CHAPTER: 5

Khalil Jibran as Master Poet
Khalil Gibran as Master Poet:

After completing The Prophet Gibran had barely more than seven years to live. The inhabitation of unburdening himself had, however for a short while thrown his illness into the shadows, and he wrote to May Ziadhan that his ailment had "forsaken" him and he was in good spirits despite the grey streaks traced on his haid.¹

By 1924 he was becoming something of a celebrity in Greenwich Village, and his reputation continued to soar in the Arabic-speaking world as new editions of his works where produced and his English works translated. The poet expressed ambivalent feelings toward fame when he wrote in Sand and Foam, his next published work: "Fame in the shadow of passion standing in the light."²

Although there was a part of him that was "the most social human being in the world," he found the intensity of his social life "a real problem."³ This need for "aloneness" reemerged in his life and was to reveal itself in his next major work, Jesus, the Son of Man. He told May: "I am a very industrious man ....... But I am also a stranger among men, entirely on my own ....... despite possessing seventy thousand friends of both sexes."⁴

The dinners, some given in his honor, the lunches and parties, inevitably led to interesting new acquaintances, but also meant more visitors to entertain in his Hermitage. Demand for his presence at literacy gatherings increased too and therefore he found little time for his painting or writing. Although some came to meet the author of The Prophet, others came in search of wise counsel:⁵

And there is one side of it all that is really part of my work. A woman, or a man .. Will call me up and say, " Can I come round to the studio and talk with you?" And the voice shows something is the matter. And he or she comes and tells me story of unhappiness. Some strange thing in me makes
They use me as a confessor. Sometimes they ask just to come here— or sit— or to talk— because as soon as they get in this room they seem to find peace. It makes me feel so sad for them— and so hopelessly grateful, so grateful— because it means such trust they give.

Whether it was the need to "confess," or the desire to be comforted, or simply curiosity that brought the steady stream of visitors to the studio, all who met Gibran were struck by his presence. Mary had felt for a number of yours that the "Hermit poet" of The Prophet was a masterful and accurate description of Gibran himself— "the relation of the people of the City to him.... A description to the very heart of the way people are toward himself." A young poet, Robert Hillyer, vividly recalled his own meeting with Gibran:

Young and easily embarrassed, I had let fall an evasive and perhaps frivolous remark in response to a characterization of me as a young poet. It was trifling; I have forgotten it. But I have not forgotten how Gibran looked at me long and intently as if searching my real nature, and at last made some observation on the sacredness of poetry and the high calling of its votaries, which disposed of any possibilities of touching the subject lightly. "Ah" he concluded, "but you must not talk that way, you must not do the usual things that other men do for a poet is holy.: A lifetime passion was behind the quiet rebuke?

Another of his friends, Claude Bragdon, recorded for posterity the first encounter he had with Gibran at one of those cultural tea parties that Gibran attended more out of duty to his admirers that for any personal satisfaction:

Physically [Gibran] is compact, strong, swarthy; all his movements are powerful and graceful; he seems charged with the dark fire of a maleness mitigated by the sweetness of his smile, the gentleness of his glance. His face is sensitive; one would say that is was a face of suffering were it not even more a face of peace. Buttoned underneath his coat is an ever-burning
lantern; he does not mean that we should see it, but somehow we know that it is there. Only by some such preposterous metaphor am I able to suggest the sense of inner happiness, harmony, unity, which his presence projects ...... for though the most modest and unpretentious of men he has certain traits of the commander and the conqueror ... the captain of his soul and the master of his fate."

Konrad Bercovici, a Romanian-born writer who met Gibran, described self-possessed "oriental" living harmoniously above the street life of New York: Faultlessly attired, Khalil Gibran looks more like a cultured Frenchman than a Syrian. But at home, in his large studio on Tenth Street, discussing with me the Orient, he instinctively bends his knees under him as he sits down on the divan to sip the thick coffee, the preparation of which is his particular pride, When he makes his guests feel at home. Everything Occidental is forgotten on entering his room and facing him. Instantly all feeling of hurry is banished. The day seems to be longer; the hours seem to be slower; even the rumbling below in the street the noise coming through the heavily shuttered windows seems to be more distant than it actually is.9

Traces of Gibran's youthful inclination to shroud details of his backgrounds re-emerged as journalies, sycophants, and acquaintances put pressure on him to reveal something of himself. Many of his visitors fell prey to his self-created myth-Gibran, who had once said that those who understand us enslave us, was content to feed it. Despite a friendship over many years Claude Bragdon was still writing:" His was what is called in the East a 'fortunate birth,' for he was brought up in an atmosphere of love, beauty and abundance.'10 Witter Bynner, who had known Gibran for over ten years, was even greeter with an evasive response when he requested information from his friend.

It is very hard for me ... to tell you what my position is in the Arabic
world. The Eastern peoples like to say that I have founded a new school of literatures. If I had, I certainly was not conscious of doing so, Writers and critics like to repeat two words: The first is "a Gibranite" meaning a new or a different person; the mother is Ginbarnism" meaning freedom in all things...

There have been many fights about me in the East - and always between the old the young I think I still live because the young were not conquered .

The "legend of Gibran," undoubtedly tended by the man himself, was augmented by the mysterious almost monastic quality of life in his Hermitage. His studio - smelling of incense and furnished with sacred images, symbolic, paintings, and a church table on which candles always stood gave the impression that its occupier was more than a poet and painter. "He was a hermit. Lean, intense and dressed in black he was thought by some visitors to be like an anchorite," his life spent before an altar, "a long-chained censer in his hand, burning incense before his God," This, however, was by no means the only mask that Gibran wore in 1924 as he continued to entrance his many admirers.

By now a respected figure, Gibran moved in the highest echelons of American society, his friendship with the Roosevelt's deepening as he visited them annually at their summer house in Herkimer, New York. "I thing that the genius of the Roosevelt family is in its simple and wholesome family life. They are very clannish and strangely devoted to one another. And they know so much and they are increased in so many things."

He also met with some of the most popular writers and artists of the day including John Glasworthy, G.K. Chesterton, the Irish dramatist and associate of Yeats, Edwards Dunsany, and the dominant force in modern South American art the Mexican painter Jose Clemente Orozco.

Gibran struck up a close friendship with the revolutionary painter whose stunning murals reflected his concern over human rights violations
and aimed to awaken the masses to the horror and futility of war. The exuberant Mexican felt a deep affinity with his Arab friend, and the two artists found they had much in common. They were exactly in his "Hermitage." Orozco in his "Ashram"; both had been sponsored by American women - in Orozco's case Alma Reed, a journalist archaeologist, and prime mover in the Delphic Group; and both spent their lives championing the causes of their oppressed peoples, in Central America and the Middle East respectively.

Their relationship, however, was not without its tensions, particularly over the men's divergent views on art, and there existed "a well-controlled but active antagonism between the two artists." These differences, however, did not prevent them from enjoying each other's company at their frequent meetings. Gibran's ethereal art, with its deeply moving tempera of striving figures, and Orozco's "violent art of Mexico" were in stark contrast - and once Gibran asked Alma Reed, who lived with the Mexican, how she could endure "living in the Ashram when Orozco's scenes of horror and tragic death covered the walls."19

Gibran's growing circle of friends included a number of beautiful models, many of whom he painted nude. One such young woman was Mariita Lawson, an aspiring artist who has been trying to capture, something of Gibran in her photographs. Gibran viewed his relationship to Mariita, who was in her twenties as that of an older relative. Although he loved children the only time he expressed any desire to be a father was in a letter to May three years previously: "A man's life will stay like a desert empty except of sand - until God endows him with a daughter.... He who does not have a daughter should adopt one, because the secret and meaning of time are hidden in the hearts of young girls."20 His correspondence with Mariita suggests that he "adopted" her as a member of his family, signing his letters "always your loving uncle"21 and addressing her as "Princess."22
A princess can be disguised and very cleverly disguised, but her uncle always knows who she is and what and where she is. Uncles like mothers are capable of knowing much more that you thing they do ... We want you to rise and grow and be a wonderful person - because we believe that you can do it. And I am so glad your sweet mother agrees with me on some things ..... You must be very proud and happy in having such a mother. Here I am preaching again! I think it is in my blood!23

Although he told Mary Haskell that he was looking forward "to being alone in old age."

the sociable side to his personality was enthralled by the many different types of people he was meeting: "I love people .... entirely without discrimination or preference. I love them as one unit, I love them because they are of God's spirit ... Are the galaxies more awe-inspiring and beautiful than what moves within the heart of man?"25 Aside from his hectic social life in 1924, another factor prevented Gibran from pursuing his creative quest. Although his royalties had been steadily increasing since the war, the "roaring twenties" was a period of rampant inflation. By now aware of his worsening illness, and increasingly concerned about Marianna's long-term security, he decided to invest his money in real estate. In partnership with a friend, Faris, Malouf, he bought a large building in Boston, at 409-411 Marlborough Street.

In the heady days of intense speculation their outlay of $24,000 for prime real estate on one of the city's busiest corners seemed like a sound investment. Before the two entrepreneurs were able to see a profit margin, however, they needed to borrow between $10,000 and $15,000 to renovate the seven stories of the twin brownstones, The venture began to fail when they discovered that they were unable to raise the money Gibran swallowing his pride, wrote to Mary for help although she responded with personal cheques to cover the most outstanding demands, it was to no avail. By October he was forced to admit that his project had failed: "I have made a
mistake, a grave mistake in trying to move in a world so different from my own ... It is the error of small trying to do big things. It is the error of the greedy ... the stupid. I have been both and I am very sorry,"26 After he had paid back all his debts he was left with $3,000 which he put in a saving bank in Marianna's name.

The affair was a staggering blow to Gibran and Mikhail Naimy sensed that the disastrous episode had "scattered" his friend's thoughts, " shut the avenues' of his inspiration, and "quickened the march of the disease in his body"27 In the midst of this turbulence Gibran had written to Naimy from Boston: "God knows that never in my past life have I spent a month so full of difficulties, trails, misfortunes and problems ... Had it not been for my sister, I would leave everything and go back to my hermitage shaking the dust of the world off my feet."28 The unfortunate events, painful as they were, served to motivate him to put everything else behind him and begin his real work anew. He was reminded of his own words from The Prophet: "Yet you cannot lay remorse upon the innocent nor lift it from the heart of the guilty Unbidden shall it call in the night, that men may wake and gaze upon themselves."29

In the aftermath of this living "hell of worldly problems,"30 and obliged to "simplify his business affairs, he began to concentrate again on his writing and painting. A letter he wrote to Mary on a visit to the country illustrates that the impressions of the natural world soon reoriented him after the worldly calamities:

I have heart of men who, after leaving prison, find themselves so lost in the world that they go back and ask to be imprisoned again. I shall not go back .... I shall try to find my way above the ground.... In the morning about 6 O'clock I looked out of my window. The trees were budding the birds were singing - the grass wet - the whole earth was shining. And suddenly I was the trees and the flowers and the birds and grass - and there was no I at all."31
With Mary's marriage to Jacob Florence Minis imminent Gibran was in need of another source of secretarial support, and fortuitously he was approached at this time by a woman called Henrietta Boughton, nee Breckenridge, a forty-six-year-old writer who had been intrigued by the man from Lebanon after hearing Butler Davenport read from The Prophet at St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie in 1923.\textsuperscript{32} In March 1925, when she discovered that Gibran was living and working in Greenwich village, she requested an audience with him, and the autumn her ambition to acquaint herself with Gibran was realized when he asked her to become his secretary.

Over the next three years Henrietta herself and aspiring writer, wrote a book of verse entitled The Keys of Heaven under the pseudonym of Barbara Young. She was captivated by the personally and brilliance of Gibran and became one of this greatest champions, arranging a public reading of his poetry at the Brevoort hotel and organizing other events such as a reading at the prestigious Fifth Avenue Bookstores Association.\textsuperscript{33} Their relationship was one built on Henrietta's utter devotion to the poet and artist. She became a self-appointed devotee and her own hagiographic account of his life, This Man from Lebanon, which was published in 1945,\textsuperscript{34} reflected her feelings of awe toward him.

Over the remaining years of his life his correspondence with Mary became practically non-existent, as did her references to Gibran in her journal; both were now aware that their remarkably intense and creative relationship- which has reached its zenith in their collaboration over, the Prophet- had fulfilled its purpose. However, their dwindling letters did not reflect any loss of a deep kinship. In what were to be some of his last letters to Mary he wrote: "You are only in the world who could advise me about 'me' ... I always think of you one to whom life more than life can give; simply because you given so much -so much. "\textsuperscript{35}
His correspondence with May was somewhat diffident over a relationship that was now based on an open admission of love on both sides. She was evidently constrained by an oriental sense of propriety: "I even blame myself for writing to you, for in writing I find myself taking too much freedom." Gibran, however, continued to send her invitation cards and a variety of postcards bought in the museums he had visited, and to share unrestrained expressions of his longings for the East.

By 1925 the ever-growing success of The Prophet meant that Gibran found himself an international figure. The prestigious New Orient Society in New York asked him to become an officer and to contribute to its quarterly journal. The man from Lebanon was honored to find himself on the same board as Mahatma Gandhi, "one of the greatest men living," and other leading thinkers including Annie Besant, Ananda Coomaraswamy George Russell (AE), John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Alma Reed, Claude Bragton, and H.G. Wells. In his editorial for The New Orient the Indian editor Syud Hussain expressed the society's respect for its newest member: "There is no more sincere and authentic or more highly gifted representative of the East functioning today in the West than Khalil Gibran." For a writer who did not wish to be forgotten by the public in his own lifetime, pressure for a sequel to The Prophet intensified: "One must keep abreast. Else one is likely to be soon forgotten. We must remind the readers of ourselves from time to time," He told Mikhail Naimy. Nearly three years had passed, and as yet a new book had not appeared under his name - a long pause for a writer in America.

Gibran had originally intended The Prophet to be the first book of a trilogy to be followed by The Garden of the Prophet, dealing with humanity's relationship with nature, and The Death of the Prophet, concerned with humankind's relation to God. However, these ambitions were not to be
realized - although he did begin work on The Garden of the Prophet, which finally appeared in a posthumous publication of the same title, having been completed by Barbara Young. He also wrote two plays in English, Lazarus and his Beloved and The Behind, although neither was published in his lifetime.

In May after marriage Mary visited Gibran in New York. He showed her a collection of aphorisms he had written over the years which were soon to be published by Knopf as Sand and Foam. Gibran enjoyed overseeing the design of the book, reminding his editor to print it in the same manner as the manuscript, "That is in regard to the number of aphorisms on one page and the number of pages it should contain."42

This dedication to detail was in part a consequence of Gibran's belief that certain numbers, particularly three and seven, are imbued with sacred qualities.43 The significance of the number seven in all spiritual traditions was not lost on the poet, and several times in Sand and Foam he makes reference to this number: "Behold every closed door is a mystery sealed with seven seals"; "We shall never understand one another until we reduce the language to seven words," and "Seven centuries ago seven white doves from a deep valley flying to the snow-white summit of the mountain." He also wrote a piece entitled "Seven Times Have I despised my Soul," perhaps echoing Sufi teaching that the seeker has to pass through seven stages of preparation in the transmutation of consciousness before individuality is ready for its true function.

Although he described it as a stop-gap work, Sand and Foam contained a number of memorable sayings:

Trees are poems that the earth writes upon the sky. We fell them down and turn them into paper that we many record our emptiness.

Strange, the desire for certain pleasures is a part of my pain.
The significance of man is not in what he attains, but rather in what he longs to attain.  
A sense of human is a sense of proportion.  
The real in us is silent acquired is talkative.  
Genius is but robin's song at the beginning of a slow spring;  
Friendship is always a sweet responsibility, never an opportunity.  
You see but your shadow when you turn your back to the sun.  
You cannot laugh and be unkind at the same time.  
Some of the aphorisms were translated from Arabic and had already received published in that language. To Almustafa's sermon on love could be added, "Love which is not always springing is always dying." And a variation on the same theme, : Love that does not renew itself every day becomes a habit and in turn a slavery. The sermon on giving in The Prophet is almost surpassed by two aphorisms in Sand and Foam: Generosity is not giving me that which I need more than you do, but it is in giving that which you need more than I do.  
and  
Generosity is giving more than can and pride is talking less than you need  
Many of the themes in Sand and Foam are those explored by Gibran in The Prophet and some undoubtedly reflect the poet's own personal experience: "Be grateful that you do not have to live down the renown of a father." When you reach the heart of life you will find yourself not higher than the felon, and not lower than the prophet." What we long for and cannot attain is dearer than what we have already attained."  
Seemingly on cue, the critics of Boston- an city Gibran now described as a "city of dead silences" castigated his work. A review in the Boston Transcript dismissed Sand and Foam as "a mixture of pungent observations,
absurdities and meaningless mysticism." Gibran, as always paid little heed: "The creator gives no heed to the critic unless he becomes a barren inventor," He wrote to May Ziadah about his own perceptions of the mystery of language: "What a strange effect certain words have on us sometimes - and similar the sound of that word is to the peal of church-bells at sunset. It is the transmutation if that invisible inner self from mere utterance to silence, from mere action to worship." He also revealed to May some premonitions of death and how he felt that his work was as yet, unfulfilled:

Whenever I think of the Departure which the people call Death, I find pleasure in such thinking and great longing for such departure. But then I return to myself and remember that there is one word I must say before I depart. I become perplexed between my disability and my obligation and I give up hope, No, I have not said my word yet, and nothing but smoke has come out from this light .... If don't depart before I spell and pronounce my word, I will return to say the word which is now hanging like a cloud in the sky of my heart."72

Although Gibran's reference to reincarnation usually lacked conceptual depth, the emotional force of the poet's lifelong conviction bursts through in both his correspondence and in his works. Influenced by the Sufi notion of the unity of being, he believed that after successive lives the individual soul ultimately merges into the greater self, or absolute, where the limitations of space, time and materiality are overcome and when the yearning for the divine is fulfilled. In this state death becomes glad tidings-giving him every reason to develop a philosophy of hope against despair-in which humankind triumphs over history and becomes part of the great order of the divine, a vision Gibran aimed to express through his writings and encapsulate in his art.
However, as always with his writings he struggled with the tension of not having yet expressed all he yearned to say even the torturous knowledge that his broken-down body was ailing fast could not deflect him from his belief that there was always the next book to be written clear. "There are three miracles of our Brother Jesus not yet recorded in the Book: The first that He was a man like you and me; the second that He had a sense of humor; and third that He knew He was a conqueror though conquered."  

To write on the life Jesus had long been and ambition of Gibran. As far back as 1909 he had written to Mary from Paris that his work could "find No better resting place than the personality of Jesus" from a very young age he had been fascinated and enchanted by the charismatic figure of the Nazarene. A story is told of how, as a tiny boy, he had gone missing one Good Friday after being told the story of the Passion. His distressed parents were relieved to find Khalil sitting in the village graveyard, clutching a bouquet of flowers, apparently wanting in some childlike way, to share in the suffering of the Messiah.  

Throughout his life he had experienced the most stunning dreams of Jesus, as early as 1908 describing one such visionary dream to Mary:

O if could only describe Him to you: if I could tell you of the sad joy in His eyes, the bitter sweetness of His lips the beauty of His large hands the rough woolen garment, and the bare feet so delicately veiled with white dust. And it was so natural and clear.  

In 1923 he described his latest dream to her:

And He came - just the same face - with the wonderful dark eyes and the clear, outdoor skin, and the abundant chestnut hair, and the strong frame ... He came from the west - and the light was behind him and made his outline glow - for the sun was declining.  

As a young man he had read everything about Christ he could lay his
hands on, being particularly impressed with Ernest Renan's Life of Jesus, which influenced his perception of Jesus as "the greatest of poets... To call him God makes so light to him. Because as God's his wonderful saying would be small but as man's they are most perfect poetry."79

Over the years Mary Haskell's journal records the poet's enduring fascination with Christ:

His courage in not seeking to escape death ... must have been reached after great struggle within himself. He died that the Kingdom of Heaven might be preached, That man might attain that consciousness of beauty and goodness and reality within himself. Jesus was the most powerful personality in history. Christ's death as well as his life had a wonderful effect on his followers. The day will come when we shall think but just of the Flame - of the fullness of Life that burned in him. Socrates and his followers' relation was more mental, but Christ's followers felt him more than they felt any of his ideas. And look what he did to them. See John- what a poet he became. Paul was a splendid advertising agent and his work worked against as well as for the real Christ ... Christ changed the human mind ... and found a new path.80

They also reveal the deep affinity Gibran felt toward Jesus, a kinship that once provoked Mary after Gibran had visited her in Marlborough street, to exclaim. Christ had been sitting in that place as well as Khalil- the two friends."81 Again after a huge thunderstorm she recorded Gibran saying, "That went through me like Christ speaking to me,"82 and she noted his belief that Jesus would have been called a "Socialist" had he lived today88

Witter Bynner later remembered how others noticed Gibran's affinity with the man from Nazareth:

One night at dinner the maids failed to bring on one of the courses, and after a considerable wait and several bell ringings, Mrs. Ford rose and
went to the pantry. Three behind a screen stood two maids. When reprimanded, one of them explained, But, "But Mrs. Ford how can we go about our business when Mr. Gibran is talking? He sounds like Jesus." And he did Odd as it was in many respects, the core of it was Christ-like.\textsuperscript{84}

Mary's journal also reveals the distinction Gibran often made between true Christianity, as represented by the life and teaching of Jesus, and the diluted form of Christianity of the church.\textsuperscript{85}

Christianity has been very far from the teaching of Christ. In the second or third century, people were not vigorous enough to take strong food that Christ gave they are only the weak food in the Gospels, or what they thought they found there and in the teaching of the men that came after Christ. They could not face the gigantic self that Christ taught ... The greatest teaching of Christ was the Kingdom of Heaven, and that is within you.\textsuperscript{86}

At the end of World War I Gibran had joyously exclaimed: 'Out of the dark mist a new world is born. It is indeed a holy day. The most holy since the birth of Jesus'\textsuperscript{87} - an expression of his lifelong belief that Jesus, entrance onto the world stage was the most important event in human history, representing the decent of the spirit "from the centre of the circle of divine light." For the poet the entry of the infant Jesus into the firmament marked the moment when the spiritual might of Ba'\textsuperscript{al}, Jupiter, Apollo, Venus, Minerva and Pan - the ancient gods - was transmitted and transmuted into the human realm to the brokenhearted beggar by the wayside though the unifying presence of Christ.\textsuperscript{88}

Gibrans portrait captured in Jesus the Son of Man evolved in his many writings over the years.\textsuperscript{89} It is significant and moving that he decided to complete his testament while his own life was beginning to ebb away. The idea of the book had been nourished for over twenty years, drawing its power from Gibran's reading and contemplations, and his childhood memories, when the language of the Bible and the electrifying figure of the
Nazarene filled the consciousness of the Maronite boy from the mountain.

The semi-autobiographical heroes of his early Arabic period, Khalil the heretic and Yuhanna the madman, are insistent that Jesus' mission never consisted in establishing hierarchical institutions with structures and sanctions, but rather in awakening humanity to its own cosmic potentiality. Christ as revolutionary inspires Gibran's fearless heroes in their struggles against the violators of his spirit, particularly the power-possessing priest. In these early works and a later one entitled "The Crucified," Gibran was intent on portraying Christ's tremendous personal power.

The Nazarene was not weak! He was strong and is strong! But the people refuse to heed the true meaning of strength. He lived as a leader. He was crucified as a crusader: He died with a heroism that frightened his killers and tormentors. Jesus was not a bird with broken wings. He was a raging tempest who broke all crooked wings.

He also depicts the Nazarene in his prose-poem "Eventide of the Feast" as "The Son of Man" who is "a stranger wandering from East to West." And outsider who has "no place to rest his Head.

Gibran's passion was also expressed in many of his paintings and when he gave Mary The Crucified in 1920 she exclaimed: "It is so terrible in its pain that talking about it most appealing, the most rebuking wonderful, and dearest thing I ever had. It is the Heart unveiled." Gibran had said of his he had ever drawn.

He now turned to what was to be his most ambitions work in English. With an advance of $2,000 from Knopf, he settled down on November 12, 1926, to write Jesus the Son of Man. As he began his book he told Mikhail Naimy that he was "sick and tired" of those who portrayed Jesus as a sweet lady with a beard and weary of scholars arguing about "the historicity of his personality." For Gibran Jesus was the most "real
personality" in human history. "a man of might and will a man of charity and pity. He was far from being lowly and meek Lowliness in something I detest while meekness to me is but a phase of weakness."99

Any authors portrait like that of an artist is dependent upon the existence of a model. For Gibran, the inspiration and template for his unique portrait of Christ was provided by the indelible impression left on him by Abdul-Baha in 1912, which moved Gibran to exclaim. "For the first time I saw form noble enough to be a receptacle for the Holy Spirit" Baha u llah the founder of the Baha I faith, had pronounced his eldest son Abdul-I-Baha to be the perfect exemplar of his teachings, the infallible interpreter of his word, and his successors as head of the faith. Born in 1844, in Tehran, Abdul'I-Baha had, as a child recognized his father's great station, but on becoming head of the faith was the victim fortress city of much jealously and opposition. A prisoner for forty years in the fortress city of Akka in the Holy Land, he was finally liberated when the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 deposed sultan Abdul-Hamid and set free all those in the Ottoman empire who had been imprisoned for their religious beliefs. Widely respected by religious leaders and politicians worldwide, Abdul'I-Baha was later knighted by the British for the part he played in alleviating the famine in the Holy Land during World War I. He began to carry the teachings of Baha'u'lllah to the West, and between 1911 and 1913 he visited Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, the United States and Canada, Central to his message to the people of America - a message echoed by Gibran himself - was the realization of unity in diversity:

The sun is one but the drawing-points of the sun are numerous and changing. The ocean is one body of water but different parts of it have particular designation, Atlantic, Pacific, Mediterranean, Antarctic, etc. If we consider the names, there is differentiation, but the water the ocean itself is one reality. Likewise the divine religions of the holy manifestations of God are
in reality one, though in names and nomenclature they differ. 102

During his nine-month visit to the United States and Canada - a strenuous tour that saw him traveling constantly up and down the Eastern seaboard into the Chicago heartland and traversing the continent via Montreal Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Denver to the West Coast before returning to New York - he expounded the fundamental principles of the revelation and teaching of Baha'u'llah. He spoke of the equality between men and women the harmony of science and religion, the need for universal education and a universal language, the independent investigation of truth the oneness of God, the oneness and continuity of the prophets of God, the oneness of the human race and the elimination of all forms of prejudice and discrimination. The American press gave his tour extensive coverage and his speeches were widely circulated in the daily press. Gibran avidly followed the news of one whom ardently desired to draw.

Abdu'l-Baha's visit to the United States took place just before the outbreak of a war that was to claim ten million lives and maim millions more. He foresaw the cataclysm ahead: "Just now Europe is a battlefield of ammunition, ready for a spark and one spark will set afame the whole world" and he called for America to raise "the standard of international peace." Maintaining that no other country had "greater capacity for such an initial step." 103

After being drawn Gibran on April 19 1912 Abu'l-Baha delivered two speeches at Columbia University and at the Bowery mission in New York there he proclaimed his message of unity:

All the divine Manifestations have proclaimed the oneness of God and the unity of mankind ... The fundamental truth of the Manifestations is peace. This underlies all religion, all justice... Read the Gospel and the other Holy Books. You will find their fundamentals are one and the same. Therefore unity is the essential truth of religion and, when so understood embraces all
the virtues of the human world.'104

Speaking at churches, universities, sanatoriums literacy societies and synagogues and addressing Christians Baha'is, Jews, Esperantists suffragettes, theosophists students the sick and the poor he often made references to Christ Gibran who heard him address an audience at the Astor hotel in New York found his own reflections on Jesus being in accord with the views beings expressed by this great spiritual teacher from the East:

His sword was to be a sword of iron... He did not conquer by the physical power of an iron rod; He conquered the East and the West by the sword of; His utterance ... he conquered and subdued the East and West. His conquest was effected through the breaths of the Holy Spirit, which elimination all boundaries and shone from all horizons'105

Such ideas resonated with Gibran, particularly Abdu'l-Baha’s teaching on the equality of men and women a theme Gibran was to address in Jesus the Son of Man Abdu'l'Baha asserted that men and women must be treated as equals if humanity is to progress.

The world of humanity is possessed of two wings the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the same degree as an until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realized; humanity cannot wing its way to heights of real attainment. When the two wings or parts become equivalent in strength enjoying the same prerogatives the flight of man will be exceedingly lofty and extraordinary. Therefore woman must receive the same education as man and all inequality be adjusted. Thus imbued with the same virtues as man, rising through all the degrees of human attainment, women will become the peers of men and until this equality is established true progress attainment for the human race will not be facilitated.106

He also spoke about terrible conflicts that had erupted between
Christians and Muslims and in a speech in Brooklyn expressed his belief in the essential oneness of religion. Gibran's own condemnation of fanaticism, forged in the crucible of his own country's bloody history was in accord with Abdu'l-Baha's belief. Quoting Baha'u'llah Abdu'l-Baha spoke of the horrors of religious prejudice and sectarian hatred.

It is not becoming in man to curse another; it is not befitting that man should attribute darkness to another .. all mankind are the servants of one God ... There are no people of Satan; all belongs to the Merciful. There is no darkness; all is light. All are the servants of God, and man must love humanity from his heart. He must verify, behold humanity as submerged in the divine mercy.

Gibran was captivated by Abdu'l-Baha calling him "complete. There are worlds in his soul" and he was enthralled and electrified by his life-affirming message.

The station of man is great very great God has created man after His own image and likeness. He has endowed him with a mighty power which is capable of discovering the mysteries of phenomena. Through its use man is able to arrive at ideal conclusions instead of being restricted to the mere plane of sense impressions. As he possesses sense endowment in common with the animals, it is evident that he is distinguished above them by his conscious power penetrating abstract realities. He acquired divine wisdom; he searches out the mysteries of creation; he witnesses the radiance of omnipotence; he attains the second birth.

Gibran wrote most of Jesus the Son of Man in Boston- away from the pressures of New York- staying with Marianna. Although he was overjoyed to be absorbed again in a project so close to his heart, his creative endeavors continued to be punctuated by periods of ill health; his new amanuensis Barbara Young, noted the turbulence the poet had to endure while Writing
the book- as though he "had come through a mighty and terrible struggle."\textsuperscript{113}

When he finally completed his first manuscript it was longest work Employing an original scheme - which has been likened to Robert Browning's method in The Ring and the Book\textsuperscript{114}- Gibran presents seventy-eight different impressions of Jesus imaginatively attributed to his contemporaries both real and fictitious; "His words and deeds as told and recorded by those who knew Him." His vision of Christ as it emerged through these imaginary accounts is poetical and highly unorthodox with no pretensions to historical accuracy\textsuperscript{115} His Jesus is not born of a virgin, he does not die for our salvation nor is he resurrected. His miracles are the result of natural phenomena, and he teaches the doctrine of reincarnation, Gibran placing him in the context of other avatars who have walked the earth:

Many times the Christ has come to the world, and He has walked many lands And always He has been deemed a stranger and a madman... Have you not heart of him at the cross-roads of India? And in the land of the Magi, an upon the sands of Egypt?\textsuperscript{116}

In Jesus the Son of Man Gibran synthesizes a number of ingredients that are also apparent in his idea of the prophet: recalling Krishna's words when he tells Arjuna he has been born times; implying acceptance of the depiction of Christ found in the opening chapter of St. John reaffirming the notion of the prophet as an outsider and a "madman"; asserting the prophet as the eternal awakener of the heart; naming him as the exemplar of compassion: "And were it not for sorrow in all of you I would not have stayed to weep."\textsuperscript{117}

Gibran's imaginative reconstruction was undertaken with the aim of challenging the one-dimensional view of Christ that had prevailed among western theologians\textsuperscript{118} - and rather than dealing with his divine nature alone, Gibran attempts to explore aspects of Christ's human nature. Often he describes the Nazarene as having ambivalent emotions- compassion toward
the dispossessed and disadvantaged, raging anger against the complacent and conceited - and as such creates a personality who, though deeply involved in man's emotional life, is masterfully unidentified with it too.

By plunging his Jesus into the turbulence of earthly existence Gibran had no wish to negate the master's divinity, but aimed instead to replace a somewhat distant conception of a figure, conjured by the church with a more approachable personality. His title for a book he had waited over twenty years to write expressed his own beliefs.

The self-designated title of Jesus, "Son of Man," which appears sixty-nine times in the first three gospels, was the same meaning as the assertion that Jesus is the "Image of God." It is the only title Jesus actually applied to himself and as an idea embraces his total work as does no other. By designating himself in this striking and mysterious way, Jesus established direct contact with a particular view current in certain circles among his people. The concept itself was not exclusively Judaic, the idea of a divine "original man" the ideal prototype, being evident in Chaldean, Egyptian, Persian and Gnostic thought. Jesus used the title both in his eschatological work and in his earthly task, the eschatological application representing a profound statement of cosmic power corresponding to the Jewish view as expressed in the visionary writing of Daniel:

I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him, And there was given his domination, and glory and a kingdom, that all people nations and languages, should serve him: his domination is an everlasting domination, which shall not pass away and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

By calling himself "Son of Man" Jesus thus embraced the highest imaginable role in the eschatological drama, confirming this role in his own words: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels
with him shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." The primary eschatological role of the Son of Man is that of judgment: "And before Him shall gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." Jesus however, profoundly transforms this idea of judgment. By becoming both the future "Man" who is the judge and the incarnate man who is the representative Suffering Servant of God, He plunges himself into the earthly drama of human existence. The Son of Man mis thus incarnate in man, in the ordinary matrix of human life, a man among men. Jesus' unification of the title Son of Man with the suffering of the Servant of God, and his designation of Jesus of Nazareth as this Son of Man, becomes also a declaration of his humility: "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minster," He explains his human life and death in terms of the work the Servant of God has to fulfill: "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected .... and be killed ."

In Gibran's treatment, the poet acknowledges the messianic nature of Christ both in his choice of title and in the words of John, the son of Zebedee, who expresses Giran's own belief in the divine nature of his subject:

He is the first Word ... Jesus the Nazarene was born and reared like ourselves, His mother and father were like our parents and He was a man. But the Christ, the Word, who was in the beginning, the Spirit who would have us live our fuller life, came unto Jesus and was with Him. And the Spirit was the versed hand of the Lord, and Jesus was the harp.

Gibran's attitude towards Christ begins to reveal itself in the artist's finely sketched frontispiece to the book- a powerful head with steep forehead, heavy eyebrows, a full mouth and strong chin and a neck that might withstand a guillotine - all quite different from the traditional image. Mikhali Naimy, who himself was later to write a book on Christ, described this face thus:
A beautiful and noble face delicately veiled with something expressive of pity gripping the heart, rather than of sorrow crouching in the soul. In the sensitive mouth is a firmness too gentle to wound, and a self-respect too proud to be meek ... a face suggestive of many meanings, the most pronounced of them being a will that has not yet conquered, but is determined to conquer.\textsuperscript{128}

This stunning image prepares the reader for Gibran's portrayal of Jesus in words.

I am sickened and the bowels within me stir and rise when I hear the faint-hearted call Jesus humble and meek, that they may justify their own faint-heartedness; and when the downtrodden, for comfort and companionship, speak of Jesus as a worm shining by their side.

Yea, my heart is sickened by such men. It is the mighty hunter I would preach and the mountainous spirit unconquerable.\textsuperscript{129}

The effectiveness of Jesus the Son of Man lies in Gibran's examination of Christ from the viewpoints of many well-known characters from the gospels, thus giving a fresh angle on a number of familiar stories. Alongside the disciples the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, there are also the views of anti-heroes such as Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate and Barabbas who makes the rueful remark that "his crucifixion endured but for an hour. But I shall be crucified unto the end of my years."\textsuperscript{130}

In the first testament in the book, James the son of Zebedee recalls Jesus looking down from the summit of Mount Hermon, His face shining "like molten gold." And saying: "In truth the earth is fair and all that is upon her is fair. But there is a Kingdom beyond all that you behold and therein I shall rule."\textsuperscript{131} Jesus is perceived to be a lord of the landscape about him, a man from the "North Country" whose attributes are, as in Nathaniels description, often evoked by lofty natural images.

Shall a man bold enough to say these things to those who rules Judea
be deemed meek and humble?

Nay. The eagle builds not nest in the weeping willow. And the lion seeks not his den among the ferns."132

Jesus is seen by one contribution - "a philosopher" - as a visionary who continually experienced the truth of the created world with the depth and intensity of an awakened one:

His senses were all continually made new, and the world to Him was always a new world.

To Him the lisping of a babe was not than the cry of all mankind while to us it is only lisping.

To Him the root of a buttercup was a longing towards God, while to us it is naught but a root.133

Nicodemus the poet also expresses the truth of Jesus in natural terms:

But Jesus was not claiming more than the month of Ma claims in her high tide.

Was He not to tell the shining truth because it was so shining?134

His mouth was like the heart of a pomegranate, and the shadows in His eyes were deep.

And He was gentle, like a man mindful of his own strength.

In my dreams I beheld the Kings of the earth standing in awe in His presence.135

More abrasive is the opinion of Mannus the Pompeian, who writes to a Greek.

And Jesus the man who revealed God as a being of joy they tortured Him, and then put Him to death.

These people would not be happy with a happy god. They know only the gods of their pain.136

Gibran's striking portrait is not chronologically based and its
subsequent unpredictability can often surprise the reader. Beginning with James the son of Zebedee’s reflections, his account moves to Jesus’ grandmother, Anna, lovingly describing a free-spirited and "hard to Govern" boy, reminiscent of the young Gibran. Similar sentiments are later expressed by Susannah of Nazareth, a neighbor of Mary, who describes a boy "full of laughter and little wandering ... venturous and over-darling"; a young man whose "eyes were like honey and full of the surprise of day" and whose beauty entranced "the maidens of Nazareth." The captivating beauty of Gibran’s Jesus is a recurring theme. Salome tells a friend Whenever He passed by my heart ached for hid loveliness," Mary Magdalene is moved to say: "He was beautiful. His body was single and each part seemed to love every other part" and John at Patmos saw in his face "a night where candles burn in space, a dream beyond our reaching." Like Almustafa, Gibran’s Jesus possesses the quality of "aloneness" Rachael, a disciple, recalled: "He among us yet not one with us" Joseph surnamed Justus describes him as "a stranger, a wayfarer on His way to a shrine" Justus Pilate remarks of him: "The lonely man is the stronger man. This theme of inner force permeates Gibran’s portrait: "Jesus despised and scorned the hypocrities and His wrath was like a tempest that scourged them. His voice was thunder in their ears and He cowed them." The hypocrites "vultures" preying on the Guileless are more often than not revealed to be priests, and through the mouthpieces of Caiaphas, Annas, and an anonymous young priest from Capernaum Gibran vividly captures the brooding animosity that must have stalked the land as these enemies of Christ plotted his demise. In their fear of him they call him "a brigand, a mountebank and a self-trumpeter"; the enemy within; "a defiler and a corrupter"; "a conjuror and a deceiver" a magician warp and woof and a sorcerer who "spoke the bustard language of the low-born and the vulgar."
Joseph surnamed Justus in contrast maintains that although Jesus' enemies portrayed him as a man uncouth and violent, "the Man despised sounded a challenge and the sound thereof shall never cease." The Nazarene enthralled and captivated Joseph and Phumiah the high priestess of Sidon, Benjamin the scribe, and a disciple called Tracheal. To them he was the "dauntless Man ... the fearless Hunter on the hill .. The sky-hearted and the ocean-handed Man .. The valiant Youth who conquered the mountain cities .. the first Golden Hawak"; "an awakenting"; and "the Great Event .. Himself a miracle wrought in Judea." As well as dealing with the mystic dimension of Jesus by whom the elements of your bodies and our dreams same together according to law, Gibran creates a rounded description of his human qualities too: "He would make merry with his listeners; He would tell jets and play upon words ad laugh with all the fullness of his heart, even when there were distances in His stories and parables the likes of which "had never been heard in Syria" before. Or of is skills as a carpenter which promoted a rich Levi who had two doors made by Jesus to say of them: "They in their stability mock at all else in my house". For others it was his gentleness that is remembered-movingly expressed by "one of the Marys," who likened his smile to "the dust of stars falling upon the eyelids of children"; yet he possessed too "the sadness of the winged who will not soar above his comrade."

Jesus' awesome power a recurrent theme in the book, is described by an unnamed man from the desert: "Nan and woman fled from before His face, and He moved amongst them as the whirling wind moves on the sand-hills" yet also impatient of "men of cunning", a man who would not be governed.

Those who heard him speak remembered the beauty and passion of his oratory Assaph himself an orator from Tyre, perceived that "when you heard Him your heart would leave you and go wandering into regions not yet
At her wedding in Cana, Rafca the bride remembered that his voice enchanted us so that we gazed upon Him as if seeing visions.\textsuperscript{167} and a character named Cleopas of Bethroune says: "His voice was like cool water in a land of drought."\textsuperscript{168}

Susannah of Nazareth describes Mary, mother of Jesus, as she awaits her son's imminent death of Good Friday: "At dawn she was still standing among us, like a lone banner in the wilderness wherein there are no hosts."\textsuperscript{169} Gibran constantly expresses his wonder at the beauty and mystery of womanhood: "Woman shall be forever the womb and the cradle but never the tomb."\textsuperscript{170} His reverence toward woman, a theme that permeates many of his works, reaches its profoundest and most moving expression in Jesus, the Son of Man, reflecting Gibran's love for the many women in his own life. He had once said to Mary: "Woman has deeper mind that is hers only. We call it intuition ... Women are better than men. They are kinder, more sensitive, more stable, and have a finer sense about much of life."\textsuperscript{171} These views bear a striking resemblance to the teaching of Abdu'l-Baha, who called women "more tender-hearted, more receptive," possession "intuition more intense" than men.\textsuperscript{172}

Jesus is depicted as having many female friends, knowing them as the should be known "in sweet comradeship."\textsuperscript{173} In particular Gibran's portrayal of Jesus' relationship with Mary Magdalene is arguably the most moving and vivid account in literature, before the discovery of the remarkable Nag Hammadi texts of 1945.\textsuperscript{174} Other attributes were recognized by 'Abdu'l-Baha in a talk to a suffragette meeting: "It is certain from the evidence of the Gospels that the one who comforted and re-established [the disciples'] faith was Mary Magdalene."\textsuperscript{175} Gibran portrays Jesus' love toward Mary as transformation: "The sunset of His eyes slew the dragon in me, and I became a woman."
Mary Magdalene appears in three separate vignettes in the book and describes her first meeting with the Son of Man thus: He was sitting in the shadow of the cypress trees across my garden, and He was as still as if He had been carved out of stone, like the statues in Antioch and other cities of the North Country ... And I gazed at Him, and my soul quivered within me, for He was beautiful. Mary attired in scented garments and golden sandals given to her by a Roman captain, approaches Jesus, who says:

You have many lovers, yet I alone love you. Other men love themselves in your nearness. I love in your self. Other men see a beauty in you that shall fade away sooner than their own years. But I see in you a beauty that shall not fade away, and in the autumn of your days that beauty shall not be afraid to gaze at itself in the mirror, and it shall not be offended. I alone love the unseen in you.

As he walked away Mary felt that "no other man ever walked the way He walked. Was it a breath born in my garden that moved to the east? Or was it a storm that would shake all things to their foundations."

In some of his earlier writings, Gibran expressed his concern about the cruel treatment of the prostitute, and his contempt for the hypocrisy of those who label her. Andrew's portrayal of a forgiving and compassionate Christ recalls the time when the Pharisees brought a prostitute to him; Jesus turned to the men who had brought her there, looked long and hard at them and wrote on the earth, "the name of every man, and beside the name He wrote the sin that every man had committed. As He wrote they escaped in shame into the streets." He then looked into the woman's eyes, telling her: "you have loved overmuch. They who brought you here loved but little."

Perhaps the most moving testimony of the book is given by Cyborea, the mother of Judas, whose love for her son reflects Gibran's own experience of the mother-son relationship.

When he took his first step, I too took my first step. For women travel
not save when led their children ... I loved him and I shall love him forevermore. If love were in the flesh I would burn it out with hot irons and be at peace. But it is in the soul, unreachable. And now I would speak no more. Go question another woman more honored than the mother of Judas, Go to the mother of Jesus. The sword is in her heart also; she will tell you of me, and you will understand.\textsuperscript{182}

The poet, who had witnessed the inhumane subjugation of women in the East and in the West, summed up his views in the last chapter of the book entitled "A Man from Lebanon Nineteen Centuries Afterwards."

Your mother is with us;

I have beheld the sheen of her face in the countenance of all mothers ...

Master, Master Lover.

The princess awaits your coming in her fragrant chamber.

And the married unmarried woman in her cage.

The harlot who seeks bread in the streets of her shame.

And the nun in her cloister who has no husband;

The childless woman too at her window.

Where frost designs the forest on the pane,

She finds you in that symmetry,

And she would mother you, and be comforred.\textsuperscript{183}

This reverence for the feminine aspect influenced his own conception of God as "both the father and mother in one," the God-Father reached through intellect and the God-mother reached through the heart-"only through love."\textsuperscript{184} Echoing his own lifelong belief that Jesus was "the Master Poet" Gibran describes Jesus thus: "Aye He was a poet whose heart dwelt in a bower beyond the heights ... the sovereign of all poets,"\textsuperscript{185} and in the last essay writes: "Master, Master Poet, Master of our silent desires, The heart of the world quivers with the throbbing of your heart. But it burns not with your song."\textsuperscript{186} In what is often an unconventional portrayal, Jesus is depicted as
having traveled to lands both in the East and the West: Philemon, a Greek apothecary depicts him as "the Master Physician" who visited India where "the priests revealed to Him the knowledge of all that is hidden in the recesses of our flesh." Again the influence of Abdu'l-Baha, who called Jesus "the real Physician." is evident - a "physician" who came to heal the world.187 Reflecting Gibran's own holistic views on medicine, Philemon witnesses in Jesus a supreme spiritual healer, to whom the sacred of another have been revealed.

To this man also sealed doors were opened. He entered the temple of the soul, which is the body; and He beheld the evil spirits that conspire against our sinews, and also the good spirits that spin the treads thereof.

Methinks it was by the power of opposition and resistance that He healed the sick but in a manner unknown to our philosophers fever with His snowlike touch and it retreated; and He surprised the hardened limbs with His own calm and they yielded to Him and were at peace.188

Gibran also refashions some of the words of the gospels, as for instance in St. Matthew's remembrance of the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the serene in spirit. Blessed are they who are not held by possessions, for they shall be free. Blessed are they who remember their pain, and in their pain await their joy";189 and attributes some new saying to Jesus: "Your neighbour is your unknown self made visible."190 and "Would that you seek the Father as the brook seeks the sea."191

In the gospel according to Gibran192 Jesus is portrayed as consciously going to his death a view he expressed to Mary Haskell as early as 1914: "Jesus wanted to die, wanted to be crucified - as an expression - the only expression that would satisfy him."193 Zacchaeus is reported as saying: "He could indeed have escaped had He chosen, but He did not seek safety ....He knew that to build the temple invisible He must needs lay Himself the corner-stone."194 His death is perceived as a victory: "The whole world stood
to honor Him upon that hill."195 When he is delivered to Pontius Pilate the Governor is struck by Jesus' dignity and bearing: "I cannot fathom what came over me .. but it was suddenly my desire though not my will, to rise and go down from the dais and fall before Him."196 After Jesus' death Pilate, now returned to Rome, observes that his wife has become "a woman of sorrow" who "talks much of Jesus to other women of Rome," leaving Pilate to question his decision in Jerusalem: "Can it be that the Syrian is conquering us in the quiet hours of the night?"197 And in a later vignette Pilate's wife herself tells another Roman woman that after seeing Jesus she new had "passed by a god," and that ever since, "His voice governs the stillness of my nights and I am held fast forevermore."198

Perhaps the most powerful account of the dignity with which Jesus faces his death is that of Claudius, a Roman soldier who guarded him the night before the crucifixion.

I had fought in Gallia and in Spain, and with my men I had faced death. Yet never had I been in fear, nor been a coward. But when I stood before that man and He looked at me I lost heart ... a man facing death with the sap of life upon His lips, and with compassion for His slayers in His eyes. And now I am old I have lived the years fully. And I think truly that neither Pompey nor Creaser was so great a commander as that Man of Galilee.199

It is left to Barabbas to record the last words of Jesus: "Now it is finished but only upon this hill"; and to a woman of Byblos to sing a heart-rending lament: Weep with me, ye daughters of Ashtarte, and all ye lovers of Tomouz (Tammuz).

Bid your heart melt and rise and run blood-tears.
For He also was made of gold and ivory is no more ...
Now He lies stained with the leaves of yesteryear,
And no longer shall His footsteps wake the seeds that sleep in the bosom of spring
The voice will not come with the dawn to my window,
And I shall be forever alone."

The Identification of Jesus with Tammuz reminds one of Shelley's poem in which he identifies Keats with Adonais, who is Tammuz under another name, and according to some scholars, one of the gods whose cults were absorbed into Christianity at a very early stage.

Again, as so many times before, Gibran's work bears the hallmark of Blake, and there is a striking resemblance in the two poets' conceptions of Jesus who is a far cry from the "Creeping Jesus" so often depicted by the church: "The Modern Church Crucified Christ with the Head Downwards" wrote Blake; and Gibran named those corrupt Christs Teachings as "monstrous" beings with "a hyena's teeth, and viper's fangs." For Blake and Gibran Jesus is a revolutionary and visionary figure who "came your King & God to Seize"; a "Scourge" who "traced diseases to their source: He curs'd the Scribe & Pharisee"; a spiritual warrior "Trampling down Hypocrisy: Where'er his Chariot took its way"; a conqueror who "with wrath" subdued; and a supreme artist: "I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts and Imagination." wrote Blake. "The Spirit of to Jesus is continual forgiveness of Sin" "Can I see another woe, and not rules"; "Jesus was all virtue and acted from impulse, not from rules"; "Upon his heart with Iron pen, He wrote, 'Ye must be borne again." By virtue of the imagination, the universal cosmic knowledge is available to whoever raises their heart and mind into those regions: "Henceforth every man may converse with God and be a King & Priest in his own house." In their magisterial works, Jesus, the Son of Man and Jerusalem, both poets challenged orthodox doctrine - in Gibran's case by breathing new life into a story perhaps grown stale through age and constant repetition. As well as refocusing attention on the joyous
side of the gospels, Gibran effectively conveys an inexorable and reviving
natural power operating through Jesus, giving the book its visionary force
and making its inspirational intensity perhaps exceed even that of The
Prophet.

Was Gibran a Christian? There is no doubt that and he had accepted
the Christian revelation, taking Jesus as an exemplar and the Bible as a
treasury of revealed spiritual and moral truth. However, true to the followers
of the Sufi part he could not accept Christianity as exclusive.215 His was a
firm belief in the unity of religion and the unity of being which directed his
enthusiastic attention to universal ecumenicalism. His creed involved a
diversity of strands of belief: the Upanishads, Syrian Neoplatonism;
Judeo-Christian mysticisml Islamic Sufism; and the Baha'í teachings on
universal love and the unity of religion as he heard them from Abdu'l-Baha.
To these influences can be added those spiritual elements he gleaned from
his reading of Ibn. Sina, Ibn. al-Farid, and al-Ghazali. He forged his own
personal spiritual philosophy which he would connect all the traditions and
join William Blake in declaring that "all religions are one."

Although it was to be his last successful work, Jesus the Son of Man
is not the anguished cry of a failing man but a magnificent testament of a
poet whose soaring prose continued to rail against the dying of the light. In
the months running up to its publication in October 1928, he had been
suffering from what he called "summer rheumatism." He told Mariita Lawson
that all the joints in his body ached, and that sometimes he could "Hardly
walk." He also ominously revealed to her that the medics, in their
desperation, were trying the excruciating - yet at the time scientifically
acceptable - method of "electric" treatment on him.216 Constantly racked with
pain, Gibran was drinking heavily again and despite Prohibition was able to
find alcohol with the help of his cousin Assaf George.217 As his health
deteriorated alcohol concerns about Marianna's security provoked Gibran to
invest in some real estate. Burnt by his last venture into business, he viewed his options carefully this time around - finally purchasing two houses at 180-182 Broadway, near Tyler Street in Boston.

He also commissioned Assaf George to investigate the possibility of buying the Mar Sarkis monastery near Bisharri, a location full of happy childhood memories for the poet. By now, increasingly aware of the seriousness of his condition, an intense longing for his homeland returned.

He wrote to May Ziadha: "My longing for my country almost melts my heart." For some time now. Gibran had been contemplating a permanent return to this small deserted monastery and according to Mikhail Naimy had planned to spend his declining years at Mar Sarkis in "fruitful work and peaceful meditation."

Unexpectedly, toward the end of 1928 he received an invitation to return to Lebanon to take up political office. The gesture by the newly formed Republic of Lebanon was probably due to served as minister of the interior and health. However, Gibran himself had never seriously nursed political ambitions and, by now physically incapacitated, felt he should stay in America to pursue his work: "I can do better in this strange, old room than anywhere else." In the past it had been either force of work or fear for his own safety that had prevented the poet's triumphant return to Lebanon. By his forty-sixth birthday, however, it was a realization that his rapidly deteriorating health made any ideas of a homecoming impossible, for as well as his visceral disorders he was developing serve swelling of the feet and legs. His appetite, never large had dwindled to almost nothing and his formerly trim physique was beginning to show signs of bloating.

As the cruel winter in "the Hermitage," struggled to come to terms with the reality of his condition. Meanwhile in the outside world his latest book was receiving universal acclaim. A front-page article in the 1928 Christmas edition
of the New York Times Book Review called it "brilliant in phrase and accurate in perception."\textsuperscript{223} and in the Manchester Guardian a reviewer wrote: It is a great delight to the jaded reader, wandering about in the endless forest of books which has sprung up around the Four Gospels, to come suddenly upon one that has great beauty and distinction peculiarly its own. Such a book I have found in Jesus the Son of Man. This is a book for those who can read with understanding.\textsuperscript{224}

In the Herald Tribune Claude Bragdon wrote a feature article on the artist:

[To Gibran] "nothing is higher than the human"-the only supernatural he recognizes is man's own supernature, and he has utter faith in man's power to become divine by realization; that is, by making real the divine, in the human life. Of this process and its results he choose Jesus as the great exemplar and he is so eager that his readers should both see and understand Him, that he adopts the device of straining Jesus, so to speak, through the consciousness of His immediate contemporaries, enemies and friends alike -each one a cloth of finer or coarser texture, in which some trait or aspect is netted, or on which it leaves an azure or crimson stain.\textsuperscript{225}

John Haynes Holmes, the former minister of the Community Church in New York, wrote in his review that Gibran had "attempted a unique and daring experiment ... It is as thought ... amplitude and beauty of phrase ... wisdom, serenity and lofty vision ... If any man were fitted to attempt this adventurous task, it is Mr. Gibran."\textsuperscript{226} A reviewer in the Springfield Union wrote that Jesus, the Son of Man "attains a degree of perfection that might well serve as an inspiration for other writers to whom English is their native tongue."\textsuperscript{227}

Gibran wrote to Mary telling her that by such praise he "was made shy" and again revealed his longing for home.\textsuperscript{228} The growing adulation, for which he had once hungered, meant little to him now as he acknowledged to
Naimy that his disease was terminal: "The ailment has settled in a place deeper than muscle and bones."229

Although increasingly crippled by his illness and unable to move about,230 Gibran refused to abandon his work: "It seems to me that there is nothing worth while but work. All else is nothing but a slow death,"231

Although Knopf was waiting for him to complete The Garden of the Prophet the poet told Naimy that he felt it "wise to get away from the publishers at present."232

Claude Bragdon recalled Gibran during this time:

Gibran lived in an old, elevatorless apartment house in lower New York, with high ceilings, rambling corridors, and winding stairways the climbing of which to his high perched studio doubtless shortened his life, though he could not be persuaded to move. Shortly before his death we planned to write a book together on the subject of architecture, in which he was greatly interested. We used to meet at the penthouse apartment of Madame Herriette Sava-Goiu, a golden-haired and golden-hearted Rumanian of extraordinary vitality and charm. There, the centre of an entranced circle, Gibran would make free translations of Sufi poetry, and tell folk-tales of his native land. It was there indeed, that I saw him last only a short time before his tragic death from cancer, after two years of secret suffering.233

Despite his illness Gibran's creative imagination was till envisioning new projects and he wrote to Maimy. What do you think a book composed of four stories on the lives of Michelangelo, Shakespeare Spinoza and Beethoven? What would you say if I showed their achievement to be the unavoidable outcome of pain, ambition, expatriation and hope moving in the human heart."234 The three identical tensions of Gibran's own life were now talking their toll. Seven years earlier in 1921 he had written: "Never mind Meesha, whatever is destined shall be. But I feel that I shall not leave the slope of his mountain before daybreak. And dawn shall throw a veil of light and gleam on
As the first winter dawn of 1929 rose, shedding its ghostly through the windows of "the Hermitage," the man from Lebanon knew that his descent from the mountain had begun.

REFERENCES:

2. Sand and Foam, 41
3. B.P., 422.
5. B.P., 423
6. Ibid., 304.
15. K. G. to M. H., Sept 4, 1924, Chapel Hill papers.
16. These meetings with Galsworthy, Chesterton, and Dunsany are verified in B.P., 429.

John Galsworthy (1867-1933) wrote the Forsythe Saga and won the Nobel prize for literature in 1932. Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936) wrote a very popular volume of stories about Father Brown the priest-detective. Edward John Moreton Dunsany (1878-1957) was closely associated with W.B. Yeats and the Irish Revival.

17. Jose Clemente Orozco (1883-1949) was one of a trio of politically committed fresco painters. The other great muralists were David Alfaro Siqueiros
(1896-1974) and Diego Rivera (1886-1957), whose revolutionary works unified the divergent cultural roots of their country's history to the demands of its national revolutionary present and, in the opinion of many, created the first great example of post-colonial art.

18. The so-called Delphic Group consisted of a group of artists and writers involved with oriental mystery religions (J. and K. Gibran, Life and World, 392).


24. B. P., 422.


28. Ibid., 197.

29. The Prophet, 106.


32. Young, This Man from Lebanon (1945), ix

33. J. and K. Gibran, Life and World 382.

34. This Man from Lebanon was published by Knopf, and although revealing some fascinating aspects of Gibran's character, cannot be regarded as always factually correct.

35. K.G to M.H., July 8, 1925, Chapel Hill papers.


37. July 22, 1921, chapel Hill papers


41. Gibran had first mentioned the play Lazarus on April 26, 1914 (J. and k. Gibran,
Life and World, 383-84). These plays first appeared in print in 1972 and 1983 respectively.

42. Gibran to Mr Smith, May 22, 1926, quoted in ibid, 384

43. B.P., 344.

44. Seven - a holy number yielded by adding the basic number of the masculine, three, and the basic number of the feminine, four. It is the number of the planets in antiquity (Sun, moon, Jupiter, Venus, Mercury, Mars, and Saturn), and the number of the days of the week that the planet names bear, as well as the number of days of an individual phase of the moon. In Buddhism there are seven different heavens, and the Qur'an too speaks of "seven heavens" (Suras 2:27, 23:17; 67:3; 78:12). The Chinese saw the seven start of Ursa Major in connection with seven openings of the body and seven openings of the human heart. Among the Babylonians, one also encounters a regard for seven: the "evil seven," a group of demons that usually appear together, and the "seven winds." In Greece, seven, which was sacred to Apollo and others, played an important role; the seven gates of Thebes, the seven sons of Helios, the seven wise men etc. (Becker [ed], Encyclopedia of Symbols). Various myths such as the Seven Sleepers appear in Syriac, Copric, Arabic, Ethiopian, and armenian Christian literature and in the Qur'an (Hastings [ed.], Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, vol. 110). In biblical literature the use of the number seven suggests a peculiar regard for it. It appears first at the record of creation and is found in the low regarding feasts, the consecration of priests and altars, defilement, and the sprinkling of blood and oil. Of persons in sevens are altars, sons, chamberlains, maidsens wise men, poor men, women, deacons; also angels, spirits, and devils. Of things in sevens__animals, ears of corn, altars, pillars, streams, eyes, start and seals Seven times is connected with bowing, punishment, praising God, restoration, and forgiveness. Seven was also used as a round number, and as sevenfold, in the sense of frequently or fully (Buckland and Williams [eds.], Universal Bible Dictionary). In the Baha'i writings, Baha'ulla'h speaks of the "Seven Valleys" or "The stages that mark the wayfarer's journey from the abode of dust to the heavenly homeland" (Baha'u'llah, seven Valleys, 4).

45. In some of his earlier works, particularly The Madman, Gibran's attachment to the number seven is evident. The madman has seven masks stolen (p 70, his seven selves whisper to each other (p 21); and he passes seven personalities in his search for "the Greater Sea" (p. 58).
sand and Foam, 78. This aphorism is perhaps an echo of the "sealed book" in the book of Revelation (5.1), which has "seven seals."

Ibid., 30.

Ibid., 81.

Ibid., 10.

Shah, The Sufic, 394

Naimy, A Biography, 207.

Sand and Foam, 20

Ibid., 9.

Ibid., 12.

Ibid., 14.

Ibid., 15.

Ibid., 25

Ibid., 29.

Ibid., 31.

Ibid., 60.

Some of these aphorisms and wise sayings can be found in al-Baday' 'wa'l- Tarayif (Beautiful and Rare Sayings), published in 1923.

Ibid., 28.

Ibib., 34.

Ibid., 66

Ibid., 73

Ibid., 42.

Ibid., 81.

Kahlil Gibran to Marita Lawson, May 19, 1920, in Hunayn, Rasa'il Jubran, 142.

"sand and Foam," Transcript (Boston), December 1926, quoted in Hawi, Kahlil Gibran, 233

Spiritual Sayings, 22

Reb. 26, 1924, in Bushrui and al-Kuzbari (eds.), Gibran: Love letters, 81

A Self-Portrait (1972), 83.

sand and Foam, 84

K.G. to M.H. March 25, 1908, Chapel Hill papers

Naimy, A Biography, 20

K.G. to March 25, 1908, Chapel Hill papers

B.P., 409.
Ernst Renan (1822-92). French philologist, historian, and essayist. His Vie de Jesus (1863) combines a critical examination of the gospel narratives with an imaginative presentation of the figure of Christ - a portrayal that "earned him both fame and persecution" in his lifetime (Drabble [ed.], Oxford companion to English literature).


B.P., 363, 294.

Ibid., 258

Ibid., 362.

Ibid., 93.

Letter from witter Bynner to Lorraine M. George, Santa Fe, February 13, 1941, in The Works of Witter bynner, 167

Gibran encapsulated his ambivalence toward institutionalized religion in Sand and Roam (p.77): "Once every hundred years Jesus of Nazareth meets Jesus of the Christians in a garden among the hills of Lebanon. and they talk long; and each time Jesus of Nazareth goes away saying to Jesus of the Christians, 'My friend, I fear we shall never, never agree.'"

B.P., 349.

Ibid., 318


"When I meditated upon Jesus I always saw Him either as an infant in the anger seeing His mother Mary's face for the first time, or staring from the crucifix at His mother's face for the last time" (Spiritual Sayings [1963], 27).

In "The Crucified" Gibran writes: "Jesus was not sent here to teach the people to build magnificent churches and temples ... he came to make the human heart a temple, and the soul an alter, and the mind a priest" (Secrets of the Heart [1992], 215)

In "Khalil the Heretic" Gibran writes of the priest: "he is a hypocrite whom the faithful girded with a fine crucifix which he held above their heads as a sharp sword" (Spirits Rebellious, 103)

B.P., 363.

"The crucified," in Secrets of the Heart, 214

"Eventied of the feast," in ibid, 226

B.P., 338

Ibid., 340.
98. Young, This Man from Lebanon (1945), 102.
100. Gail, Other People, Other Places, 228.
103. Talk delivered at meeting of International Peace Forum, Grace Methodist Episcopal Church, West 104 Street, New York, by ‘Abdu’l Baha, May 12, 1912 in ibid., 122,121.
104. Talk delivered at Earl Hall, Columbia University, new York, by ‘Abdu’l- Baha, April 19, 1912, in ibid., 32.
110. K.G. to M.H., April 16, 1912, Chapel Hill papers.
112. A Self-Portrait (19720, 84.
113. Young, this man from Lebanon (1945), 102-103.
114. Both John haynes Holmes, the former of the Community Church in new York (quoted in J and K. Gibran, life and World, 390), and Clude Bragdon (in “Modern Prophet from Lebanon,” Merely Players, 144) compare gibran’s work with Browning’s.
115. Some scholars, such as joseph Ghougassian, argue that the exegesis, the thinking, and deeds of Gibran’s Jesus concur with Christ’s personality as depicted by the four evangelists (Wings of Thought, 21).
116. Jesus, the Son of Man, 42,43.
117. Ibid., 4.

118. This view is supported by Joseph Ghougassian in Wings of thought, 221.

119. Some leading New Testament scholars believe that a Christology built on the concept of the "Son of Man" would have solved the endless controversies that dominated Christological debates for so long. "If a modern theologian would have undertaken to build a Christology entirely on the New Testament idea of the Son of Man not only would such a Christology be entirely orientated toward the New Testament and go back to Jesus' self-designation; it would also have the advantage of purring the logically insoluble problem of the natures of Christ on a level where the solution becomes visible: the pre-extent Son of Man, who is with God at the very beginning and exists with him as his image, is by his very nature divine man. From this point of view the whole toilsome discussion which dominated the earlier Christological controversies actually becomes superfluous" (Cullman, Christology, 137, 192; Cullman's influential thesis was delivered at the Zenos Lectures (1955) at the McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago).

120. The idea of the divine original man can also be found among the Mandeans and Manicheans, as well as in the cult of Attis.

121. Daniel 7:13, 14. This eschatological dimension is also evident in the parables of chapters 37-71; in the book of Enoch and in Ezra 7:28 and 13:22.

122. Matthew 25:31. Other key eschatological saying in the gospels are to be found in Luke 17:22 ff.

123. Matthew 25:32

124. Mark 10:45.

125. Mark 8:31. All biblical quotations are from the Authorized Version of the Bible. Although the Suffering Servants and the Son of Man already existed in Judaism, Jesus' combination of precisely these was something completely new. He brought together, in his own person, both deepest humility – the Suffering Servant of God. Even if there had been a concept of a suffering Messiah in Judaism, suffering was in no way synonymous with the Son of Man coming in all his glory on the clouds of heaven. The connection between the Son of Man and Servant of God in Ezra and in Enoch are of a formal nature and do not become incarnate in humanity nor does he assume the form of the Servant (Cullman, Christology, 144, 161). By designating himself the title therefore, Jesus, in a unique act, was able to unite the
two apparently contradictory tasks in his self-consciousness and express this unity in his life and teaching.

126. Jesus, the Son of Man, 42, 43


129. Jesus, the Son of Man, 60.

130. Ibid., 190

131. Ibid, 2.

132. Ibid., 60.

133. Ibid., 97.

134. Ibid., 102.


136. Ibid, 133.

137. Ibid, 8.

138. Ibid., 158.

139. Ibid., 159

140. Ibid., 64.

141. Ibid, 13

142. Ibid., 153.

143. Ibid, 68.

144. Ibid., 168

145. Ibid, 136

146. Ibid, 35.

147. Ibid, 36

148. Ibid, 182.

149. Ibid, 183.

150. Ibid., 24

151. Ibid., 46

152. Ibid., 45.

153. Ibid, 182

154. Ibid., 168.

155. Ibid., 114 115.

156. Ibid, 117.

Gibran once told Mary that if he had had to make his living as a "labourer," he would have been a carpenter (B.P., 137).

Jesus, the Son of Man, 78.

Junior, the Son of Man, 89.

Jesus, the Son of Man, 171.

Jesus, the Son of Man, 10.

Jesus, the Son of Man, 30.

Jesus, the Son of Man, 70.

Jesus, the Son of Man, 162.

Jesus, the Son of Man, 167.

B.P., 413, 286.

'Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, 161

Jesus the Son of Man, 26.

Mary Magdalene, never recognized as an apostle by the orthodox, is depicted in the Gospel of Mary as the one favored with visions and insights that far surpass Peter's. The Dialogue of the Savior praises her not only as a visionary, but as an apostle who exceeds all the rest. She is the "women who knew the All" (Dialogue of the Savior 139: 12-13, Nag Hammadi Library. 235; New Work, 1977). One group of Gnostic sources claim to have received a secret tradition from Jesus through James and through Mary Magdalene. Member of this group prayed to both the divine Father and Mother. "From Three, Father, and through Three, Mother, the who immortal names, Parents of the divine being, and thou, dweller in heaven, humanity, of the mighty name" (Hippolytus, Refutationis Omnium Haeresium 5:6; see Pageis, The Gnostic gospels, 22, 79).

Talk delivered at women's suffragette meeting, Metropolitan Temple, New York, by 'Abdu'l-Baha, May 20, 1912, in Promulgation of Universal Peace. 134

Jesus, the Son of Man, 15

Gibran told Mary on June 16, 1923 that he thought it significant that a tremendous number of names in his life "begin with M" (B.P., 413) 177. Jesus, the Son of Man, 12, 13

Ibid., 14-15.
In Nymphs of the Valley the heroine, Martha, is forced into a life of prostitution in Beirut. In Sand and Foam (p. 77) he writes, "You may sir at your window watching the passers-by. And watching you may see a nun walking toward your right hand, and a prostitute toward your left hand. And you may say in your innocence, 'How noble is the one and how ignoble is the other.' But should you close your eyes and listen awhile you would hear a voice whispering in the ether, 'One seeks me in prayer, and the other is pain. And in the spirit of each there is a bower for my spirit.

181. Jesus, the Son of Man, 146.
182. Ibid., 203-204.
183. Ibid., 209-214-15
185. Jesus, the Son of Man, 80
186. Ibid., 215.
187. Talk delivered at 309 West Seventy-eight Street, New York, by 'Abdu'l-Baha, June 17, 1912, in Promulgation of Universal Peace, 204
188. Jesus, the Son of Man, 16-17
189. Ibid., 37.
190. Ibid., 54.
191. Ibid
192. Authors' expression.
193. B.P., 207.
194. Jesus, the Son of Man, 119, 120.
195. Ibid., 120, 121
196. Ibid., 135.
197. Ibid., 139.
198. Ibid., 172.
199. Ibid., 191-92
200. Ibid., 205.
201. I weep for Adonais- he is dead!
    O weep for Adonais! Though our tears
    Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
    Hutchinson (ed.). Shelley, 432
In Jerusalem Blake has Jesus saying "I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend. Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside me" (Jerusalem, in Blake, 622), and in the Everlasting Gospel, Blake's views Gibran's own perceptions of Jesus.

This is the race that Jesus ran
Humble to God Haughty to Man.
Cursing the Rulers before the people
Even to the temple's highest Steeple;
And when he Humble himself to God.
Then descended the Cruel Rod.
*If thou humblest thyself, thou humblest me,
*Thou also dwell'st in Eternity
*Thou art a Man, God is no more,
*Thy own humanity learn to adore,
*For that is my Spirit of Life,
*Awake, arise to Spiritual Strife.
(The Everlasting Gospel, in Blank, 752-53)

204. The Everlasting Gospel, in Blake, 750.
205. "A Vision of The Last Judgment, "in ibid., 615
206. Spiritual Sayings(1963), 46.
207. The Everlasting Gospel, in Blake, 750.
208. Jerusalem, in ibid., 716-17.
209. Ibid., 621
211. "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. "in ibid., 158
212. The Everlasting Gospel, in ibid., 750.
213. Annotations to Watson, ibid., 389
214. D.H. Lawrence, whose last book Apocalypse, was written in 1929 and was an interpretation of the book of Revelation, wrote of the Bible: "The Bible is book that has been temporarily killed for us by having its meaning arbitrarily fixed. We know it so thoroughly, in its superficial or popular meaning, that it is dead, it gives us nothing any more "(Lawrence, Apocalypse.3).
216 Kahlil Gibran to Mariita Lawson, September 8, 1926


220. The exact nature of this political office is unknown and apart from Gilbarn's reference to the affair (B.P., 438) no other supporting documentary evidence can be found.

221. B.P., 438.

222. J. and K. Gibran, Life and World, 389

223. Wilson, "Jesus was the supreme poet." In the article Wilson discusses Jesus, the Son of Man and a book by Walter Russell Bowie entitled The Master which was published in the same year (1928).

224. Manchester Guardian review quoted in Young, This Man From Lebanon (1945).


226. Jhon Haynes Holmes' review is quoted in Young, This man From Lebanon (1945), 110. And in Jesus, the Son of Man (1928).

227. Springfield Union review quoted in young, This Man from Lebanon (1945), 36-37.

228. B.P., 438.


230. Khalil Gibran to Mariita Lawson, August 7, 1928

231. Ibid., April 6, 1927