

Walking the Path with Jesus and Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931): Lent and Early Easter
SESSION ONE: Mon Eve. Feb. 26 (6:30-8 p.m.) repeated Tues. Morn. Feb. 27 (9:30-11 a.m.)

I came here to live in the light of beauty and love which are reflections of God. --Gibran



Gibran Readings, Session One

[Pictured: Gibran's Self-Portrait]

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1. Reading: Overview of the 3 Gibran Sessions
February 26-27, March 19-20, & April 16-17

This Session. We will read and discuss Gibran's achievement, early Life, religion (including Christianity and the Baha'i faith), and politics. We will focus primarily on his most famous work (*The Prophet*, 1923) and his earliest work (*The Madman*, 1918). We will also discuss the voices that appear in Gibran's *Jesus, Son of Man* (1928) and read a few selections.

2nd Session (March 19-20). We will consider the middle period of Gibran's life followed by a brief look at the short aphorisms (clever, wise sayings) in *Sand and Foam* (1926). That work serves as a link between *The Prophet*, published 3 years earlier, and *Jesus, Son of Man*, published 2 years later. The majority of the session will focus first on the life and work of 13th C. Persian, Sufi poet Rumi, a central influence on Gibran; we will then focus on additional stories from *Jesus, Son of Man*.

3rd Session (April 16-17). We will explore the last years of Gibran's life, his burial, and his legacy and will conclude our discussion of *Jesus, Son of Man*. We will consider Gibran's patriotic writing and selections from his other works, including *Broken Wings* (translated from Arabic). We will also enjoy and learn from Gibran's exquisite art work.

Gibran, Complete Texts. Project Gutenberg Australia has Gibran's major works online. The documents re easy to read, searchable, and are in the public domain. Here are the 2 major works:

Son of Man = <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebookso3/0301451h.html>

The Prophet = <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebookso2/0200061h.html>

2. Reading: Gibran's Achievement, Religion, Politics, and Biography (1st 20 Years)

A. Achievement. Gibran (1883-1931), who immigrated to America as a young man from Lebanon, is chiefly known in the English-speaking world for *The Prophet* (1932). This small volume has sold more than 100 million copies, is in its 163rd printing, and has never been out-of-print. In 2015, international producers including Salma Hayek (also Lebanese of descent) developed an animated screen adaptation of *The Prophet*. Although most of Gibran's early writings were in Arabic, almost all his work published after 1918 were in English.

In the Arab world, Gibran's continues to be a major influence. He is considered the father of the early 20th C. Arabic literary Renaissance. Gibran is a deeply revered in his native country as a literary and political hero. While Gibran fully appreciated the U.S., he never lost his love or allegiance for his native Lebanon and never became a U.S. citizen. He is buried in Lebanon as he desired.

When Gibran from Lebanon to the U.S. 1995, he believed he was called to be an artist and produced over 400 artistic works. We will discuss Gibran's art in Session 3 although I'll use relevant Gibran artistic works throughout our readings. However, he also began writing in the early 1920's, and it is his writing that has endured. In addition to *The Prophet*, Gibran's principal works in English are *The Madman* (1918), *The Forerunner* (1920), *Sand and Foam* (1926), *Jesus, the Son of Man* (1928), and *Earth Gods* (1931). As a

critic has declared, "Gibran has become the greatest representative of Middle Eastern culture in the West. He is an essayist, draftsman, novelist, painter, poet, and universal bard of human emotions."

B. Religion. A devout Maronite Catholic, Gibran is from the historical town of Bsharri in northern Mount Lebanon then a semi-autonomous part of the Ottoman Empire. His mother Kamila, daughter of a Maronite priest, was 30 when Gibran was born; Kahlil. His father, her 3rd husband, was a tax collector, who fell out of favor with the Ottoman Empire. As a result, the family was impoverished. Gibran received no formal schooling early on in Lebanon. However, priests, who visited regularly, introduced him to the Bible and taught him the Arabic and Syrian languages. Although Christianity is a pervasive presence in his writings, it merges with mysticism from Islam, Hinduism, Sufism and the Baha'i faith. [Note: A brief description of the Baha'i faith follows; we'll take a look at Sufism in Session 2.]



[Pictured: [Gibran's drawing of Baha'i prophet Abdu'l-Bahá.] Gibran met and conversed with the Baha'i leader and prophet `Abdu'l-Bahá who visited the U.S. (1911-12). In fact, Gibran soon embraced most of the Baha'i teachings: (1) the unity of God and religions, (2) the oneness of humanity, (3) the equality of women and men, (4) economic justice, and (5) peace. Abdu'l-Bahá also insisted that all his meetings be open to all races. Gibran was entranced with `Abdu'l-Bahá's faith and held its teachings close to his heart while he was writing *Jesus, The Son of Man*, the Gibran work that will be part of this and our other 2 Gibran sessions. The one teaching Gibran admired, but did not accept was the necessity of peace.

Gibran: You are my brother and I love you. I love you when you prostrate yourself in your mosque, and kneel in your church and pray in your synagogue. You and I are sons of one faith - the Spirit.

C. Gibran's Politics, A Lebanese patriot, Gibran argued that "young nations like his own" must be freed from Ottoman control. During WW 1, when the Ottoman empire was starving the people of Lebanon by cutting off their access to supply lines, Gibran wrote a poem—"Pity the Nation"—lamenting what he considered to be a genocide of his people—a genocide largely ignored by the Western world. ["Pity the Nation" was posthumously published in *The Garden of the Prophet*.]

Gibran encouraged people in the Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire to rise up against their oppressors and to seek liberation and independence. He also called for the adoption of Arabic as a national language of Syria, arguing that it made sense from a geographic point of view. Although he may have lacked the pragmatism of a politician, Gibran clearly had a political agenda for some of his work.

When the Ottomans were finally driven out of Syria, Gibran's exhilaration was manifested in a sketch called "Free Syria" which appeared on the front page of the American Arabic newspaper in a special "victory" edition. In a draft of a play found among his papers, Gibran expressed great hope for national independence and progress. This draft, according to a current Gibran scholar, "defines Gibran's belief in Syrian nationalism with great clarity, distinguishing it from both Lebanese and Arab nationalism, and showing us that nationalism lived in his mind, even at this late stage, side by side with internationalism."

D. Gibran's 1st 30 years (1883-1903). (1) Birth. Gibran was born in 1893 in what is now northern Lebanon, but was then Ottoman Syria. Gibran's poetry is filled with visions of his birthplace Bisharri with its magnificent setting above the Holy Valley on the slopes of Mount Lebanon near the Forest of the Cedars of God (Horsh Arz el-Rab). The setting is a significantly important cultural landscape that encompasses one of the most important early Christian monastic settlements in the world and has been a place of meditation and refuge since the earliest years of Christianity.

(2) His Parents. His parents were 30-year-old Kamila Jubran (the daughter of a Maronite priest) and Kamila's 3rd husband, an abusive alcoholic and gambler. Gibran had an older half-brother, Butrus, and two younger sisters, Sultana and Marianna.

(3) Gibran's No-Good Father. Gibran's father had a checkered employment history. He became bored with running a walnut grove and, besieged by gambling debts, took an unpopular position as a tax collector for a local Ottoman-appointed administrator. Around 1891, extensive complaints by angry subjects led to the administrator's removal and an investigation of the administrator's staff.

The result was confiscation of the family's property and his father's imprisonment. Although Gibran's father was released in 1894, Kamila decided to follow her brother and emigrate to the U.S. since Peter, her son from her 1st marriage was living there. She also was determined to leave Gibran's father, and in 1895 (minus her husband) left for New York, taking Khalil, his younger sisters Marianna and Sultana, and his elder half-brother Butrus.

(4) South Boston. The Gibrans settled in Boston's South End which then was the 2nd-largest Syrian-Lebanese-American community in the U.S. His mother began working as a seamstress, peddling her lace and linens from door to door. 12-year-old Gibran started school soon after arriving, in a special class for immigrants to learn English. We know him as Kahlil Gibran because the school officials made a mistake when he first registered at the school; they reversed his Arabic name—Jubran Kahlil Jubran. Believing his call was to be an artist, he also enrolled in an art school at a nearby settlement house.



(5) Fred Holland Day (Pictured). In 1896 his teachers introduced him to the avant-garde Boston artist, photographer, and publisher Fred Holland Day, a pioneering art photographer, who was partial to exotic and oriental themes. He encouraged and supported Gibran in his creative endeavors. Day became Gibran's friend and patron, using the boy as a model (a few photographs survive of Gibran in Arab costume), introducing him to 19th C. Romantic literature, and helping him with his drawing. For a time Gibran was a pet of Day's fashionable bohemian set.

Day read to him from English literature and, as Gibran's English improved, lent him books and directed him to the new Boston Public Library. Day and his friends convinced Gibran that he had a special artistic calling. Gibran's drawing progressed; one of his drawings was published as a book cover.



(6) Josephine Peabody (Pictured). Gibran was drawn to older women. At an exhibit of Day's photographs in 1898, Gibran met Cambridge poet Josephine Prescott Peabody, who was 9 years older than he. He sketched a portrait of her from memory and gave it to Day to pass on to her. Peabody was charmed by the sketch, and she and Gibran exchanged a few letters.

(7) Back to Lebanon and the Maronite Education. Shortly afterward, Gibran's mother sent him back to Lebanon to continue his education. His mother may have been concerned about the influence of his new U.S. friends, including Peabody. Gibran later said that he lost his virginity to an older married woman around this time. But his mother was chiefly determined that her son know and absorb his Arabic heritage.

She arranged for him to study at a Maronite-run preparatory school "*al-Hikma*" (Trans. *The Wisdom*) in Beirut. While his education by the local priest was not the best, Gibran was successful at the school. In addition, a local Arabic doctor tutored him. Gibran read widely in Arabic and French literature, started a school poetry magazine, and won a poetry contest. And he absorbed much of the Lebanese folk culture that infuses his writings. He visited Bisharri during vacations, but his relationship with his father was strained.

(8) Europe. Gibran left Beirut in 1901 and wandered around Europe. In April 1902 he received news that his sister Sultana had died of tuberculosis; he hurried back to Boston, arriving 2 weeks after her death. Butrus, who also had tuberculosis left for Cuba that winter in search of a more healthful climate.

(9) Reconnecting with Peabody. Gibran decided to reach out to Peabody and, in November 1902, wrote to her. She invited him to a party at her house 2 weeks later. An intense platonic relationship resulted, though Gibran seems to have wanted it to progress to a sexual one. He visited her regularly; they went to musical and artistic events together. She gave him the nickname "The Prophet" that he used as the title of his most famous book. In May, Peabody helped to arrange to have Gibran's work included in an art exhibition at Wellesley College.

(10) Death of his Mother and Brother; Peabody moves on. His mother Kamila died in June 1902, and Gibran became responsible for Marianna and the debt-ridden family shop. In 1903, Butrus also died. Gibran ran the business long enough to pay off the debts, then allowed Marianna to support the 2 of them on her earnings as a seamstress. In October 1903 Gibran wrote something in a letter to Peabody that angered her, and their relationship cooled. She married someone else 3 years later.

(11) Gibran's Other Years (1904-1931). Information about Gibran's life will be provided in each of our 3 Gibran session. We'll focus on his years in Paris and his move to New York in our 2nd Session. If you'd like to read a complete account of his life now, I'd recommend this link to the Poetry Foundation: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/kahlil-gibran>.

3. Reading. Selections from Gibran, *The Madman* (1918)

Background and Comment. *The Madman* is the first long work Gibran published in English. He composed it in Arabic and then, with the able assistance of his editor Mary Haskell translated it into English. The narrative design of the *Madman's* anticipates what will become *The Prophet* (1923): (1) the use of a wanderer and prophet and (2) the delivery of insights through parables: stories that teach spiritual or moral lessons much like the parables of Jesus in the Gospels.

The work is both a brilliant, fragmented, and haunting achievement. Gibran's lifelong correspondent and literary advisor May Ziyada understood clearly the sense of despair and disillusionment pervading the work when she wrote Gibran that the "cruelty" and "dark caverns" in the work frightened her.

I've included only a few, short pieces. Almost all of the 34 entries are readable, but puzzling. Each caused me to stop, rethink, and read again. *The Madman*, like its successor *The Forerunner* (1920) and *The Wanderer* published after Gibran's death, is more like a series of meditations and short aphorisms: some are funny, some are charming, some are abstract, and some are moving.

Gibran begins the work with these words: "You ask me how I became a madman." This opening has an immediate intimacy that draw us directly into relationship with the speaker. We are curious about why we asked this speaker such a question. We then listen as the madman explains that he became mad when a thief stole his masks. Once unmasked, he saw his own and other's self-delusion and self-deception.

Gibran's madman explains that the "normal" or "sane" person wears masks in order to function in society since society and redefines corrodes the self for its collective purpose. To act without a mask and, thus, to think and speak and behave without this veil of illusion is to be mad. To lose these masks is to be free: true to self, to nature, and to reality. The problem is that we are then considered "mad."

Such freedom has great price: loneliness, isolation, pain, and rejection. Without a mask, the world is unfriendly, even hostile and dangerous. Once that mask is gone, we are free from self-deception, yet caught in an asocial, empty space. His next 34 short parables, vignettes, and tales are designed to convince us (since we asked the question) the emptiness we may exist in if we become "mask-less."
The Prophet written 5 years later (1923), has echoes of *Madman*.

THE OPENING SECTION

You ask me how I became a madman. It happened thus: One day, long before many gods were born, I woke from a deep sleep and found all my masks were stolen,—the seven masks I have fashioned and worn in seven lives,—I ran maskless through the crowded streets shouting, "Thieves, thieves, the cursed thieves." Men and women laughed at me and some ran to their houses in fear of me.

And when I reached the market place, a youth standing on a house-top cried, "He is a madman." I looked up to behold him; the sun kissed my own naked face for the first time. For the first time the sun kissed my own naked face and my soul was inflamed with love for the sun, and I wanted my masks no more. And as if in a trance I cried, "Blessed, blessed are the thieves who stole my masks." Thus I became a madman. And I have found both freedom of loneliness and the safety from being understood. Those who

understand us enslave something in us. But let me not be too proud of my safety--even a thief in a jail is safe from another thief.

GOD

In the ancient days, when the first quiver of speech came to my lips, I ascended the holy mountain and spoke unto God, saying, "Master, I am thy slave. Thy hidden will is my law and I shall obey thee for ever more." But God made no answer, and like a mighty tempest passed away.

And after a thousand years I ascended the holy mountain and again spoke unto God, saying, "Creator, I am thy creation. Out of clay hast thou fashioned me and to thee I owe mine all." And God made no answer, but like a thousand swift wings passed away.

And after a thousand years I climbed the holy mountain and spoke unto God again, saying, "Father, I am thy son. In pity and love thou hast given me birth, and through love and worship I shall inherit thy kingdom." And God made no answer, and like the mist that veils the distant hills he passed away.

And after a thousand years I climbed the sacred mountain and again spoke unto God, saying, "My God, my aim and my fulfilment; I am thy yesterday and thou are my tomorrow. I am thy root in the earth and thou art my flower in the sky, and together we grow before the face of the sun."

Then God leaned over me, and in my ears whispered words of sweetness, and even as the sea that enfoldeth a brook that runneth down to her, he enfolded me. And when I descended to the valleys and the plains God was there also.

THE SCARECROW

Once I said to a scarecrow, "You must be tired of standing in this lonely field." And he said, "The joy of scaring is a deep and lasting one, and I never tire of it."

Said I, after a minute of thought, "It is true; for I too have known that joy." Said he, "Only those who are stuffed with straw can know it."

Then I left him, not knowing whether he had complimented or belittled me.

A year passed, during which the scarecrow turned philosopher. And when I passed by him again I saw two crows building a nest under his hat.

THE THREE ANTS

Three ants met on the nose of a man who was asleep in the sun. And after they had saluted one another, each according to the custom of his tribe, they stood there conversing.

The first ant said, "These hills and plains are the most barren I have known. I have searched all day for a grain of some sort, and there is none to be found."

Said the second ant, "I too have found nothing, though I have visited every nook and glade. This is, I believe, what my people call the soft, moving land where nothing grows."

Then the third ant raised his head and said, "My friends, we are standing now on the nose of the Supreme Ant, the mighty and infinite Ant, whose body is so great that we cannot see it, whose shadow is so vast that we cannot trace it, whose voice is so loud that we cannot hear it; and He is omnipresent."

When the third ant spoke thus the other ants looked at each other and laughed. At that moment the man moved and in his sleep raised his hand and scratched his nose, and the three ants were crushed.

THE BLESSED CITY

In my youth I was told that in a certain city every one lived according to the Scriptures. And I said, "I will seek that city and the blessedness thereof." And it was far. And I made great provision for my journey.

And after forty days I beheld the city and on the forty-first day I entered into it.

And lo! the whole company of the inhabitants had each but a single eye and but one hand. And I was astonished and said to myself, "Shall they of this so holy city have but one eye and one hand?"

Then I saw that they too were astonished, for they were marveling greatly at my two hands and my two eyes. And as they were speaking together I inquired of them saying, "Is this indeed the Blessed City, where each man lives according to the Scriptures?" And they said, "Yes, this is that city."

"And what," said I, "hath befallen you, and where are your right eyes and your right hands?" And all the people were moved. And they said, "Come thou and see."

And they took me to the temple in the midst of the city, and in the temple I saw a heap of hands and eyes. All withered. Then said I, "Alas! What conqueror hath committed this cruelty upon you?" And there went a murmur amongst them. And one of their elders stood forth and said, "This doing is of ourselves. God hath made us conquerors over the evil that was in us."

And he led me to a high altar, and all the people followed. And he showed me above the altar an inscription graven, and I read:

"If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that the whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

Then I understood. And I turned about to all the people and cried, "Hath no man or woman among you two eyes or two hands?" And they answered me saying, "No, not one. There is none whole save such as are yet too young to read the Scripture and to understand its commandment."

And when we had come out of the temple, I straightway left that Blessed City; for I was not too young, and I could read the scripture.

PAM'S NOTE: You'll know the calling of the blind man at the end of this reading!

In the shadow of the temple my friend and I saw a blind man sitting alone. And my friend said, "Behold the wisest man of our land."

Then I left my friend and approached the blind man and greeted him. And we conversed. After a while I said, "Forgive my question; but since when has thou been blind?"

"From my birth," he answered. Said I, "And what path of wisdom followest thou?"

Said he, "I am an astronomer." Then he placed his hand upon his breast saying, "I watch all these suns and moons and stars."

4. Reading. Selections from *The Prophet* (1923), Kahlil Gibran



Pictured: Gibran's Illustration "Hand of God" for "The Prophet Cover"

A. Background, Influence, and Summary. Gibran wrote earlier prose poems and parables that hint at the subject matter of *The Prophet*. As early as 1912, Gibran's idea for a work in which a mysterious prophet counsels his people before returning to his island home appears in Haskell's journal. Gibran cites the Baha'i leader Abdu'l-Bahá as a major influence



on the book; in fact, some speculate that Gibran modeled the character of the Prophet Almustafa on the Baha'i leader.

The book grew in popularity during the 1930s. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson told Gibran: "You are the first Eastern storm to sweep this country, and what a number of flowers it has brought!" The book experienced a resurgence of interest during the 1960's and continues to sell well today. Gibran's writing has touched millions of readers, including such notable figures as Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi, rock 'n roll legend Elvis Presley, who often gave *The Prophet* as gifts, and the Beatles sensitive, songwriter-singer John Lennon. As in most of his books, Gibran created *The Prophet* illustrations.

Summary. The first chapter of *The Prophet* is "The Coming of the Ship." The teacher and wise man Almustafa has been living on the island of Orphalese for 12 years. All that time he has been sharing his insights and teaching the Orphalese, but he has also been waiting for a ship to take him home to his birthplace. Suddenly from the top of a hill, he, sees the ship coming into the harbor.

The people of Orphalese gather and beg him not to leave. However, the seer Almitra, knows that he must depart, so she asks him instead to share his truths with her and the villagers. Using poetic language in poems, aphorisms, and short essays, the prophet presents his truths in response to 26 requests: 3 from Almitra and a single request from each of 23 villagers. The list of those making the request and the subject they wish to know more about is provided below.

Each request begins with "Master, speak to us of ____." Significantly, the first request comes from the seer Almitra who asks Almustafa about Love and then Marriage. She is followed by a mother asking about Children. Almitra also makes the final request, asking about Death. After the prophet answers them, he bids them farewell.

OPENING: THE COMING OF THE SHIP

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| 1. Almira, LOVE | 2. Almitra, MARRIAGE | 3. Woman with a baby, CHILDREN |
| 4. Rich man, GIVING | 5. Innkeeper, EATING- DRINKING | 6. Ploughman, WORK |
| 7. Woman, JOY-SORROW | 8. Man, HOUSES | 9. Weaver, CLOTHES |
| 10. Merchant, BUYING-SELLING | 11. Judge, CRIME-PUNISHMENT | 12. Lawyer, LAWS |
| 13. Orator, FREEDOM | 14. Priestess, REASON-PASSION | 15. Woman, PAIN |
| 16. Man, SELF-KNOWLEDGE | 17. Teacher, TEACHING | 18. Youth, FRIENDSHIP |
| 19. Scholar, TALKING | 20. Astronomer, TIME | 21. City Elder, GOOD-EVIL |
| 22. Priestess, PRAYER | 23. Hermit, PLEASURE | 24. Poet, BEAUTY |
| 25. Old Priest, RELIGION | 26. Almitra, DEATH | |
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CLOSING: THE FAREWELL

Selections.

#o. OPENING: THE COMING OF THE SHIP. ALMUSTAFA, the chosen and the beloved, who was a dawn unto his own day, had waited twelve years...for his ship that was to return and bear him back to the isle of his birth... on the seventh day of ... the month of reaping, he climbed the hill without the city walls and looked seaward; and he beheld his ship coming with the mist. Then the gates of his heart were flung open, and his joy flew far over the sea. And he closed his eyes and prayed in the silences of his soul. t I cannot tarry longer. The sea that calls all things unto her calls me, and I must embark....

And as he walked he saw from afar men and women leaving their fields and their vineyards and hastening towards the city gates. And he heard their voices calling his name, and shouting from field to field telling one another of the coming of his ship.

....And when he entered into the city all the people came to meet him, and they were crying out to him as with one voice. And the elders of the city stood forth and said: Go not yet away from us. A noontide have you been in our twilight, and your youth has given us dreams to dream. No stranger are you among us, nor a guest, but our son and our dearly beloved....

And the priests and the priestesses said unto him: Let not the waves of the sea separate us now, and the years you have spent in our midst become a memory. You have walked among us a spirit, and your shadow has been a light upon our faces....

And there came out of the sanctuary a woman whose name was Almitra. And she was a seer. And he looked upon her with exceeding tenderness, for it was she who had first sought and believed in him when he had been but a day in their city. And she hailed him, saying:

“Prophet of God, in quest of the uttermost, long have you searched the distances for your ship. And now your ship has come, and you must needs go. Deep is your longing for the land of your memories and the dwelling-place of your greater desires; and our love would not bind you nor our needs hold you.

Yet this we ask ere you leave us, that you speak to us and give us of your truth. And we will give it unto our children, and they unto their children, and it shall not perish. In your aloneness you have watched with our days, and in your wakefulness you have listened to the weeping and the laughter of our sleep. Now therefore disclose us to ourselves, and tell us all that has been shown you of that which is between birth and death.”
And he answered: People of Orphalese, of what can I speak save of that which is even now moving within your souls?

#1. LOVE. THEN said Almitra, Speak to us of Love. And he raised his head and looked upon the people, and there fell a stillness upon them. With a great voice he said: When love beckons to you, follow him, though his ways are hard and steep. And when his wings enfold you, yield to him....When he speaks to you, believe in him though his voice may shatter your dreams as the north wind lays waste the garden.

For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth, so is he for your pruning.... Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself. Love possesses not nor would it be possessed, for love is sufficient unto love. When you love you should not say, “God is in my heart,” but rather, “I am in the heart of God.”

#6. WORK. ...To be idle is to become a stranger unto the seasons....When you work, you are a flute through whose heart the whispering of the hours turns to music.... all work is empty save when there is love. When you work with love, you bind yourself to yourself and to one another and to God....Work is love made visible.

#19. TALKING. AND then a scholar said, Speak of Talking. And he answered, saying: You talk when you cease to be at peace with your thoughts. When you can no longer dwell in the solitude of your heart, you live in your lips....In much of your talking, thinking is half murdered. For thought is a bird of space. It may unfold its wings in a cage of words, but it cannot fly.

There are those among you who seek the talkative through fear of being alone. The silence of aloneness reveals to your eyes the naked self and you would escape.... When you meet your friend on the roadside or in the market-place, let the spirit in you move your lips and direct your tongue. Let the voice within your voice speak to the ear of his ear. His soul will keep the truth of your heart as the taste of the wine is remembered, the color is forgotten and the vessel is no more.

#22. PRAYER. THEN a priestess said, “Speak to us of Prayer.” And he answered, saying: You pray in your distress and in your need; would that you might pray also in the fullness of your joy and in your days of abundance. For what is prayer but the expansion of yourself into the living ether?

And if it is for your comfort to pour your darkness into space, it is also for your delight to pour forth the dawning of your heart....Therefore let your visit to that temple invisible be only for ecstasy and sweet communion. For if you should enter the temple for no other purpose than asking, you shall not receive. And if you should enter into it to humble yourself, you shall not be lifted. Even if you enter into it to beg for the good of others, you shall not be heard. It is enough that you enter the temple invisible.

I cannot teach you how to pray in words. God listens not to your words save when He Himself utters them through your lips. And I cannot teach you the prayer of the seas and the forests and the mountains. But you who are born of the mountains and the forests and the seas can find their prayer in your heart. If you listen in the stillness of the night you shall hear them saying in silence: “Our God, who art our winged self, it is thy will in us that willeth....Thou art our need; in giving us more of thyself thou givest us all.”

#25. RELIGION. AND an old priest said, “Speak to us of Religion.” And he said: Have I spoken this day of anything else? Is not religion all deeds and all reflection....All your hours are wings that beat through space from self to self. He who wears his morality only as his best garment were better naked. The wind and the sun will tear no holes in his skin. He who defines his conduct by ethics imprisons his song-bird in a cage.

The freest song comes not through bars and wires. He to whom worshipping is a window to open but also to shut, has not yet visited the house of his soul whose windows are from dawn to dawn....And if you would know God, be not therefore a solver of riddles. Rather look about you and you shall see Him playing with your children. And look into space; you shall see Him walking in the cloud, outstretching His arms in the lightning and descending in rain. You shall see Him smiling in flowers, then rising and waving His hands in trees.

#26. DEATH. THEN Almitra spoke, saying, “We would ask now of Death.” And he said: You would know the secret of death. But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart of life? The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind unto the day cannot unveil the mystery of light.

If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life. For life and death are one even as the river and the sea are one. In the depth of your hopes and desires lies your silent knowledge of the beyond. Like seeds dreaming beneath the snow, your heart dreams of spring. Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden the gate to eternity....Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing. And when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall begin to climb. And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance.

CLOSING: THE FAREWELL. And now it was evening. And Almitra the seer said, “Blessed be this day and this place and your spirit that has spoken.” And he answered, “Was it I who spoke? Was I not also a listener?”

Then he descended the steps of the Temple and all the people followed him. And he reached his ship and stood upon the deck. And facing the people again, he raised his voice and said: “People of Orphalese, the wind bids me leave you. I go with the wind, people of Orphalese, but not down into emptiness.

...Know, therefore, that from the greater silence I shall return...my spirit has entered your houses, And your heart-beats were in my heart, and your breath was upon my face, and I knew you all...It was the boundless in you: He whose chant in all your singing is a soundless throbbing. It is in the vast Man that you are vast. And in beholding him, I beheld you and loved you.

Vague and nebulous is the beginning of all things, but not their end...I...would have you remember me as a beginning....But you do not see, nor do you hear, and it is well. The veil that clouds your eyes shall be lifted by the hands that wove it, and the clay that fills your ears shall be pierced by those fingers that kneaded it. And you shall see.

And you shall hear. You shall not deplore having known blindness, nor regret having been deaf. For in that day you shall know the hidden purposes in all things, and you shall bless darkness as you would bless light. After saying these things he looked about him, and he saw the pilot of his ship standing by the helm and gazing now at the full sails.

Fare you well, people of Orphalese. This day has ended...Forget not that I shall come back to you. A little while, and my longing shall gather dust and foam for another body. A little while, a moment of rest upon the wind, and another woman shall bear me. Farewell to you and the youth I have spent with you.

It was but yesterday we met in a dream. You have sung to me in my aloneness, and I of your longings have built a tower in the sky. But now our sleep has fled and our dream is over, and it is no longer dawn. The noontide is upon us and our half waking has turned to fuller day, and we must part. If in the twilight of memory we should meet once more, we shall speak again together and you shall sing to me a deeper song. And if our hands should meet in another dream we shall build another tower in the sky.

So saying he made a signal to the seamen, and straightaway they weighed anchor and cast the ship loose ...And a cry came from the people as from a single heart, and it rose into the dusk and was carried out over the sea like a great trumpeting.

Only Almitra was silent, gazing after the ship until it had vanished into the mist. And when all the people were dispersed she still stood alone upon the sea-wall, remembering in her heart his saying: "A little while, a moment of rest upon the wind, and another woman shall bear me."

5. Reading. Introduction to *Jesus: Son of Man: His Words and His Deeds as Told and Recorded by Those Who Knew Him (1928)*

Background and Comment. In 1928 Gibran published his longest book and his crowning achievement; *Jesus, the Son of Man: His Words and His Deeds as Told and Recorded by Those Who Knew Him*. The book was written in 1926-1927, and Gibran's long-time editor and friend, Mary Haskell, edited the manuscript.

In the book, 78 people who knew Jesus—some real, some imaginary; some sympathetic, others hostile—tell of him from their own points of view. Anna is puzzled by the worship of the Magi. An orator is impressed by Jesus' rhetoric. A merchant sees the parable of the talents as the essence of commerce and cannot understand why Jesus' followers insist that he is a god. Pontius Pilate discusses the political factors leading to his decision to execute Jesus. Barabbas is tormented by the knowledge that he is alive only because Jesus died in his place. It was the most lavishly produced of Gibran's books, with some of the illustrations in color. For once, the reviews were strongly and uniformly favorable.

For Gibran, re-telling the story of Jesus had been the ambition of a lifetime. He had known the Biblical stories of Jesus in his Lebanese childhood, His approach is to allow the reader to see Jesus through the eyes of a large and disparate group of people. Some of these characters will be familiar (Peter, Mary his mother, Luke, Nathaniel, Pontius Pilate, Thomas and Mary Magdalene); However, most of the speakers are completely created by Gibran. The fact that they all have an opinion about Jesus connects them although no two opinions are the same. Even Gibran's own voice enters as the final voice (#79): "A MAN FROM LEBANON, *Nineteen Centuries Afterward*."

THE SEVENTY-NINE VOICES AND OPINIONS

I suggest you give yourself time to read the names of the "characters" in the work. Gibran also list the topic of their story next to their names. Skip this if you don't have time now, but the list is intriguing.

1. JAMES THE SON OF ZEBEDEE, *On the Kingdoms of the World*
2. ANNA THE MOTHER OF MARY, *On the Birth of Jesus*
3. ASSAPH CALLED THE ORATOR OF TYRE, *On the Speech of Jesus*
4. MARY MAGDALEN, *On Meeting Jesus for the First Time*
5. PHILEMON A GREEK APOTHECARY, *On Jesus the Master Physician*
6. SIMON WHO WAS CALLED PETER, *When He and His Brother were Called*
7. CAIAPHAS, *The High Priest*
8. JOANNA THE WIFE OF HEROD'S STEWARD, *On Children*

9. RAFCA, *The Bride of Cana*
10. **A PERSIAN PHILOSOPHER IN DAMASCUS, *Of Ancient Gods and New***
11. DAVID ONE OF HIS FOLLOWERS, *Jesus the Practical*
12. LUKE, *On Hypocrites*
13. MATTHEW, *The Sermon on the Mount*
14. JOHN THE SON OF ZEBEDEE, *On the Various Appellations of Jesus*
15. A YOUNG PRIEST OF CAPERNAUM, *Of Jesus the Magician*
16. **A RICH LEVI IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF NAZARETH, *Jesus the Good Carpenter***
17. A SHEPHERD IN SOUTH LEBANON, *A Parable*
18. JOHN THE BAPTIST, *He Speaks in Prison to His Disciples*
19. JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA, *On the Primal Jims of Jesus*
20. NATHANIEL, *Jesus was not Meek*
21. OF ANTIOCH, SABA *On Saul of Tarsus*
22. SALOME TO A WOMAN FRIEND, *A Desire Unfulfilled*
23. RACHAEL A WOMAN DISCIPLE, *On Jesus the Vision and the Man*
24. CLEOPAS OF BETHROUNE, *On the Law and the Prophets*
25. NAAMAN OF THE GADARENES, *On the Death of Stephen*
26. THOMAS, *On the Forefathers of His Doubts*
27. ELMADAM THE LOGICIAN, *Jesus the Outcast*
28. ONE OF THE MARYS, *On His Sadness and His Smile*
29. RUMANOUS A GREEK POET, *Jesus the Poet*
30. LEVI A DISCIPLE, *On Those who would Confound Jesus*
31. A WIDOW IN GALILEE, *Jesus the Cruel*
32. JUDAS THE COUSIN OF JESUS, *On the Death of John the Baptist*
33. THE MAN FROM THE DESERT, *On the Money-changers*
34. PETER, *On the Morrow of His Followers*
35. MELACHI OF BABYLON AN ASTRONOMER, *The Miracles of Jesus*
36. A PHILOSOPHER, *On Wonder and Beauty*
37. URIAH AN OLD MAN OF NAZARETH, *He was a Stranger in our Midst*
38. NICODEMUS THE POET, *On Fools and Jugglers*
39. JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA, *The Two Streams in Jesus' Heart*
40. GEORGUS OF BEIRUT, *On Strangers*
41. MARY MAGDALEN, *His Mouth was like the Heart of a Pomegranate*
42. JOTHAM OF NAZARETH TO A ROMAN, *On Living and Being*
43. EPHRAIM OF JERICHO, *The Other Wedding-Feast*
44. BARCA A MERCHANT OF TYRE, *On Buying and Selling*
45. PHUMIAH THE HIGH PRIESTESS OF SIDON, *An Invocation*
46. BENJAMIN THE SCRIBE, *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead*
47. ZACCHAEUS, *On the Fate of Jesus*
48. JONATHAN, *Among the Water-lilies*
49. HANNAH OF BETHSAIDA, *She Speaks of her Father's Sister*
50. MANASSEH, *On the Speech and Gesture of Jesus*
51. JEPHTHA OF CAESAREA, *A Man Weary of Jesus*
52. JOHN THE BELOVED DISCIPLE, *On Jesus the Word*
53. MANNUS THE POMPEIIAN TO A GREEK, *On the Semitic Deity*
54. PONTIUS PILATUS, *Of Eastern Rites and Cults*
55. BARTHOLOMEW IN EPHESUS, *On Slaves and Outcasts*

56. MATTHEW, *On Jesus by a Prison Wall*
57. ANDREW, *On Prostitutes*
58. A RICH MAN, *On Possessions*
59. JOHN AT PATMOS, *Jesus the Gracious*
60. PETER, *On the Neighbor*
61. A COBBLER IN JERUSALEM, *A Neutral*
62. SUSANNAH OF NAZARETH, *Of the Youth and Manhood of Jesus*
63. JOSEPH SURNAMED JUSTUS, *Jesus the Wayfarer*
64. PHILIP, *And When He Died All Mankind Died*
65. BIRBARAH OF YAMMOUNI, *On Jesus the Impatient*
66. PILATE'S WIFE TO A ROMAN LADY, *Walking in the Groves*
67. A MAN OUTSIDE OF JERUSALEM, *Of Judas*
68. SARKIS AN OLD GREEK SHEPHERD CALLED THE MADMAN, *Jesus and Pan*
69. ANNAS THE HIGH PRIEST, *On Jesus the Rabble*
70. A WOMAN, ONE OF MARY'S NEIGHBOURS, *A Lamentation*
71. AHAZ THE PORTLY, *The Keeper of the Inn*
72. BARABBAS, *The Last Words of Jesus*
73. CLAUDIUS A ROMAN SENTINEL, *Jesus the Stoic*
74. JAMES THE BROTHER OF THE LORD, *The Last Supper*
75. SIMON THE CYRENE, *He who Carried the Cross*
76. CYBOREA, *The Mother of Judas*
77. THE WOMAN OF BYBLOS, *A Lamentation*
78. MARY MAGDALEN THIRTY YEARS LATER, *On the Resurrection of the Spirit*
79. A MAN FROM LEBANON, *Nineteen Centuries Afterward*

6. Reading. Session. 1, Selections from Early Narratives: *Jesus, Son of Man*

ANNA, THE MOTHER OF MARY: On the Birth of Jesus

Jesus the son of my daughter, was born here in Nazareth in the month of January. And the night that Jesus was born we were visited by men from the East. They were Persians who came to Esdraelon with the caravans of the Midianites on their way to Egypt. And because they did not find rooms at the inn they sought shelter in our house.

And I welcomed them and I said, "My daughter has given birth to a son this night. Surely you will forgive me if I do not serve you as it behooves a hostess." Then they thanked me for giving them shelter. And after they had supped they said to me: "We would see the new-born."

Now the Son of Mary was beautiful to behold, and she too was comely. And when the Persians beheld Mary and her babe, they took gold and silver from their bags, and myrrh and frankincense, and laid them all at the feet of the child. Then they fell down and prayed in a strange tongue which we did not understand. And when I led them to the bedchamber prepared for them they walked as if they were in awe at what they had seen.

When morning was come they left us and followed the road to Egypt. But at parting they spoke to me and said, "The child is not but a day old, yet we have seen the light of our God in His eyes and the smile of our God upon His mouth. "We bid you protect Him that He may protect you all." And so saying, they mounted their camels and we saw them no more.

Now Mary seemed not so much joyous in her first-born, as full of wonder and surprise. She would look upon her babe, and then turn her face to the window and gaze far away into the sky as if she saw visions. And there were valleys between her heart and mine. And the child grew in body and in spirit,

and He was different from other children. He was aloof and hard to govern, and I could not lay my hand upon Him. But He was beloved by everyone in Nazareth, and in my heart I knew why.

Oftentimes He would take away our food to give to the passer-by. And He would give other children the sweetmeat I had given Him, before He had tasted it with His own mouth. He would climb the trees of my orchard to get the fruits, but never to eat them Himself. And He would race with other boys, and sometimes, because He was swifter of foot, He would delay so that they might pass the stake ere He should reach it. And sometimes when I led Him to His bed He would say, "Tell my mother and the others that only my body will sleep. My mind will be with them till their mind come to my morning." And many other wondrous words He said when He was a boy, but I am too old to remember.

Now they tell me I shall see Him no more. But how shall I believe what they say? I still hear His laughter, and the sound of His running about my house. And whenever I kiss the cheek of my daughter His fragrance returns to my heart, and His body seems to fill my arms. But is it not passing strange that my daughter does not speak of her first-born to me? Sometimes it seems that my longing for Him is greater than hers. She stands as firm before the day as if she were a bronze image, while my heart melts and runs into streams.

Perhaps she knows what I do not know. Would that she might tell me also.

ASSAPH, CALLED THE ORATOR OF TYRE: On the Speech of Jesus

What shall I say of His speech? Perhaps something about His person lent power to His words and swayed those who heard Him. For He was comely, and the sheen of the day was upon His countenance. Men and women gazed at Him more than they listened to His argument. But at times He spoke with the power of a spirit, and that spirit had authority over those who heard Him.

In my youth I had heard the orators of Rome and Athens and Alexandria. The young Nazarene was unlike them all. They assembled their words with an art to enthrall the ear, but when you heard Him your heart would leave you and go wandering into regions not yet visited. He would tell a story or relate a parable, and the like of His stories and parables had never been heard in Syria. He seemed to spin them out of the seasons, even as time spins the years and the generations.

He would begin a story thus: "The ploughman went forth to the field to sow his seeds." Or, "Once there was a rich man who had many vineyards." Or, "A shepherd counted his sheep at eventide and found that one sheep was missing." And such words would carry His listeners into their simpler selves, and into the ancient of their days.

At heart we are all ploughmen, and we all love the vineyard. And in the pastures of our memory there is a shepherd and a flock and the lost sheep. And there is the plough-share and the winepress and the threshing-floor. He knew the source of our older self, and the persistent thread of which we are woven.

The Greek and the Roman orators spoke to their listeners of life as it seemed to the mind. The Nazarene spoke of a longing that lodged in the heart. They saw life with eyes only a little clearer than yours and mine. He saw life in the light of God.

I often think that He spoke to the crowd as a mountain would speak to the plain. And in His speech there was a power that was not commanded by the orators of Athens or of Rome.

A PERSIAN PHILOSOPHER IN DAMASCUS: Of Ancient Gods and New

I cannot tell the fate of this man, nor can I say what shall befall His disciples. A seed hidden in the heart of an apple is an orchard invisible. Yet should that seed fall upon a rock, it will come to naught.

But this I say: The ancient God of Israel is harsh and relentless. Israel should have another God; one who is gentle and forgiving, who would look down upon them with pity; one who would descend with the rays

of the sun and walk on the path of their limitations, rather than sit for ever in the judgment seat to weigh their faults and measure their wrong-doings. Israel should bring forth a God whose heart is not a jealous heart, and whose memory of their shortcomings is brief; one who would not avenge Himself upon them even to the third and the fourth generation.

Man here in Syria is like man in all lands. He would look into the mirror of his own understanding and therein find his deity. He would fashion the gods after his own likeness, and worship that which reflects his own image. In truth man prays to his deeper longing, that it may rise and fulfil the sum of his desires.

There is no depth beyond the soul of man, and the soul is the deep that calls unto itself; for there is no other voice to speak and there are no other ears to hear. Even we in Persia would see our faces in the disc of the sun and our bodies dancing in the fire that we kindle upon the altars.

Now the God of Jesus, whom He called Father, would not be a stranger unto the people of Jesus, and He would fulfil their desires.

The gods of Egypt have cast off their burden of stones and fled to the Nubian Desert, to be free among those who are still free from knowing. The gods of Greece and Rome are vanishing into their own sunset. They were too much like men to live in the ecstasy of men. The groves in which their magic was born have been cut down by the axes of the Athenians and the Alexandrians. And in this land also the high places are made low by the lawyers of Beirut and the young hermits of Antioch. Only the old women and the weary men seek the temples of their forefathers; only the exhausted at the end of the road seek its beginning.

But this man Jesus, this Nazarene, He has spoken of a God too vast to be unlike the soul of any man, too knowing to punish, too loving to remember the sins of His creatures. And this God of the Nazarene shall pass over the threshold of the children of the earth, and He shall sit at their hearth, and He shall be a blessing within their walls and a light upon their path.

But my God is the God of Zoroaster, the God who is the sun in the sky and fire upon the earth and light in the bosom of man. And I am content. I need no other God.

CAIAPHAS, The High Priest

In speaking of that man Jesus and of His death let us consider two salient facts: the Torah must needs be held in safety by us, and this kingdom must needs be protected by Rome. Now that man was defiant to us and to Rome. He poisoned the mind of the simple people, and He led them as if by magic against us and against Caesar. My own slaves, both men and women, after hearing him speak in the market-place, turned sullen and rebellious. Some of them left my house and escaped to the desert whence they came.

Forget not that the Torah is our foundation and our tower of strength. No man shall undermine us while we have this power to restrain his hand, and no man shall overthrow Jerusalem so long as its walls stand upon the ancient stone that David laid.

If the seed of Abraham is indeed to live and thrive this soil must remain undefiled. And that man Jesus was a defiler and a corrupter. We slew Him with a conscience both deliberate and clean. And we shall slay all those who would debase the laws of Moses or seek to befoul our sacred heritage. We and Pontius Pilatus knew the danger in that man, and that it was wise to bring Him to an end. I shall see that His followers come to the same end, and the echo of His words to the same silence.

If Judea is to live all men who oppose her must be brought down to the dust. And ere Judea shall die I will cover my grey head with ashes even as did Samuel the prophet, and I will tear off this garment of Aaron and clothe me in sackcloth until I go hence for ever.
