

A Hymn

by A.Appleyard

One of the few Earth humans who had been on the alien homeworld and returned still knowing who he was, brought back with him this that he had found there:

Here mid the alien homeworld's fear
to hold our faith now give us strength
so far from church and homelands dear,
O Lord Who made all space's length.
A man had hundred sheep, one strayed,
he sought it far: lose none, we teach:
but all of us by alien raid
are here, but yet Thy arm can reach.

We sing of Thy nativity,
when men brought lambs to th'one Most High;
what grass or sheep can e'er we see
here on the Estanddâran dry?,
although we flocks on greener hills
depict in memory of Thy word
as labour we on alien skills;
but yet Thy grace is not deferred.

We built this church, as such as may;
but when will Ekhkuzgarikhk's name
where we beyond the light years pray,
like Winchester⁰ have holy fame?
God grant the aliens spare this place,
whate'er decree they for our fate,
brought exiled far through endless space;
advise them in what they dictate.

We talk of frankincense¹ and myrrh
which wise men brought to Thee from east,
and endless sand did not deter;
but chance that we'll see them is least,
beyond a waste far wider sent
here working hard on th' aliens' rigs;
O that Thy house knew better scent
than teargas-smelling *khlîvan*² twigs!

"Give God and Caesar each his dues"
Thou taughtest: give us will that to do.
When aliens order, we can't choose:
but grant we keep to Thy paths true
and tell the aliens in their speech
of Yêsûs Nazarethib's grace:

God grant that some of them will reach
 at th'End to greet thee face to face.
 Look we for where from boat you'd preach,
 for where you'd Transfiguration seek,
 upon this world's one small sea's beach
 or Karsum-Inagh's spiky peak?
 Or will, enclosed in alien gear,
 we fly from here th'returning road,
 and see ourselves those places dear,
 where once in truth you healed and strode?
 Beneath the Ighduvzdârigh steep,
 a UFO base all too nigh,
 give us the strength Thy faith to keep,
 to Thee we exiled far now cry,
 as yearly we Good Friday show
 of *khîvan* twigs a crown of thorn,
 as died you freeing those Below;
 but crown of gold on Sunday morn,
 to save from Satan's endless night
 all people by Thy holy blood
 as man who knows and camps on height
 when down the *kaghep*³ roars the flood,
 when comes a rain, as come it must,
 although a cent'ry dry we stand:
 grant we at th'Ending found are just:
 "build on the Rock, and not on sand!".
 O Lord who holds all things in hand,
 who tracks the speeding UFO,
 and knows each insect in the sand,
 all things above, and all below,
 in exile as we try to know
 Jerusalem and Galilee,
 on us and them Thy peace bestow,
 so that Thy word we all can see.

⁰ [a town in England: there is a famous old cathedral there]

¹ [used e.g. in church incense]

² [a species of alien desert bush]

³ [alienese for 'dry desert gully']

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