

Kahlil Gibran *speaks*

Out of Lebanon there emerged not many years ago a poet and painter whose deep mystical insight into the beauties of life marked him as utterly unique in his generation. Slowly his message has encircled the globe, and today he is considered one of the outstanding world figures of recent times.

Gibran was born in 1883 and at an early age evidenced unusual ability in writing and drawing. At twelve he accompanied his mother to the United States, but within two years had returned to Syria to acquire an Arabic education. Completing his work there, he moved to Paris and studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. The rest of his life he sojourned in the United States, but always with a keen interest and love for his native land.

At twenty he attracted attention for his attack on Turkish hegemony over Syria in *Spirits Rebellious*. For his revolutionary writing he was exiled and his book banned, but he lived to see it become an Arabic classic. Soon there followed his imaginative, sensitive portraits of the ideal in human life, sometimes in fable or parable form, as in *The Madman*, *The Forerunner*, and *The Wanderer*; sometimes in poetry, as in *The Prophet*, *The Garden of the Prophet*, *The Earth Gods*, *Prose Poems*, and *Jesus—the Son of Man*; once in aphorisms—*Sand and Foam*; and often in drawings, as in *Twenty Drawings* and the illustrations for all his books. In 1931 he died and was buried in his home land, near the famous Cedars of Lebanon.

In the following excerpts from his works, one can sense Gibran's simplicity and sensitivity to the ideal in man and nature.

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Leonard S. Kenworthy

ON RELIGION . . .

"Is not religion all deeds and all reflections,
And that which is neither deed nor reflection,
but a wonder and a surprise ever
springing in the soul, even while the hands
hew the stone or tend the loom?"

Who can separate his faith from his
actions, or his belief from his occupations?"

"Your daily life is your temple and your
religion."

ON GOD . . .

"And after a thousand years I climbed the
sacred mountain and again spoke to God, say-
ing, 'My God, my aim and my fulfillment; I
am thy yesterday and thou art my tomorrow.
I am thy root in the earth and thou art my
flower in the sky, and together we grow be-
fore the face of the sun.'"

ON THE SOUL . . .

"The soul is mightier than space, stronger
than time, deeper than the sea, and higher
than the stars."

"Beyond my solitude is another solitude,
and to him who dwells therein, my aloneness
is as a crowded market place and my silence
a confusion of sounds."

ON FAITH . . .

"Doubt is a pain too lonely to know that
faith is his twin brother."

"Faith is an oasis in the heart which will
never be reached by the caravan of thinking."

ON JESUS . . .

"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."

"My kingdom is not of the earth. My kingdom shall be where two or three of you shall meet in love and in wonder at the loveliness of life, and in good cheer, and in remembrance of me."

"Jesus was never married but He was a friend of women, and He knew them as they would be known in sweet comradeship. And He loved children as they would be loved in faith and understanding. In the light of His eyes there was a father and a brother and a son."

"Andrew to Jesus: 'Master, we would be threads between your hands and your loom. Weave us into the cloth if you will, for we would be in the raiment of the Most High.'"

ON PRAYER . . .

"You pray in your distress and in your need; would that you might also pray in the fulness of your joy and in your days of abundance."

"Our father in earth and heaven, sacred is Thy name.

Thy will be done with us, even as in space.
Give us of Thy bread sufficient for the day.

In Thy compassion forgive us and enlarge us to forgive one another.

Guide us towards Thee and stretch down Thy hand to us in darkness.

For Thine is the kingdom and in Thee is our power and our fulfillment."

ON LOVE AND MARRIAGE . . .

"Love one another, but make not a bond of love:

Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.

Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.

Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.

Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each of you be alone,

Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music."

ON CHILDREN . .

"The song that lies silent in the heart of the mother will sing upon the lips of the child."

"Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but are not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you

You may give them your love but not your thoughts

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you can not visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backwards nor carries with yesterday.

You are the bow from which your children as living arrows are sent forth."

ON GREAT MEN . . .

"The truly great man is he who would master no one, and who would be mastered by none."

ON FRIENDSHIP . . .

"Your friend is your needs answered.
He is your field which you sow with love
and reap with Thanksgiving.
And he is your board and your fireside.
For you come to him with your hunger, and
you seek him for peace.

When you part from your friend, you grieve
not;
For that which you love most in him may
be clearer in his absence, as the moun-
tain to the climber is clearer from the
plain.

And let your best be for your friend.
If he must know the ebb of your tide, let him
know its flood also."

"Friendship is always a sweet responsibil-
ity, never an opportunity."

ON FAULT-FINDING . .

"Is there a greater fault than being con-
scious of the other person's faults?"

ON REASON AND PASSION . . .

"Your reason and your passion are the rud-
der and the sails of your seafaring soul.

"If either your sails or your rudder be
broken, you can toss and drift, or else be held
at a standstill in mid-seas."

ON CITIZENSHIP . . .

"And what is it to be a good citizen?

"It is to acknowledge the other person's rights before asserting your own, but always to be conscious of your own.

"It is to be free in word and deed, but it is also to know that your freedom is subject to the other person's freedom.

"It is to create the useful and beautiful with your own hands, and to admire what others have created in love and with faith.

"It is to produce by labor and only by labor, and to spend less than you have produced that your children will not be dependent upon the state for support when you are no more."

ON SIMPLICITY . . .

"The lust for comfort, that stealthy thing that enters the house a guest, and then becomes a host, and then a master."

ON WORK . . .

"And all work is empty save when there is love;

"And when you work with love you bind yourself to yourself, and to one another, and to God.

"And what is it to work with love?

"It is to weave the cloth with threads drawn from your heart, even as if your beloved were to wear that cloth.

"It is to build your house with affection, even as if your beloved were to dwell in that house.

"It is to sow seeds with tenderness and reap the harvest with joy, even as if your beloved were to eat the fruit.

"It is to charge all things you fashion with a breath of your own spirit."

ON BEAUTY . . .

"One of our lovely, almost forgotten words is 'hand-made'."

"Beauty is eternity gazing at itself in a mirror.

"But you are eternity and you are the mirror."

"I would build a city near to a harbor, and upon an island in that harbor I would erect a statue, not to Liberty, but to Beauty. For Liberty is that one about whose feet men have forever fought their battles; and Beauty is that one before whose face all men reach hands unto all men as brothers."

ON ART . . .

"Art is a step from nature toward the infinite."

"A work of art is a mist carved into an image."

ON IMMORTALITY . . .

"I long for Eternity, for there I shall meet my unwritten poems and my unpainted pictures."

"Night is over, and we children of night must die when dawn comes leaping upon the hills; and out of our ashes a mightier love shall rise. And it shall laugh in the sun, and it shall be called deathless."

"And what is it to cease breathing, but to free the breath from its restless tides, that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered."

ON THE BEATITUDES . . .

"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.

"Blessed are they who hunger after truth and beauty, for their hunger shall bring bread and their thirst cool water.

"Blessed are the kindly, for they shall be consoled by their own kindness.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall be one with God.

"Blessed are the merciful, for mercy shall be in their portion.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for their spirit shall dwell above the battle, and they shall turn the potter's field into a garden.

"Blessed are they who are hunted, for they shall be swift of foot and they shall be winged.

"Rejoice and be joyful, for you have found the kingdom of heaven within you."

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