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the mountains carried the voice of the Almighty. Signs and portents were spread against the canopy of the stars for his rapt eye. The play of lightning in the core of a storm answered his cry for guidance on his way. The desert's harshness tintured the evangelist's theology. No denomination or established dogma bound him; his ordination had come direct from God, staying his hand in a moment of blood lust — for so he vaunted his conversion — and sending him on a mission of redemption. Terrible the Mosaic law and the exactions of Jehovah in Uncle Alf's interpretation, and terrible his exposition of them. He could survey a quarter section of hell in a way to bring the most hardened backslider crawling to a temporary seat on the mourners' bench.

A weird, unworldly figure. Taller than most tall men; gaunt as a hound; weathered features all sunken into swales and hummocks about his eyes of a seer; uncut hair and sweep of snowy beard mingling about his ears; thin wrists and shanks sprouting like cypress roots from the vents of his hand-me-down garments. A veritable blasted pine of a man.

There was something in the evangelist's eyes when Hilma rode close enough to see his saddle