

David Scott

Ibn Abbad woke early

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Ibn Abbad woke early, put on  
his patched garment, turned to God  
and said, *Peace be to us, and to all, this day.*

Rabbi Schmelke of Nikolsburg,  
when a rich and distinguished man  
tried to make him look ridiculous,  
read the forty-first psalm, and  
translated verse eleven, *By this  
I know that you delight in me:  
my enemy will suffer no ill because of me.*

Father Louis in his American hermitage  
wrote to Abdul Aziz, *Let us  
have great love for truth, and open our hearts  
to the spirit of God our Lord and Father,  
Compassionate and Merciful.*

All three went to Paradise,  
Ibn Abbad, Rabbi Schmelke of Nickolsburg,  
and Father Louis, and sat to eat  
at the same table. They drank the water of life  
and ate the meat of friendship. Whenever  
their cups ran dry or their plates were empty  
a little Nazarene came by and filled them up.  
*Who are you?* they said.  
*I am Jesus, son of Mary. Can I sit awhile?*  
*Be our guest,* they said.

As they sat, the ground beneath them shook,  
their faces paled and their eyes were filled  
with knowledge, and with grief. *Today,*  
*said Jesus, they will hate more and  
love more, than on any other day since  
the world began. Hold hands,*

*and ask our God to speak to us  
in Spirit. And there they sat  
in love and prayer, all day, all day,  
Ibn abbad, Rabbi Schmelke of Nikolsburg,  
Father Louis, and Jesus, Mary's son.*

and their silence was more profound than words  
and their communion was most eloquent  
and they willed the world to peace

After a long time they opened their eyes,  
and there were only three at the table.  
Jesus, Mary's son, had gone,

had gone to join some other hands in love  
sit by some other beds of pain  
pray with some other desperate men  
break for some other hearts the loaf  
share with some other faiths the way

and that goes on today  
unceasing in his care to see beyond the robes  
of different length, and hue, and cloth,  
the common beating heart, and to mark again  
as on the Beth'lem night, the angels' call:  
*Peace on earth, goodwill to all, to all*

David Scott, *Beyond the Drift: New & Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe Books, 2015)  
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**David Scott** (1947–2022) was renowned as a poet, priest and religious writer who first came to public attention in 1978 when he won the Sunday Times/BBC national poetry competition. *A Quiet Gathering* (1984), his first book of poems, won him the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize in 1986. His second collection, *Playing for England* (1989) was a Poetry Book Society Recommendation. The poems from the two collections were republished with new work in *Selected Poems* (1998), and followed by *Piecing Together* in 2005. His retrospective, *Beyond the Drift: New & Selected Poems* (2014), drew on his four previous titles, with the addition of a whole collection of new poems.