

Valley Road, Louisville
(for Paul, Helen, and Anne Pearson)

THANKS BE to God
that sometimes we can
walk in Eden. Quiet
in the morning, I catch
the shadow and the sun,
so neither hurt.
I know there's a world
elsewhere, but am allowed this one.
Whatever the six-fold lips
of the lily say, they say it kindly.
Trees there are in plenty
arching like Blake's tall angels
over me, each a blessing, none
bearing the troublesome apple.

Ibn Abbad Woke Early

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 Nikolsburg,
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 in 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 Bethlehem night, the angel's call:
Peace on earth, goodwill to all, to all.