



Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University
LMU Loyola Law School

Theological Studies Faculty Works

Theological Studies

2014

Editor's Note: "God bless Elijah / With the feather in his hand"

Amir Hussain

Loyola Marymount University, amir.hussain@lmu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/theo_fac



Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

Digital Commons @ LMU & LLS Citation

Hussain, Amir, "Editor's Note: "God bless Elijah / With the feather in his hand"" (2014). *Theological Studies Faculty Works*. 475.

https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/theo_fac/475

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Theological Studies at Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theological Studies Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@lmu.edu.

Editor's note: "God bless Elijah/ With the feather in his hand"

Amir Hussain



CHIEF ELIJAH HARPER HOLDS UP ONE OF TWO EAGLE FEATHERS HE HELD DURING THE MEECH LAKE PROCEEDINGS IN THE MANITOBA LEGISLATURE. PHOTO: THE CANADIAN PRESS/TOM HANSON

AS THIS ISSUE OF THE *JAAR* was in its final stages of preparation, we learned of the death of Nelson Mandela on December 5, 2013. My university's Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka, issued a simple one-line statement, echoing Cleopatra's words on the death of Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*: "The soul of Africa has departed, and there is nothing miraculous left in the world." Another African Nobel Laureate, John Coetzee, ended his obituary for Mandela with the line: "He was, and by the time of

Journal of the American Academy of Religion, March 2014, Vol. 82, No. 1, pp. 1–2
doi:10.1093/jaarel/ift109

Advance Access publication on January 16, 2014

© The Author 2014. Published by Oxford University Press, on behalf of the American Academy of Religion. All rights reserved. For permissions, please e-mail: journals.permissions@oup.com

his death was universally held to be, a great man; he may well be the last of the great men, as the concept of greatness retires into the historical shadows." For this issue, South African scholar Ebrahim Moosa and Canadian human rights leader Derek Evans have both provided us with their remembrances of Madiba.

The Thursday morning that President Mandela died, I was teaching my final class of the semester, talking about a course I am leading this summer in Cape Town. The class ended with a discussion of the new film version of *Long Walk to Freedom*, starring Idris Elba as Mandela. Coming back to my office after class and thinking about South Africa and the legacies of Steve Biko and Robert Sobukwe, I was listening to Peter Gabriel's song "Biko" as I worked. I had first learned about apartheid as a youngster in 1975, when I stayed up late one night and watched Gil Scott-Heron perform "Johannesburg" on *Saturday Night Live*. Five years later, "Biko" introduced me to the death and life of Stephen Bantu Biko. Coincidentally, it was the words "The man is dead" that I was listening to when I got the news of Madiba's death.

2013 also saw the deaths of Otto Maduro, a former president of the AAR, and Jean Elshtain, a noted scholar of religion and ethics. Remembrances for both of our colleagues are included in this issue. Otto was too ill to prepare his 2012 AAR Presidential Address for publication, and after his death we could not locate a copy. However, it was discovered last year by his friends and is also included in this issue. The 2013 Presidential Address by John Esposito will be published as scheduled in the June issue.

The title of this note comes from a 1992 song, "Fools Like You," by my favorite Toronto band, Blue Rodeo. The lines are in reference to First Nations leader Elijah Harper, who also passed away last year. While not nearly as well-known as President Mandela, Elijah Harper was a Canadian hero, instrumental in increasing the impact of aboriginal voices at the political table. The eagle feather held by Elijah Harper in the Manitoba legislature, the leopard skin that covered Nelson Mandela's coffin, and the songs of the people are all powerful reminders of indigenous leadership.

Finally, we also saw some changes to the JAAR team in 2013. Susan Snider and Sarah Levine are our new liaisons to the AAR, replacing the extraordinary Stephanie Gray. Patrick McGinty, our liaison to Oxford University Press, takes with us our best wishes as he moves into a new position with another publisher. He is replaced by the superb team of Patricia Thomas and Sara McNamara. Our new production editor at OUP is the amazing Sarah Cooper, who is responsible for both our print and online versions. Our thanks to everyone at OUP and AAR who make possible the JAAR.