was ready to eat and the prayer was long enough. I guess my mother heard it too. She stopped about then. My knees were kind of hurting from kneeling on the linoleum, so I was glad she finished. It isn't so bad when we pray in the front room; there's carpet in there. When I opened my eyes Moroni was already in his chair. He likes to eat. It seemed to me at the time that if the Lord did everything my mother asked Him to about Mr. Newton, he was going to be a member in a hurry.

The next day we all went to the funeral, along with about everybody else in the valley, and it was really swell after the preaching was over and we took Brother Swenson out to the cemetery and left him and went back to the church to eat. Each of the sisters had brought food and it was all lined up on the tables out on the church back lawn in the shade of the big willow trees with the white tablecloths kind of flapping a little in the breeze that was starting up. You just took what you wanted.

The Relief Society was in charge, so of course my mother had to kind of direct things. She's president. She told us where to sit and said she would be there in a little while. She said for my father to fill her plate because he knew what she wanted anyway.

Five minutes after we got sat down Sister Clark came by with Ralph and his two little brothers. My father has always liked Sister Clark, and even more since she got her divorce. They excommunicated Brother Clark, which my father said at the time was a good thing because he was worse than any barnyard tomcat and didn't deserve a good woman like Sister Clark. After the divorce my father would go over to Sister Clark's once in a while to help her on her farm, or sometimes he sent our hired man, John, over. He says Sister Clark is one of the few women he ever met who had a head on her shoulders and that she deserved any help he gave her.

So my father invited them to sit with us. He got right up and helped Sister Clark with her plate and saw she got seated. Then he introduced Mr. Newton to them. They started talking and seemed to forget all about us kids. My mother came a little later. "Well, I see you got acquainted," she said, smiling at Sister Clark and Mr. Newton both at the same time. My father kind of gave her the eye. After that us boys got permission to sit on the grass and eat with some of the other guys. We didn't want to listen to the gab at the table; besides a lot of people were coming by to visit.

That afternoon after we dropped Mr. Newton off and were driving home, my mother said she thought it was a fine afternoon. "Brother Newton really seemed to enjoy himself," she said. "I watched him during the sermons. He liked Sister Clark, too; anybody could see that."

"I guess you didn't have anything to do with Doris Clark sitting by us either did you, Mother?" my father asked as we pulled into the lot.

"Well, I certainly didn't invite her to sit at our table," my mother said, smiling. "You did that."

"No, but you saw to it that she came in our general direction didn't you?" he said. "What was I supposed to do, let her go sit off somewhere alone with those three boys?"

"All the same you invited her to sit down," she said. "It wasn't me."

My father said something under his breath about people sticking their noses into other people's affairs. Then my mother said he was going against nature and the Lord wanting to keep Sister Clark and Mr. Newton apart when it was obvious they were meant for each other and it would help save Mr. Newton's soul because you have to be married to get into the highest degree of glory in the next world.

Also she said my father was stiff-necked, which is a word they use in the Book of Mormon a lot, and that he just wanted to keep them separated because he liked a bachelor friend to hob-nob with and wanted to be the only one to help Sister Clark. She said he shouldn't oppose the Lord's will. My father said it was bad enough her trying to save Mr. Newton's soul, but trying to get him married to boot was too much and that my mother had a peculiar idea of what the Lord's will was as far as he was concerned.

That night my father said the prayer, but he didn't say anything about Mr. Newton, except he did say for the Lord to protect the innocent. I don't think my mother liked that because she looked up then, only for minute, though. She told me to close my eyes.

Well, after the funeral my mother really shifted into high gear as far as Mr. Newton's joining the Church was concerned. She had him over to eat at least twice a week and invited him to all the meetings and church socials. It seemed to me I spent half my time taking food over to him. There was two weeks though she was gone to help my sisters who were having babies, one in June and one in July. She always goes for a week to help out. It seems to me they have a lot of babies, because she's gone quite often.

My mother has pictures of all the family on top of the piano. Every time there is a new baby she adds another picture. My father says if the kids don't stop having babies she will have to sell our little piano and buy a grand to put the pictures on. She says my sisters are just following the commandment to multiply and replenish the earth and give the spirits bodies that are waiting around in heaven. My father says that is a mighty easy commandment to follow. My mother says if anybody should know about that he should.

The second time my mother went to help with a baby, my father asked her if she wasn't afraid of losing ground with Mr. Newton. She said no, that going without her cooking would help him realize what he was missing not being married. My father said she was bigger schemer than he thought, that he knew she was using her cooking to help convert Mr. Newton but he hadn't figured on her trying to marry him off by using the same weapon. My mother said she wasn't a schemer and he just didn't understand the mysterious ways of the Lord.

By August it looked to me like Mr. Newton was about ready for baptism. He was going to church real often and even helping build the new addition on the chapel. Also he was playing in the ward horseshoe tournament, which my father accused my mother of getting the bishop to start just so Mr. Newton would play. He liked horseshoes. My mother didn't say anything. She was already talking about a party for Mr. Newton when he got baptized. My father told her not to count her members before they were dunked, by which he meant baptized, and my mother told him to be more respectful.

Also Mr. Newton seemed to be kind of interested in Sister Clark. He hadn't dated her, at least that's what Ralph told me, but he danced with her at the church socials and sat by her in meetings, and sometimes went by her place to help her with little things. My father accused my mother of arranging that and said she would get those two talked about if she wasn't careful with her arranging. She said nonsense, that there wasn't anything wrong with Mr. Newton going over to Clark's in broad daylight to help put up a clothesline. She said he was just upset because Mr. Newton was doing the little things for Mrs. Clark he used to do.

Of course my mother wanted to get Mr. Newton baptized first because then him and Sister Clark could get married in the temple in Salt Lake for time and all eternity, which is how long they marry you for there, and you have your family and everything in the life to come. My father says if he were married to some women he knew, this life would be plenty long enough and he wouldn't want to be stuck for eternity too. My mother says he shouldn't talk that way around us boys.

Every time I went over to Mr. Newton's he showed me his turkeys. He was proud of those birds and he was getting them all ready to show at the state fair in October. They were fat as they could be, with their feathers all silky and pretty. Of course my mother admired the turkeys when Mr. Newton talked about them, but she said later after he would leave that if he had a wife and family to concern himself with he wouldn't have time for turkeys. The best place for a turkey was on a platter, she said. My father asked he why she didn't tell Mr. Newton that.

Well, my mother nearly had me convinced all about God because it looked like Mr. Newton was, just like she said, going to enter the fold. But then we had all the trouble about Tom, that biggest turkey of Mr. Newton's, and everything seemed to change.

It was the last Saturday before Labor Day and me and the other guys went down to the pond way below Mr. Newton's to swim and play Indian in the big grove of cottonwood trees down there. We had on our breechcloths, which were really dish towels we'd hooked from our mothers, and our war paint like usual and had been swimming, when we decided to build a fire and roast the potatoes we'd brought along. Ralph Clark

and Sam Simmons went into the trees to get some wood while the rest of us got the potatoes ready.

They'd only been gone a few minutes, not nearly long enough to get the wood, when all of a sudden they came tearing back through the willows with Ralph leading, shouting "A turkey! A turkey! There's a wild turkey in the big tree!" Of course if we'd stopped to think about it we would have known it couldn't have been a wild turkey because we don't have any around our part of Utah. But we didn't stop to think. I guess we wanted it to be a wild turkey so much we didn't think about anything else.

It was a big tom just sitting on a low limb giving us the eye and kind of talking to himself. You'd suppose I would have recognized that Tom as many times as I'd seen him, but I didn't. We started shooting at him with our bows, but it was quite a while before somebody finally bounced an arrow off him. But he sure came roaring out then. We ran out of arrows and started throwing rocks, yelling and hollering all the time, the old turkey a gobbling like crazy, half running and half flying all through the trees, and us right behind him. We couldn't hit him, though. But about that time Ralph took his flipper from around his neck and loaded up, which was kind of cheating because whoever heard of an Indian using a flipper? Anyway that old tom perched on a limb just once too often and Ralph got off a shot. He plunked him square in the head right in the middle of a gobble, which he didn't get to finish. Down he came just like a sack of wheat.

We had a big war dance of course and then got a pole and tied him to it by his feet and carried him back to where we were going to build our fire, thinking all the time we were Indians taking a turkey to the Pilgrims. We decided to cook him, which was a dumb thing to do because he was so big it would have taken a week. Anyway me and Dave Nelson started to pick him while the rest went to gather wood. We knew we would need lots of wood.

I was sitting on a rock holding the turkey and had a big handful of feathers I'd just pulled off the breast when it happened. Mr. Newton came crashing through the willows like a mad bull right at me. I don't remember exactly what took place except that Dave, who was holding one of the legs at the time, made a flying leap for the bushes, knocking me off my rock with the turkey right on top of me. I was sort of

dazed for a minute I guess, but I could sure hear Mr. Newton.

He was hollering, "Tom! Tom!" over and over and almost doing a dance. I figured maybe he thought Dave was Tom somebody, but then I saw he meant the turkey. He sure was upset. He picked up the turkey and stood there kind of hugging it and holding its head and looking at it. I thought he was going to give it some artificial respiration or something to bring it back to life, like they taught us in the Scouts. I could have told him it wasn't any use. I guess he figured that out by himself though because pretty soon he laid the turkey down, gentle like it was a baby, and turned on me. I was still kind of sitting there by the rock just beginning to figure out whose turkey we'd annihilated.

Well, after considerable shouting, swearing and stomping around, during which time he called me a murdering little savage, a heathen, and a few other things, Mr. Newton grabbed me by the wrist and yanked me up. "We'll see what your mother has to say about this," he said, then gave me a jerk and we were off to a running start, one hand on me, the other cradling the turkey.

I hollered what about my clothes, but I guess Mr. Newton didn't hear me. I sure didn't want my mother to see me dressed like an Indian. She didn't know anything about us playing Indian. But I was having too much trouble just keeping the breechcloth on, what with the weeds and bushes pulling at it, to worry too much about my other clothes. I was glad I had on my tennis shoes, though.

I turned around once and saw the guys following back a ways. They were all dressed and Ralph was carrying my clothes. I thought maybe they would ambush Mr. Newton and set me free, but they were too chicken. I would have, though, if Mr. Newton had caught one of *them*. He didn't even turn around. I guess he thought I murdered his turkey all by myself.

When we came up past our barn I could see the truck was gone, which meant my father was gone too. I was glad for that. Mr. Newton didn't even knock but went storming right in the back door, dragging me along and still holding the turkey. My mother was in the kitchen ironing. I guess we were quite a sight coming in on her like that without knocking or anything. Her mouth kind of dropped open, and she just held the iron on my father's white shirt she was doing till it started scorching and she smelled it.

Mr. Newton started right in, not giving my mother a chance to say anything. First he told about what wonderful turkeys he had, which was something she already knew and didn't need telling, and how his prize tom got out through a hole high up on the south wall of the coop and how he went looking for it down in the trees because that was the place a loose turkey would naturally go, and heard all the screaming and yelling and followed the noise and found his prize turkey dead and me picking him. Then he pulled me farther out in front of him like he thought my mother couldn't see me plain, and giving me a shake when he said that last about me picking that darn turkey.

Then Mr. Newton stopped. I guess he expected my mother to say something. She did too.

She looked at him in a kind, faint-smiling, comforting sort of a way and said, "Well, that certainly is too bad about your poor turkey, Brother Newton."

I guess maybe he expected her to say more than that. I guess what he really expected was she would break right down and cry over that turkey and say it was a terrible tragedy and I would be whipped within an inch of my life and all, but she didn't. My mother always says after raising and marrying off five daughters and part raising three boys, and coming from a big family herself with all the trials and tribulations involved, that there isn't much can upset her. But I guess Mr. Newton didn't know that.

Anyway he started right up again. But he didn't swear this time either, which I thought kind of made him a hypocrite because he sure swore before, but anyway I was going to tell my mother all about his swearing. I figured she wouldn't be so anxious to have him in the Church when she knew that.

He called me a murdering little savage again like down at the pond and other things, and wanted to know if I was the kind of boy the Church developed, and if so it had a lot of improving to do, which I thought wasn't a very fair question. Finally he wound up, though, because after all there's only so much a man can say, and I guess he had about said it. He ended up saying he had said all he was going to and now it was up to my mother.

She stood there smiling at him still, like she expected to soften him up just by doing that. "Why, I'd be glad to roast that turkey for you, Brother Newton, so it won't go to waste,"

she said. Which was kind of a dumb thing even for her to say because she knew as well as I did how Mr. Newton felt about people who ate turkeys. Then she stepped over to the table where he'd put the turkey without even asking if she could and felt the bare spot where the feathers were gone. "He's awfully big for cooking, but maybe he won't be too tough," she said. "Maybe he will grind up for patties."

That was sure the wrong thing to say. Mr. Newton just stood there hardly breathing, his eyes wide open. "Sweet suffering Jesus!" he said finally real loud, and then went thundering out the back door and down the steps, stomping hard enough to put his foot right through the porch and almost tearing the screen off the hinges. My mother went after him to say he'd forgot his turkey, but he didn't come back.

When she came back in she wasn't very happy. She wanted to know what I had to say for myself. I was going to tell her, but she didn't give me a chance. "Disgraceful," she said, "running around naked as a savage." Then she picked up a serving spoon laying on the sideboard and cracked me twice on the head with it, like she does sometimes when she's mad.

I had to take two baths because the water got all red from my war paint.

My mother was still mad when I got back in the kitchen. "Fancy you upsetting Brother Newton like that," she said. "Why what will he think, just what will think? I just hope you haven't upset him too much, what with him about to be baptized and everything. I'll have to send him over a nice pie tonight."

I wanted to tell her I didn't think a pie would help much, but I didn't. She wouldn't let me explain about anything, and I had to pick the turkey. "Your father will deal with you later," she said. Which was what I was afraid of. The guys were waiting for me outside. They helped me pick the turkey. The chickens.

When my father got home at supper time and my mother told him, he laughed. "You better find yourself another convert, Mother," he said after he got over laughing. "Strass Newton won't want to be joining any church whose members murder his prize turkey."

"But they didn't mean any harm," she said. "They're just boys. Surely Brother Newton wouldn't let a little thing like a turkey keep him out of the Kingdom."

"Just resurrect the turkey and everything will be fine," my father said, still laughing. My mother told him not to say such things.

Seeing my father felt so good I thought he would forget about me. But he didn't. It wasn't too bad, though. He bawled me out and told me I should have had more sense. When I told him it wasn't all my fault, he said not to make excuses, that a man always paid for his mistakes in this life sooner or later and the faster I learned that the better off I would be. He tried to act mad, but I could see he wasn't too upset about Mr. Newton. He said I couldn't ride my bike for a week.

A little later Jed came over with some plates and said Mr. Newton wouldn't be going to Sunday school in the morning so not to pick him up.

"What did I tell you," my father said, looking up from his paper when Jed left.

My mother didn't say anything for a minute. "The Lord's ways are mysterious to man," she said finally kind of solemn, like she was repeating scripture.

"They're going to have to be mighty mysterious if you ever get Newton under the water," he said. He said, too, she better forget about Mr. Newton courting Sister Clark, because if Ralph was with us Mr. Newton probably saw him and wouldn't feel any more kindly toward the Clarks than he did toward us. My father seemed pleased about that.

"All over a silly turkey," my mother said. Then she told my father to take the turkey over to Mr. Newton. He said that would be just like waving the red flag at the bull and did she expect Mr. Newton to eat his prize bird, because it would be just like him eating a member of his own family if she did. Finally she decided to pay for the turkey out of her egg money and freeze it until the church supper in October.

Later, when I figured she was cooled down enough, I told my mother how Mr. Newton swore and carried on at the pond. She said none of us was perfect and I shouldn't talk about people's faults. "Brother Newton was provoked," she said. When Moroni and me went to bed she told us to pray for Mr. Newton so he would see the light. She prayed at supper and had a lot of good things to say about him.

I said a word or two, but not any more than I figured I had to. I don't know what Moroni said. Anyway it looked to

me like Mr. Newton wasn't about to get converted no matter what happened. I was starting to wonder a little bit about God.

The next morning things were kind of quiet around our place. I guess my mother was thinking about Mr. Newton's soul and all that. She wasn't sad though, because, like she always says, you have to have faith. Well, I got ready for Sunday School and was sitting on the front porch waiting for my mother to finish getting Moroni ready when all of a sudden Doctor Blanchard went tearing down the road in his old Ford raising a cloud of dust. My mother saw it too through the kitchen window. The way he was traveling meant somebody was either sick or hurt.

Right away she started phoning down the line to find out where he had stopped. It was at Mr. Newton's. Jed answered. He said Mr. Newton fell off a ladder while he was up fixing the hole in the coop where the turkey got out and broke his leg and hurt his back. My father came in from checking the cows just as she was hanging up the phone. He saw Doctor Blanchard's car too.

"Somebody sick?" he said.

"Brother Newton fell and broke his leg," she said, already taking off her apron.

"My hell," he said, "and the last of the crops to finish up too."

My mother didn't even pay any attention to my father swearing. They hurried and got in the truck and went zooming over to Mr. Newton's. She told me to read to Moroni out of the Book of Mormon and we probably wouldn't make it to Sunday school.

They were gone two or three hours. I heard all about what happened at lunch. It was like Jed said: Mr. Newton fell while he was fixing the hole in the coop. My mother said it was providence because now Mr. Newton would see how the Church helped people in distress and that would maybe bring him into the fold. My father said he hoped he wouldn't be bothered by any of that kind of providence.

There must have been a big discussion at Mr. Newton's from what I heard. Doctor Blanchard said Mr. Newton would have to go to the hospital. He didn't want to, though, even if he did need nursing. My mother said at the table most men are boobs and afraid of hospitals, but my father said it was just because Mr. Newton was tight and didn't want to spend all

that money. There wasn't any need of sending him to the hospital, though; my mother arranged for the Relief Society sisters to take care of him. Mr. Newton said no at first but finally said yes. It was because of the twenty dollars a day it would have cost him, my father said, and because he would have been away from his turkeys.

My father told Mr. Newton he wouldn't have to worry about his farm, that the neighbors would help Jed and see his hay got put up and everything. My mother told him he should have said brethren rather than neighbors.

My mother was busy two days organizing pairs of Relief Society sisters to go in and take care of Mr. Newton. During the next weeks my father said it seemed to him Sister Clark was assigned more than her share of the time at Mr. Newton's and my mother would get those two talked about yet. She said nonsense and for him not to worry about such things. Two sisters always went together, so she said everything was all right anyway. He said it looked like a plot to him.

My mother also saw that Mr. Newton got plenty of Church reading material because now he had plenty of time, but she didn't go around his place too much. She knew he was still thinking about his turkey and she wanted things to run smooth as possible.

When the fair came, me and my father and Ralph took Mr. Newton's turkeys to show for him. They all won prizes, which made Mr. Newton very happy. He had the ribbons tacked on his bedroom wall so he could look at them all the time when he wasn't reading or watching television or eating. My father said the sisters would have Mr. Newton so fat feeding him like they did that his legs wouldn't be able to support the weight when he did finally get out of bed.

I helped when we all got together to put up Mr. Newton's hay; then I helped a lot too when Jed had more than he could handle. I didn't get paid, though. My mother said it was one way to pay back for the turkey and that part of repenting was restoring what you had taken. You have to repent if you go to heaven.

Well, after Mr. Newton was laid up two months I don't know what happened, because he was almost better and he decided to join the Church. My mother says it was because he saw what real Christian brotherhood was like while he was laid

up. But my father says it was just that the Relief Society wore him down and he didn't have a chance once he broke his leg.

Mr. Newton and Sister Clark decided to get married, too. My mother tells everybody it's a real romance and he had a chance to see what a fine woman she was while he was recovering. Not my father, though; he says it was because Mr. Newton just got used to having women around the house during those weeks and he can't get used to the peace and quiet now he's almost better. He says, too, Mr. Newton needs some more pasture and Sister Clark's farm has the best pasture in the valley. Also he says Ralph and his two brothers will be a great help on the farm and Mr. Newton can see that. My mother says nonsense and that my father hasn't got a romantic bone in his body and he's just upset the way things turned out.

They announced the engagement at the ward dinner last week. My mother sure had to do some scurrying around when we got there, though. They had Mr. Newton's prize turkey we killed all roasted and right in the center of the middle table. She had the sisters cut it all up and spread the platters out so Mr. Newton wouldn't notice when he came in on his crutches with Sister Clark. My father said she was shifty and he had half a mind to tell Mr. Newton. She said he shouldn't oppose the Lord's will.

I think Mr. Newton is going to be all right, though. He told Ralph and his brothers he would take them to Yellowstone Park next summer if they got good grades and helped their mother this winter, and he said I could go if I wanted. Which sounds like a good deal because I always wanted to see a grizzly bear like the Indians used to kill just with a knife to prove they were brave.

Of course Mr. Newton's temper worries me a little still. I sure wouldn't want to do anything wrong on that trip. I wonder sometimes, too, what might happen if he ever found out it was Ralph who blasted his turkey out of the tree. My mother says not to worry about Mr. Newton's temper. She says being married would help him a lot and being in the Church would help too because that's what the Church is for is to perfect people and we would see a big change in Mr. Newton by next summer.

My father says not to depend on it.

I don't know, though. I've been thinking about everything that's happened this summer and I've nearly decided my mother

is right about God, his moving in a mysterious way and all. Now I'm waiting for next summer. Mr. Newton's family wrote from Minnesota that they were real pleased he was getting married and settling down finally because it was about time, and his younger brother, who is past thirty-five, will be coming out in June to see if he can't find a farm. This was all in a letter Sister Clark read to my mother.

Of course my mother is real happy. She wrote to Nephi that the fields here in this part of the Lord's vineyard are truly ripe for harvest, and she's already making plans for next summer. I'm waiting to see what God will have to do to Mr. Newton's brother to get him to join the Church.