



THE
LOST COUNSELS
of

ALMUSTAFA
THE PROPHET

THE 'NEWLY-DISCOVERED' CHAPTERS
ON TOPICS TOO CONTROVERSIAL
TO BE INCLUDED IN KAHLIL GIBRAN'S
ORIGINAL VERSION OF

THE PROPHET

**SAMPLE
SELECTIONS**
MARK S HASKETT

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**EXCERPTS
FROM THE
PREFACE
BEGIN ON
NEXT PAGE,
FOLLOWED BY
SAMPLES
FROM THE
COUNSELS**

EXCERPTS FROM THE PREFACE

This work of fiction assumes that you, the reader, have at least a passing familiarity with another fictional work published exactly 100 years ago (as this book goes to press) entitled, *The Prophet*, by Kahlil Gibran. That acclaimed volume, said to be the 20th Century's best-selling book after *The Holy Bible*, features a collection of 26 poetic homilies – what Gibran called “counsels” – about everyday issues ranging from love to work, from joy and sorrow to religion and death... (*preface continues*)

Because my own introduction to *The Prophet* occurred during the social unrest and political/religious turmoil of the 1960s, its guidance filled a spiritual vacuum in me, as it did for millions of others. In the process, *The Prophet* became “required reading” for my generation, having repeated that distinction in nearly every decade since its publication by the respected New York firm, Alfred A. Knopf, in 1923.

And yet, from the very beginning of my “discipleship,” I found *The Prophet's* silence on certain issues troubling, if not completely baffling. How could Gibran (through his fictional mouthpiece, Almustafa), fail to address the subject of war, a topic of such passionate debate for those of us facing conscription at the height of a much-despised Viet Nam conflict? How could the author avoid the subject of sex and sexual identity, when women's suffrage and their struggle for equality were bringing marchers into the streets by the tens of thousands? And where were Almustafa's illuminating insights into such vital issues as racial intolerance and political division? Or poverty and ecology?

It's not enough to say, in defense of Gibran, that these subjects were of little concern to him when he wrote his most celebrated book... (*preface continues*)

So after fifty-plus years conversing with *The Prophet* – and therefore with Kahlil Gibran – I began to suspect that Almustafa's seeming silence on certain issues wasn't really a choice the author had made. Perhaps Gibran *did* write counsels with such titles as *On War* and *On Race*... and a purely commercial determination was made: In the judgment of Knopf's senior editors, certain subjects were deemed too controversial to broach. Those most likely to harm the book's potential sales were removed... (*preface continues*)

Of course, there's no historical evidence to support this scenario. I'm not

PREFACE *(continued)*

aware of any letters suggesting that Gibran expressed regret or outrage at having been told specific topics were precluded or rejected before the final version was typeset...

But that's *my* story and I'm stickin' to it, if only as the premise for this book. Which is simply this:

If Gibran *had* put his thoughts about war into Almustafa's mouth, what might he have said? If the book *had* taken on the issues of racial and gender equality, what guidance might *The Prophet* have offered us? And what if, among the papers bequeathed to (mentor and life-long friend) Mary Haskell following Gibran's much-too-early demise, a hidden trove of unpublished counsels came to light, tucked away in a drawer next to the stacks of intimate correspondence she was surprised to discover in his New York studio?... *(preface continues)*



P.S. Over the ten decades between *The Prophet's* initial publication and its recent passage into the public domain, the status of women in society – at least in the West – has finally begun to approach parity with that of men. And even though one of the sixteen counsels in the following collection deals with women's issues and gender equality, a certain female character in Gibran's original work remains enshrouded by the same near-invisibility women struggled with during his lifetime. I refer here to Almitra the Seeress.

While Gibran assigns Almitra a cameo role in *The Prophet's* first and final chapters... she remains a mysterious, almost hollow, figure. In the first of these *Lost Counsels*, however, I've not only given Almitra a few more moments in the spotlight, I've offered several tantalizing clues about her own backstory and put the closing lines of that counsel in her mouth.

Gibran may not have sanctioned such literary license back in the 1920s, but I believe he would today.

— *Mark S. Haskett*
October, 2023

ON IMMIGRATION



ND after Almustafa had imparted his wise counsel for the better part of the morning,

Almitra the Seeress, silent and spellbound as the townfolk assembled below the temple steps,

Chanced to look back upon him when the harbour's sweet breezes wafted through the city gates,

Spying the turn of his head, and the path of his gaze as it came to rest on the ship that awaited his boarding.

Even from this distance, Almitra could see the sailors high in the rigging and alongside the rail,

Others arrayed as a princely guard on either end of the boarding plank, All of them peering as though to question their lone passenger's ongoing delay,

Lengthening now, even as the shadows of the ship's masts began to extend themselves upon the adjacent wharf.



And when Almustafa's gaze lingered there overlong, Shoulders rising, then falling as one who has settled on a course of action only with great reluctance,

Almitra trembled with alarm, hastily crossing the marble tier upon which she had often imparted her own wisdom, coming to a halt in the space between him and his ship.

And whispering softly lest those in the temple square might hear, she said, My precious one, my love's completion, Much have you given of the harvest gathered from your seasons among us,

And spoken to me in the silence between our caresses.

ON IMMIGRATION

(continued)

Now tarry but an hour longer, I beg you,
For the book you have begun to inscribe upon our peoples' hearts has
pages yet unfilled,
And the light behind your eyes is only partly unveiled.



Then, seeing the glimmer of desperation on her cheek,
Almustafa's shoulders rose and fell once more, as much with empathy as
reluctance,

For he remembered that she, too, had arrived on the selfsame winds that
had brought him to Orphalese,

Her vessel far more modest, yet more laden with humanity than the ship
that had borne him a generation later,

Her escape purchased with a grandmother's last piece of silver after whis-
pers of city elders plotting death for a girl-child had reached her ears,

Whose oracles had become a challenge to their rule.



And before Almitra could form the words to ask of him,

He answered her, saying,

I would now speak of the immigrant, from whose seed all but a handful of
you have been rooted and nurtured,

And the memory of whom you have written upon your sacred scrolls.

But only in part, lest those who arrived first on these shores be obliged to
share equally with those who came after,

Contending for a meager wage by toiling in the fields and vineyards your
forebears apportioned themselves,

And in the garment shops and warehouses...

(counsel continues in book)

ON HEALTH AND SICKNESS



WHEN a mixer of medicines asked: What of Health and Sickness?

And he answered:

Unlike your moments of pleasure and pain, your days of good and poor health linger over your lives as kinfolk who cross your threshold for a visit of unknown length,

Lifting your spirits by their welcome presence,

Or consuming your time and energies with their unceasing demands.

Would that you could invite the one and exclude the other.

And in much of what occupies your time, this is the very harvest of what you have sown.

For that which you consume may bring nourishment to your body as fertile ground brings abundance to the field well-tended and faithfully watered,

Or seeps into your sinews like the tainted effluent from the ironworks that neighbors the barren orchard.



Your nourishing foods, too, like sweets prepared for the wedding feast,
When consumed with abandon may linger overlong in the storehouses of your flesh,

Not as a reserve for the months of meager harvest, or as fuel for the forges of your livelihood,

But as a caution against your own indulgence,

And a reminder of others' whose substance, withering on their limbs, bears witness to their hunger.

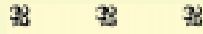
Yet those of leaner stature have no license to ridicule or to heap shame,
For in truth, breadth of body is as natural among those who walk the earth

ON HEALTH AND SICKNESS

(continued)

as the stout oak amidst the aspen.

And it is not yours, but those who carry the weight that are given to decide
whether the façade represents a fault to be overcome,
Or a feature to be embraced as the oak enriches the grove of aspen.



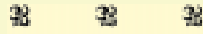
Likewise your drink, though pressed from the fruit of your vines, or from
the scarlet globes whose bejeweled seeds yield a cleansing potion;
Even these, left overlong to ferment in their casks,
Or sweetened beyond what nature bequeaths, the better to please the
palate and fatten the vendor's purse,
Become as layers of winter's clothing under summer's sun.



There are those who promise respite from the travails of ill-health and the
anguish of a life ill-spent;
Owners of grand apothecaries whose bricks are set row upon row with
mortar made from the tears of those desperate for deliverance,
Both from the body's pain, and from the misery of their own mistaken
choices,
Or who, though they suffer symptoms begotten by unknowing contact
with another's malady,
Or from a weakness in the spore of their father's fathers,
Yet do they succumb to the cunning entreaties of others who offer easy
redemption.
Ay, and in such straits, the cure may become as ruinous as the sickness,
Or worse, not only at the cost of their gold and silver,
But in the endless obeisance the precious elixir requires, rendering them
ever more dependent on the transitory relief it provides,
And all the less able to regain their health by any other means, natural or
otherwise.

ON HEALTH AND SICKNESS

(continued)



See, therefore, that your merchants of medicine are not also purveyors of entrapment,

But render swift justice to those who would seek to mortgage your health in pursuit of their greater fortune,

Or who ask the pauper to pay a king's ransom for relief,

Even as you forgive those whose sickness has made them easy prey.

For the unwell deserve your compassion and kindness,

Just as the healthy merit their own well-being.



ON MALE AND FEMALE



AND a woman adorned in silk and gold earrings asked,
What of Male and Female?

And he said:

You are alike, yet not alike.

The heavens fashioned the peacock and the peahen not
without reason, and the seed and soil according to their
purpose.

Neither is exalted for what it alone can give, and neither abased for
what it cannot.

Each one lies fallow without the other's gift, but is not thereby lacking.

For the conjoining of any one male with any one female brings glory to
all,

And the difference between them is redeemed not only when any two
should mate, but in Nature's assurance that other couples will.



The strength of the male does not license his dominion over the fe-
male, nor should control of his passions depend upon the other's conceal-
ment beneath veils.

Neither must the laws decreed by our fathers, or their traditions how-
ever long practiced, be allowed to sanction the submission of one to the
other, when it is Nature herself who occupies the throne.



And how can I speak further of male and female without talk of body
and soul?

For the soul that sees through your body's eyes and hears through your
body's ears is neither male nor female, but wears its gender as clothing.

ON MALE AND FEMALE

(continued)

It is the body that feels pleasure and pain, the soul joy and sorrow;
The body that feels wakefulness or sleep, the soul consciousness or nothingness;

The body that desires satisfaction, the soul fulfillment.

And it is not the body that loves, but the soul.

Would that you honor the love that unites two souls,

Or much the better, celebrate it with music and dance, whether it connect male with female, or bodies of like kind,

For love is the soul's sustenance, as well as substance, and will not be denied for lack of others' consent.



You have been told that the conjoining of bodies is sanctified only by the provision of still more such vessels to carry the souls of those who have yet to worship in the temple of Creation.

And this much is surely true: The cry of the newborn consecrates those bodies as instruments of the Divine.

But their conjoining is no less holy if their seed fails to take root, or was never sown for next year's harvest.

For there is far more bounty to be gathered than the sustenance for which the sowing was first decreed,

And still more to reap than what mere senses bestow.



The rituals in the temple are less for what the body performs than what the soul receives.

The lighting of the candle is less for its illumination than the kindling of our enlightenment.

The singing of the hymn is less for the melody that rises from our lips than the Deeper Song that sings in us.

The reciting of the prayer is less for the answer one seeks than our

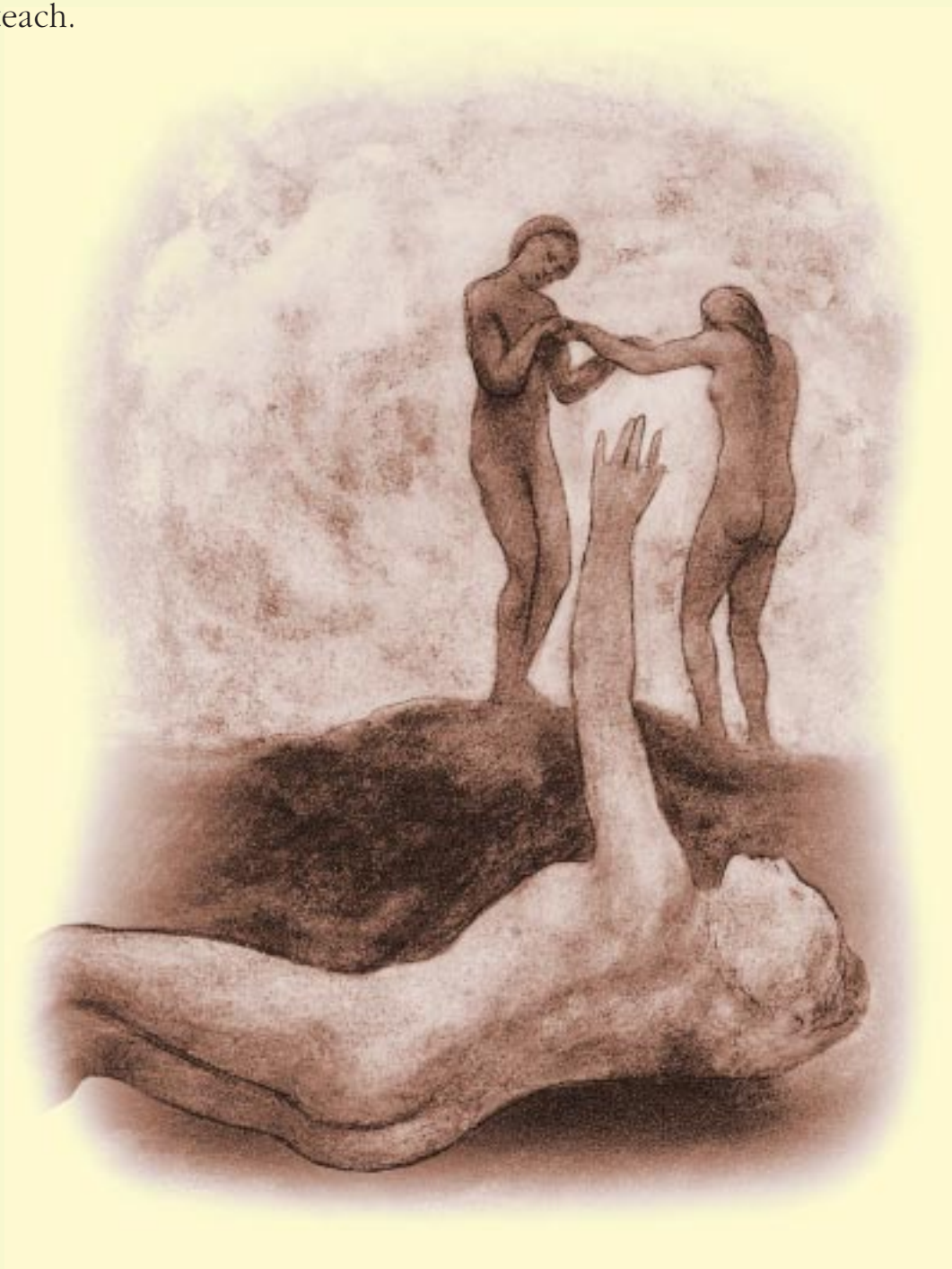
ON MALE AND FEMALE

(continued)

souls' communion with the Divine.

And, in like fashion, our soul's embodiment is less for learning the ways of male or female,

Than learning the ways of the Divine only our soul's embodiment can teach.



ON WAR AND PEACE



WHEN a Bowman said, Speak to us of War and Peace.
And a pall of sorrow fell across Almustafa's face,
And after turning his gaze for but a moment toward the
battlements on either side of the city's gates, he said:
The stone monuments and graven tombs of our fathers'
fathers, both far and near, are adorned with the glories
and grandeur of their crusades.

Yet these selfsame monuments are cast down and broken to pieces by
each succeeding victor,

And their boastful reliefs of vanquished enemies and looted treasure
defaced when the challenger who awaits his moment seizes the throne.

For those whose authority rests solely on might will draw rivals, like
the stag ever vigilant in defense of his harem,

But a people ruled only by fear has little cause to muster themselves in
their despot's defense.



And turning his face again to the Bowman, he asked:

Was there ever a just war?

How often have kings and generals amassed armies to steal what their
neighbors have created for themselves through sacrifice and honest labour?

What justice is there when years of patient toil by your carpenters and
masons can be turned to ashes and rubble in an afternoon's campaign?

And how is it that warfare can be hailed as a righteous cause when a
single weapon, devised with the selfsame wit that might have overcome
the scourge of disease, can unleash hell's inferno,

Destroying in but a moment the child along with her mother, the inno-
cent together with the guilty?



ON WAR AND PEACE

(continued)

Yet what choice is left to those besieged but to build ever stronger walls before the next assault should come,

And ever more powerful weapons for their defense, whose very creation incites the next call to arms;

And when even these measures fail, to accept death over defeat, lest the besieged submit to tyranny and in so doing reward the aggressor?

But whoso allays the massing of armies and prevents the assault before its onset is mightier than any king, and stronger than any general.

For the deeper war is the struggle against War itself,

Which quiets the pounding in men's hearts roused by remembrance of past victories or bitter losses unforgotten.

And the warrior who slows the wrathful drumbeat to make way for a procession of peace will be crowned with wreaths of laurel, and showered with rose petals.



And this, too, I would ask:

Was there ever an unjust peace?

Ay, for how often has tranquility been purchased at the cost of voices muted?

And what is the recompense of a people who trade submission for serenity but another means of dying?

The quiet of the burial ground is also a kind of peace,

Though the toll exacted is the interment of one's soul.



People of Orphalese, the earth belongs to no one,
And only a portion is entrusted to your care, or given for the dominion of others beyond your horizon.

See, then, to your own orchards and flocks and fields,

And let the soil beneath them be bathed with the sacred sweat of your

ON WAR AND PEACE
(continued)

labour and not with your blood.

And let your gratitude for its bounty be the might that vanquishes both
the enemy from without,
And the enemy within.

OTHER BOOKS BY MARK

