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Recorder: Louis Bird
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Louis Bird: It makes the God so mean, you know that's what it says. You're more like afraid. That's was something that I asked about. Why did they make it so sound terrible?

George Fulford: Why do you think they made it sound that way?

LB: I don't know. To scare us, I think.

GF: I think so too.

LB: Reading in Cree from the Red Book. [Translation] And those who are condemned will equally be punished as much as they have deserved. Beside not able to see God, anyhow they deserve in different level to suffer. And it's a measurement in which they deserve from their sins. And be equally the same, as much as sinful they were, they will equally be measured to suffer the consequence. So when we know about the forbidden truth and if we know this, then what more will be convincing in the mind that we could possess to prevent to have a sinful desires and which we should try to avoid [so as] not to commit sin. And this is how the Bible is advising us. And this is the mystery in everything that we do, please remember whatever the last thing you may do that you may not be sinful.

This is more like a preaching to someone. And then they begin to describe the picture after that.

GF: So what does it say about the picture?

LB: About page 75, that's where they describe the picture of Plate 17. So it says here [Louis Bird is reading line by line in Cree and translating into English]:

A definition of the picture. The picture shows us barely how awful the hell pain must be. On the top picture we saw seven deadly sins representing the seven ravines that lead to hell. And all these seven ravines that represent the seven greatest sins that lead into hell, and these are the seven root sins. And they are: pride, greed, fornication, jealousy, gluttony, anger, and laziness. In this picture it shows us that we should always remember this is the truth how sin can lead us into suffering in hell. And the top picture on the ravine we see the animals that represent the sinful things. For example, there is a rooster. The rooster represents pride. A bullfrog means greed. A male goat represents fornication. The turtle is laziness [because the turtle walks very slowly - poor thing - why did they have to put him there?]. And the fire never stops destroying the spirit of those who end up in hell. Nevertheless each individual deserves as his own punishment the way he has lived. Some are more severely punished, and for those who have committed more sins than the other.

On the bottom side of the picture. And in the centre we saw the picture of those who were dragged into the centre to kneel down and worship the devil, who is there forever because during their lifetime they have never allowed themselves to be humble in front of other people or in front of God. At the bottom, Side "E" we say the greediness. In that picture we saw the greed. And it shows us those who led greedy lives. And they are weary gunny sacks around their necks to remind them how foolish they have been in this world to love the material things so much instead of the richness in heaven.

This time we see the picture at the bottom which is fornication. We saw the figures who have committed fornication in their lives. And they have been beaten by the devil and they are being bound by those beasts. It doesn't really mean that such beasts exist in hell. And so in this picture, it just barely shows us how terrible it can be, to make us think how bad it is to lead such a life. Sexual

sins that are forbidden. And in there it shows us how the devil can make us suffer, for those who are condemned in hell.

Another side of the picture it shows a picture about jealousy. And in there we see the picture of the people being surrounded by the poisonous large snakes that are wound around their body and suffocating them. It shows us how greediness can be so bad. And the bottom also shows us the picture of those who love to eat too much. We see those who led such kind of a life. And also those who have drunk so much that they are suffering from hunger and thirst. And then they are fed vinegar, which is very bitter, by the beasts around them. They are severely punished by starvation and thirst and they are made to drink the bile fed by these terrible beasts.

And at the bottom we see anger. We see the terrible acts of those people that are so severely punished by pulling the hairs from the heads of each other.

And the other picture shows sloth. We saw the turtle as if they were pierced through the tongue with fire and being stung by terrible poisonous bugs. And they are piercing into the insides with flame.

Another picture shows us that those who have broken all Ten Commandments and those who have disobeyed all seven holy laws. We see the people being stepped on by the seven-headed beast that is punishing them and breathing fire into their being, which shows us how terribly they are being punished. On the left side we see some people at the end some human beings who are half horses. And they are being stepped on by those beings' heels. And those were the people who were the leaders of the wrong teachings in the wrong kind of church. And those leaders who have created the wrong laws. And those who have constantly fought Christianity by using the wrong materials. And those who have created bad books and other unholy writing.

In the centre we see hell. We see a large clock which is always pointing to the same place, which means "here is eternity" and reminds those who are condemned that time will remain forever and ever. And those who fall into this category, who have been condemned in this hell fire, salvation will never come.

And that's what they teach us in school. Makes you really scared and think that you really should never do anything. And we - the little kids - you know we listened to this. It really makes us wary. And the little thing that might come in our way - we think that. Then you run away.

GF: So if you went home and started playing around with cousins or kids who hadn't been to residential school and learned all of that and they did things which seemed to be according to these teachings, very wrong - what would you do?

LB: I would just try to get away. And we were supposed to try and stay away from them and also report it to your parents. And say: "I don't want to play with them because they play like this." And of course, our parents were like that too. So they used to say, we don't wrestle with girls when we were about 10 years old. We used to tumble and fight because we didn't know anything. As we get to be 10 or 12 years old, then our parents began to say, "No, no - you do not wrestle with girls anymore!" And that was very strict. So we read this, and that's what it says. Especially where it talks about sixth Commandment of God and also nine. Nine. But it's in here.

GF: You said a word in there - *inetamowikaasowin*. You said it was a holy law.

LB: *Ayaamihemanitokaasowin*

GF: OK. I thought there was another one, but maybe that's what I heard.

Ayaamihemanitokaasowin. So that *-kaaso* normally means -

LB: Act, act.

GF: But some words that have *-kaaso* mean pretend. *Ayaamihemanitokaasowin* - no, it doesn't apply that way. *Ayaamihemanitokaasowin* is an act of holy thing. So you turn it the other way around. OK. But *ayaamihekaasowin* is a different thing. That means you are pretending to pray, like a Pharisee who says, "Thank you God that I am not like this

guy." That's *ayaamihekaasowin* because you're not really that holy. That's what it's talking about. So that's *ayaamihekaasowin*. *Ayaamihemanitokaasowin* - it's an act of holy thing when you pray. That's *ayaamihemanitokaasowin*.

Who did the translation for this [the Red Book]?

LB: I think most of the James Bay elders did this. But the other one - the Bible - was done by Winisk, with the five elders. But this one was done right across James Bay and all that stuff. So this is the same kind of language which has been used.

GF: It doesn't sound like English translated into Cree? It sounds like the real thing?

LB: It's just like in the Native language. But the thing is, every word that you hear there, it has been from the mind of an elder. You don't hear those words in everyday language. You don't hear them. Only here. See there is Old Testament stories too. It tells you all that to look at this thing. [Gasp] used to mystify me. People can sort of [behave to] each other like that? And all these things. And then we used to look at the picture. We used to ask my mother, you know, to read a definition of the preacher. It's in here [Plate 42 and associated text on pp 178-9]. The large picture in the top says [reads passage in Cree]:

In the small picture on the left we saw the old man Toby who is blind and also very poor. Even though he was once very rich and he had many things. And true to his generous act he has given away all that he had. And therefore his wife has to work to support him, along with the youngest of his sons. One day he was given a small lamb which was found close by, because his son had hurt this lamb. And right away he said to his family: "Be careful. Perhaps this lamb may have been stolen from somebody else. And so we will have to give it back to the rightful owner because it's against God's Commandments for us to eat or even to touch something that has been stolen" (Toby 2:21).

GF: Who is Toby?

LB: Toby is in the Old Testament. And then there is another small picture on the right. No. This is going to deal with the large one [reading in Cree]:

In the big picture in the centre we see the death of Akab - Israel's king. He wanted to own the vineyard that was next door to his vineyard, which belongs to a man called Napat. However, Napat did not agree to part with the vineyard which belonged to his father. By the persuasion of his wife Jezebel, a woman who is truly sinful, Akab arranged to murder Napat. And then he took over the vineyard to be his own. At the time, a prophet Eli went to see Akab, and he said: "Thus say the Lord - where the dogs have licked the blood of Napat and there also the dogs will lick your blood after that. And there was a war between Akab. He decided to go to the front line to watch the battle. And after he had disguised himself, one arrow struck his chest and there he died. The blood that has poured from his wound - a dog came to lick his blood, exactly the way the prophet had predicted.

And the small picture on the other side, Akan, an Israelite who was condemned by the prophet Joshua to die a terrible death because he disobeyed God's Commandment. He took upon himself to take the spoils of Jericho. He took one beautiful red garment and also two hundred golden coins worth 50 gold pieces. And for disobeying God's commandment he was killed by stoning. And all his belongings were burned. That was in the Old Testament.

GF: It's very ironic when they told the story of Akab, because it's about someone who disobeyed God's law by stealing the land of his neighbour and that's precisely what happened to the Aboriginal lands when the Whiteman came.

LB: [Laughing] I should read that book to them!

GF: It's very ironic, that story, isn't it? With the picture. That they made a big deal of that. It's exactly what was going on.

LB: Yeah, that's right. So I used to read these things. I used to love listening to my mother read those things. We don't know what it looks like. It's just as the picture shows here. Just think about us. In our life, we haven't seen a horse. We haven't seen the chariot. All we have as a little toboggan and a dog (maybe). And then, the way these people dress. Look at this guy [pointing to the picture of Akab falling out of a chariot in battle]. These terrible action and all these things. And the vultures waiting to eat. All this picture was terrifying in our mind. And it's all this that shows us, because you sin, you disobeyed God. That's very powerful for us. Me - it took me 25 years before I was committed a sin (just because I was drunk). But to do it without alcohol or anything like that - I just wouldn't do anything. That's how powerful this teaching was. And it was also tells us here: "On the other side you will see what the greediness and material possessions..." It's all here, and it tells you you shouldn't do that. And for us, we didn't have anything anyway. We didn't have much to worry about. We just have a tipi and one blanket. That's all I had. And still they still applied this to us. And especially - unfortunate to say - the priest who was there just before Treaty - Fr. Ouimet or Martell - I'm not so sure. Ouimet I think. And he used to preach using these kind of preaching. Says possessing material things is not necessary. What does he think we have? We don't have a thing [laughter].

GF: And the Treaty was going to take the little bit that you had.

LB: Exactly. And he says: "Do not disagree with the commissioner - not even commissioner (he didn't use the word 'commissioner'). He says: "Do not, do not," what does he say? "Do not fight or disagree with the King's servants who are going to come to you this summer, because the King represent God on earth." You know, just like we read about David - King David is representing God. That kind of mentality was in us, in our mind. And when the commissioners came, nobody can say anything. Not even one question. Because we've been told not to ask questions. That's what my grandmother used to say. She says: "What do you think," she says. "How could you ask anything, even question what those people do, because all winter you've been preached, you know, just to submit." Anyway, I really didn't know anything about that. I just remember my

grandmother saying that. I was not anything interested yet. I was just listen to her saying it. And then my mother repeated the word for some reason.,

GF: Which word was that?

LB: That is to say, "Do not think of possessions on earth."

GF: She would say that just like reciting it?

LB: Yeah, yeah. So we were told never to wish anything. That is why I don't care much about having anything.

GF: Why did you think your grandmother spoke against it whereas your mother was just following the words of what she'd been taught?

LB: I really don't know what makes the difference. I think my mother, my grandmother was the most converted person. And one other thing that my grandmother is that she used to pretend that she's part White. And she wanted to listen to those - proud to be, being, you know her father was a half breed. So that's what's wrong with my grandmother. So she sort of look down on our own culture. But my mother just repeated the words because for our spirit. You know, so our souls will go to heaven. Yup.

Did I tell you about when I was born, that my grandmother insist that my mother had me out in the open? That's what she did. That's the custom, really. You know, in the summer - if the lady (or in the wintertime) - if she is going to have the baby. One week ahead they usually prepare the small tipi away from main home so the lady can go have baby there. But have always a helper - another lady. And make a nice fire and a little bed there and where she can have a baby. So she have somebody help her.

But this time my mother was alone and my grandmother didn't even go out to help. And I was born. And even, she even stated that, you know: "I wish the thing wouldn't born [laughter]." That was me! Condemn me. And you know, they say that in our culture, if you do that to the person you curse the person and he became bad. That's

our customary belief. If you curse someone, even the kid, sometimes when you do that it actually happen and the person is condemned. I told that to my wife one time. She says: "Louis, you are a terrible person - you are bad." And I said: "Thelma, yes, I believe you," I said. "It happens when I was born, by my grandmother [laughter]." "Yes, I am terrible," I said. "There is no hope," I said. "No hope in heaven [laughter]." I just joking around with Thelma. But she didn't like that. Sometimes I have fun with her.

So that's the book That's enough for now. I feel like a little boy again by reading that. It feels like it just happened yesterday, or just a while ago. The way they used to teach us. I never resent it. I don't resent. I just say, "That's alright, that's what happened in my time." The only thing that I'm questioning is why is it the Great God which is Almighty have to be so terribly described. That's all that I'm asking. And I mean in a contradiction in there. And it says, "God so loved the world and he sent his own son to be crucified." It's a very contradictory thing. But, OK, OK. I just have to live by it.

GF: It does seem strange that you would sacrifice your own child...

LB: But I was thinking about that. I was thinking about that many times recently. I say, "Why did that has to happen?" So you think about before that. You know, just when - when did it begin? It begin there a long time before that. People tend to sacrifice something. They even sacrifice,- you know, it has been traced by the archaeologists, seeing the things that has been done, the human body being killed in those strange places. So it's all human activity. It's all same idea. So when the, - sometimes I think this way: "Supposing I'm God," you know, "and here are the stupid creations who don't think of people themselves. Their own way, their own thing. And how do you speak, if they don't see you? You don't dare show yourself to them. But you want to speak to them. What they have developed is that they have developed a habit of sacrificing, sacrificing. And then finally the great God decided: "Well, I will speak their language." So he decided to inspire Abraham and said, "OK - kill these birds and sacrifice them. Kill the lamb - it's clean - and cut it in pieces and burn it for me." Whatever it is, you know, it's there somewhere in the Bible.

So that is the beginning for the Jewish people. So they sacrifice animals in place of their sins. That was the idea. So the lamb is the sacrifice for the sin to be forgiven. And that's what God looks at. He says, "OK, that's what they do - that's what I told them." And now, in order to have a strong effect, I'm going give my son. Let them kill him and sacrifice him so I can forgive them, because they cannot do it themselves." That's what their definition is.

GF: How is it different from *Wemishoosh*?

LB: [Laughter] It's almost the same. Yes, it is. Everything that we read in the Bible and we say, "Oh - it sounds like that in our legend." But our elders [say], "Don't you say that, that's all devil's stuff [laughter]." Don't compare it, they says. Don't compare it to the Old Testament and our legends. Because ours is just an evil stuff. But actually it is not. It was not. It was the only thing that was there to teach.

GF: Louis, what do you make of this picture [unnumbered coloured plate appearing before p. 1 of the Red Book]?

LB: Well, the most important thing is love - a heart. You know when somebody says, "I love you from the bottom of my heart." You know, that's what people say. So the burning feeling is what you see. It's the burning feeling of Jesus, of love. That's what it says. Jesus the holy loving heart. *Jesus ka manitowitehen*. It says "Be merciful to us." So I never that's what it means.

GF: The holy loving heart.

LB: Yeah. Burning. Burning that is continuing constantly. The fire is symbolic something. Terrible way and also a good way. Everything is opposite from everything. The idea of the warm and the idea of the dead being burned. So it's always something. Anyway.

GF: It's curious because there's a Christian cult, if you could call it that, of this sacred heart. It was very popular in the middle 1800s. It was a saint - Ste. Theresa - who was connected with this.

LB: Something like that.

GF: Sacré Coeur - that's what they call it in French. Sacré Coeur - the sacred heart. You see lots of schools called Sacré Coeur - Sacred Heart School. That's a fairly recent thing. And it was very popular around 1870-1920. Very, very popular. That's when I see that heart thing I'm wondering if it was connected with this book.

LB: That is right, Yeah. There is - it's telling Ste. Theresa. What do they call it? I can't remember how we used to say that word. How did the words? It's in the Prayer Book somewhere - that's exactly how it goes. It says "A sacred heart - how Jesus" and then Theresa. It's connected there somewhere, but I can't remember exactly how. Ste Theresa's sacred heart or something like that.

GF: It was a holy order that got established about the 1850s. It was very popular and Louis Riel's sister became a nun in that order. And he was closely connected with his sister. There was a whole thing going on there with his interpretation of the Bible and his destiny as a leader of the Métis people.

LB: I didn't know that part.

GF: Yeah, I read that somewhere.

LB: I mean I used to hear Louis Riel, but I all I know that he was condemned to be hanged. I didn't know that he was as...

GF: He thought he was the, the incarnation of King David. That's why when you told me that story about King David I thought, "That's amazing because Louis Riel was using

that story in a very different way around 1876." But maybe it was connected to that story that he heard. You know, that would say, "I'm the new king of the new Jerusalem."

LB: Could be.

GF: That was Manitoba.

LB: Well, it has been repeated. That sort of idea, by the Christianity and by the other denominations.

GF: Well he was very Christian. Deeply Christian. Like I said, his sister a nun. But those symbols get reinterpreted in very interesting ways. Because think about this, Louis. Why the sacred heart may have been so popular at that time. When the missionaries were very active among the Ojibwe and Cree people. *Midewiwin*. *Midewiwin*. That root, I'm sure is the same as *mitehon* and *otehi*. It has to do with the heart.

LB: I don't see it yet. I mean I have not think that way.

GF: I don't know. When I saw that picture of Jesus. When I saw the burning heart, the sacred heart. I don't know...

LB: Maybe there is some connection there....

GF: Well, is it somehow building on the association, whether it's meant to or not, that *midewiwin* - *otehi*.

LB: It could be.

GF: I don't know. I'm just thinking out loud.

LB: I have not thought of it that way.

GF: I don't know. It's one of those ideas that has two very different sides to it. Now the crown of thorns is on his heart here. It's causing it to bleed.

LB: That was the crown of thorns. That was put on his head. But instead of his head they put it on his heart.

GF: So to me it's a bit about guilt, almost. That you take something that's physical and you move it inside yourself. All of these horrible, scary stories. You put that inside yourself and you transfer it from fear to guilt. Personally feel that there's something wrong with you. That's what I think these thorns are doing on there. It's like the little boys, scared to do anything in case they sinned.

LB: Yeah, that's what they used to say with us. They said: "When you sin," he says, "you are reenacted the crucifying of Jesus." This is what they used to say. Every time you commit a mortal sin, they says, you are now crucifying Jesus again over. And that's what it means. But he still love you.

GF: There's something in this Catholic Christian message about morality and guilt - internalizing the teaching.

LB: It's a powerful one. I have not hear the other Christian denominations to be so complicating and so contradicting itself [as] the Catholic Church. It's a most powerful thing. The Anglican are soft - they are not that hard. And the other ones too. I asked my wife sometimes. I say, "What do you find, do you find Catholic Church teaching more mean or more harder to follow than [Anglican]?" And she says, "Yes, yes I find it hard."

I say, "Which part do you find hard?"

She says, "The confession is the one - I don't quite get that," she says. But the first time. But after repeatedly she begin to understand the idea. But she didn't believe that the priest has the power to forgive. She didn't believe it. She says only God, only God can do that.

I said, "Yes, we know that. The Catholic Church know that. It's not the priest that forgive you for your sins. You just tell him, unload your feeling. It's God that supposedly forgive you because you admit your wrongdoing instead of keeping it there." But that's part of the reason the Catholic did, they say, uses that. And even in the story of the Bible, Jesus used to say to the sick people, he says "Your sins are forgiven - get well," you know. And the Pharisees say, " You're a man - the son of Joseph, the Armenian - you're not God."