I often wonder whether Jesus was a man of flesh and blood like ourselves, or a thought without a body, in the mind, or an idea that visits the vision of man.

Often it seems to me that He was but a dream dreamed by countless men and women at the same time in a sleep deeper than sleep and a dawn more serene than all dawns.

And it seems that in relating the dream, the one to the other, we began to deem it a reality that had indeed come to pass; and in giving it body of our fancy and a voice of our longing we made it a substance of our substance.

But in truth He was not a dream. We knew Him for three years and beheld Him with our open eyes in the high tide of noon.

We touched His hands, and we followed Him from one place to another. We heard His discourses and witnessed His deeds. Think you that we were a thought seeking after more thought, or a dream in the region of dreams?

Great events always seem alien to our daily lives, though their nature may be rooted in our nature. But though they appear sudden in their coming
and sudden in their passing, their true span is for years and for generations.

Jesus of Nazareth was Himself the Great Event. That man, whose father and mother and brothers we know, was Himself a miracle wrought in Judea. Yea, all His own miracles, if placed at His feet, would not rise to the height of His ankles.

And all the rivers of all the years shall not carry away our remembrance of Him.

He was a mountain burning in the night, yet He was a soft glow beyond the hills. He was a tempest in the sky, yet He was a murmur in the mist of daybreak.

He was a torrent pouring from the heights to the plains to destroy all things in its path. And He was like the laughter of children.

Every year I had waited for spring to visit this valley. I had waited for the lilies and the cyclamen, and then every year my soul had been saddened within me; for ever I longed to rejoice with the spring, yet I could not.

But when Jesus came to my seasons He was indeed a spring, and in Him was the promise of all the years to come. He filled my heart with joy; and like the violets I grew, a shy thing, in the light of His coming.

And now the changing seasons of worlds not yet ours shall not erase His loveliness from this our world.

Nay, Jesus was not a phantom, nor a conception of the poets. He was man like yourself and myself. But only to sight and touch and hearing; in all other ways He was unlike us.
He was a man of joy; and it was upon the path of joy that He met the sorrows of all men. And it was from the high roofs of His sorrows that He beheld the joy of all men.

He saw visions that we did not see, and heard voices that we did not hear; and He spoke as if to invisible multitudes, and oft-times He spoke through us to races yet unborn.

And Jesus was often alone. He was among us yet not one with us. He was upon the earth, yet He was of the sky. And only in our aloneness may we visit the land of His aloneness.

He loved us with tender love. His heart was a winepress. You and I could approach with a cup and drink therefrom.

One thing I did not use to understand in Jesus: He would make merry with His listeners; He would tell jests and play upon words, and laugh with all the fullness of His heart, even when there were distances in His eyes and sadness in His voice. But I understand now.

I often think of the earth as a woman heavy with her first child. When Jesus was born, He was the first child. And when He died, He was the first man to die.

For did it not appear to you that the earth was stilled on that dark Friday, and the heavens were at war with the heavens?

And felt you not when His face disappeared from our sight as if we were naught but memories in the mist?
Cleopas of Bethroune

When Jesus spokc, the whole world was hushed to listen. His words were not for our ears but rather for the elements of which God made this earth.

He spoke to the sea, our vast mother, that gave us birth. He spoke to the mountains, our elder brother whose summit is a promise.

And He spoke to the angels beyond the sea and the mountain to whom we entrusted our dreams ere the clay in us was made hard in the sun.

And still His speech slumbers within our breast like a love-song half forgotten, and sometimes it burns itself through to our memory.

His speech was simple and joyous, and the sound of His voice was like cool water in a land of drought.

Once He raised His hand against the sky, and His fingers were like the branches of a sycamore tree; and He said with a great voice:

"The prophets of old have spoken to you, and your ears are filled with their speech. But I say unto you, empty your ears of what you have heard."

And these words of Jesus, "But I say unto you," were not uttered by a man of our race nor of our world; but rather by a host of seraphim marching across the sky of Judea.
Again and yet again He would quote the law and the prophets, and then He would say: "But I say unto you."

Oh, what burning words, what waves of seas unknown to the shores of our mind: "But I say unto you!"

What stars seeking the darkness of the soul, and what sleepless souls awaiting the dawn!

To tell of the speech of Jesus one must needs have His speech or the echo thereof.

I have neither the speech nor the echo.

I beg you to forgive me for beginning a story that I cannot end. But the end is not yet upon my lips. It is still a love-song in the wind.
NAAMAN OF THE GADARENES

His disciples are dispersed. He gave them the legacy of pain ere He Himself was put to death. They are hunted like the deer and the foxes of the field, and the quiver of the hunter is yet full of arrows.

But when they are caught and led to death, they are joyous, and their faces shine like the face of the bridegroom at the wedding-feast. For He gave them also the legacy of joy.

I had a friend from the North Country, and his name was Stephen; and because he proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God, he was led to the market-place and stoned.

And when Stephen fell to earth he outstretched his arms as if he would die as his Master had died. His arms were spread like wings ready for flight. And when the last gleam of light was fading in his eyes, with my own eyes I saw a smile upon his lips. It was a smile like the breath that comes before the end of winter for a pledge and a promise of spring.

How shall I describe it?

It seemed that Stephen was saying: "If I should go to another world, and other men should lead me to another market-place to stone me, even then I
would proclaim Him for the truth which was in Him, and for that same truth which is in me now.”

And I noticed that there was a man standing near, and looking with pleasure upon the stoning of Stephen.

His name was Saul of Tarsus, and it was he who had yielded Stephen to the priests and the Romans and the crowd, for stoning.

Saul was bald of head and short of stature. His shoulders were crooked and his features ill-sorted; and I liked him not.

I have been told that he is now preaching Jesus from the house-tops. It is hard to believe.

But the grave halts not Jesus’ walking to the enemies’ camp to tame and take captive those who had opposed Him.

Still, I do not like that man of Tarsus, though I have been told that after Stephen’s death he was tamed and conquered on the road to Damascus. But his head is too large for his heart to be that of a true disciple.

And yet perhaps I am mistaken. I am often mistaken.
THOMAS

My grandfather, who was a lawyer, once said: 
"Let us observe truth, but only when truth is made manifest unto us."

When Jesus called me I heeded Him, for His command was more potent than my will; yet I kept my counsel.

When He spoke and the others were swayed like branches in the wind, I listened immovable. Yet I loved Him.

Three years ago He left us, a scattered company to sing His name, and to be His witnesses unto the nations.

At that time I was called Thomas the Doubter. The shadow of my grandfather was still upon me, and always I would have truth made manifest.

I would even put my hand in my own wound to feel the blood ere I would believe in my pain.

Now a man who loves with his heart, yet holds a doubt in his mind, is but a slave in a galley who sleeps at his oar and dreams of his freedom, till the lash of the master wakes him.

I myself was that slave, and I dreamed of freedom, but the sleep of my grandfather was upon me. My flesh needed the whip of my own day.
Even in the presence of the Nazarene I had closed my eyes to see my hands chained to the oar.

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

Doubt is a foundling unhappy and astray, and though his own mother who gave him birth should find him and enfold him, he would withdraw in caution and in fear.

For Doubt will not know truth till his wounds are healed and restored.

I doubted Jesus until He made Himself manifest to me, and thrust my own hand into His very wounds.

Then indeed I believed, and after that I was rid of my yesterday and the yesterdays of my forefathers.

The dead in me buried their dead; and the living shall live for the Anointed King, even for Him who was the Son of Man.

Yesterday they told me that I must go and utter His name among the Persians and the Hindus.

I shall go. And from this day to my last day, at dawn and at eventide, I shall see my Lord rising in majesty and I shall hear Him speak.
ELMADAM THE LOGICIAN

YOU bid me speak of Jesus the Nazarene, and much have I to tell, but the time has not come. Yet whatever I say of Him now is the truth; for all speech is worthless save when it discloses the truth.

Behold a man disorderly, against all order; a mendicant, opposed to all possessions; a drunkard who would only make merry with rogues and castaways.

He was not the proud son of the State, nor was He the protected citizen of the Empire; therefore He had contempt for both State and Empire.

He would live as free and dutiless as the fowls of the air, and for this the hunters brought Him to earth with arrows.

No man shall ram the towers of yesterday and escape the falling stones.

No one shall open the flood gates of his ancestors without drowning. It is the law. And because that Nazarene broke the law, He and His witless followers were brought to naught.

And there lived many others like Him, men who would change the course of our destiny.

They themselves were changed, and they were the losers.

There is a grapeless vine that grows by the city
walls. It creeps upward and clings to the stones. Should that vine say in her heart: “With my might and my weight I shall destroy these walls,” what would the other plants say? Surely they would laugh at her foolishness.

Now sir, I cannot but laugh at this man and His ill-advised disciples.
ONE OF THE MARYS

His head was always high, and the flame of God was in His eyes.

He was often sad, but His sadness was tenderness shown to those in pain, and comradeship given to the lonely.

When He smiled His smile was as the hunger of those who long after the unknown. It was like the dust of stars falling upon the eyelids of children. And it was like a morsel of bread in the throat.

He was sad, yet it was a sadness that would rise to the lips and become a smile.

It was like a golden veil in the forest when autumn is upon the world. And sometimes it seemed like moonlight upon the shores of the lake.

He smiled as if His lips would sing at the wedding-feast.

Yet He was sad with the sadness of the wingèd who will not soar above his comrade.
HE was a poet. He saw for our eyes and heard for our ears, and our silent words were upon His lips; and His fingers touched what we could not feel.

Out of His heart there flew countless singing birds to the north and to the south, and the little flowers on the hillsides stayed His steps towards the heavens.

Oftentimes I have seen Him bending down to touch the blades of grass. And in my heart I have heard Him say: “Little green things, you shall be with me in my kingdom, even as the oaks of Besan, and the cedars of Lebanon.”

He loved all things of loveliness, the shy faces of children, and the myrrh and frankincense from the south.

He loved a pomegranate or a cup of wine given Him in kindness; it mattered not whether it was offered by a stranger in the inn or by a rich host.

And He loved the almond blossoms. I have seen Him gathering them into His hands and covering His face with the petals, as though He would embrace with His love all the trees in the world.

He knew the sea and the heavens; and He spoke of pearls which have light that is not of this light, and of stars that are beyond our night.
He knew the mountains as eagles know them, and the valleys as they are known by the brooks and the streams. And there was a desert in His silence and a garden in His speech.

Aye, He was a poet whose heart dwelt in a bower beyond the heights, and His songs though sung for our ears, were sung for other ears also, and to men in another land where life is for ever young and time is always dawn.

Once I too deemed myself a poet, but when I stood before Him in Bethany, I knew what it is to hold an instrument with but a single string before one who commands all instruments. For in His voice there was the laughter of thunder and the tears of rain, and the joyous dancing of trees in the wind.

And since I have known that my lyre has but one string, and that my voice weaves neither the memories of yesterday nor the hopes of tomorrow, I have put aside my lyre and I shall keep silence. But always at twilight I shall hearken, and I shall listen to the Poet who is the sovereign of all poets.
LEVI, A DISCIPLE

UPON an eventide He passed by my house and my soul was quickened within me.
He spoke to me and said: "Come, Levi, and follow me."
And I followed Him that day.
And at the eventide of the next day I begged Him to enter my house and be my guest. And He and His friends crossed my threshold and blessed me and my wife and my children.
And I had other guests. They were publicans and men of learning, but they were against Him in their hearts.
And when we were sitting about the board, one of the publicans questioned Jesus, saying: "Is it true that you and your disciples break the law, and make fire on the sabbath day?"
And Jesus answered him, saying: "We do indeed make fire on the sabbath day. We would inflame the sabbath day, and we would burn with our torch the dry stubble of all the days."
And another publican said: "It was brought to us that you drink wine with the unclean at the inn."
And Jesus answered: "Aye, these also we would comfort. Came we here except to share the loaf and
the cup with the uncrowned and the unshod amongst you?

"Few, aye, too few are the featherless who dare the wind, and many are the wingèd and full-fledged yet in the nest.

"And we would feed them all with our beak, both the sluggish and the swift."

And another publican said: "Have I not been told that you would protect the harlots of Jerusalem?"

Then in the face of Jesus I saw, as it were, the rocky heights of Lebanon, and He said: "It is true.

"On the day of reckoning these women shall rise before the throne of my Father, and they shall be made pure by their own tears. But you shall be held down by the chains of your own judgment.

"Babylon was not put to waste by her prostitutes; Babylon fell to ashes that the eyes of her hypocrites might no longer see the light of day."

And other publicans would have questioned Him, but I made a sign and bade them be silent, for I knew He would confound them; and they too were my guests, and I would not have them put to shame.

When it was midnight the publicans left my house, and their souls were limping.

Then I closed my eyes and I saw, as if in a vision, seven women in white raiment standing about Jesus. Their arms crossed upon their bosoms, and their heads were bent down, and I looked deep into the mist of my dream and beheld the face of one of the seven women, and it shone in my darkness.

It was the face of a harlot who lived in Jerusalem.
Then I opened my eyes and looked at Him, and He was smiling at me and at the others who had not left the board.

And I closed my eyes again, and I saw in a light seven men in white garments standing around Him. And I beheld the face of one of them.

It was the face of the thief who was crucified afterward at His right hand.

And later Jesus and His comrades left my house for the road.
A WIDOW IN GALILEE

My son was my first and my only born. He laboured in our field and he was contented until he heard the man called Jesus speaking to the multitude.

Then my son suddenly became different, as if a new spirit, foreign and unwholesome, had embraced his spirit.

He abandoned the field and the garden; and he abandoned me also. He became worthless; a creature of the highways.

That man Jesus of Nazareth was evil, for what good man would separate a son from his mother?

The last thing my child said to me was this: “I am going with one of His disciples to the North Country. My life is established upon the Nazarene. You have given me birth, and for that I am grateful to you. But I needs must go. Am I not leaving with you our rich land, and all our silver and gold? I shall take naught but this garment and this staff.”

Thus my son spoke, and departed.

And now the Romans and the priests have laid hold upon Jesus and crucified Him; and they have done well.

A man who would part mother and son could not be godly.
The man who sends our children to the cities of the Gentiles cannot be our friend.

I know my son will not return to me. I saw it in his eyes. And for this I hate Jesus of Nazareth who caused me to be alone in this unploughed field and this withered garden.

And I hate all those who praise Him.

Not many days ago they told me that Jesus once said: “My father and my mother and my brethren are those who hear my word and follow me.”

But why should sons leave their mothers to follow His footsteps?

And why should the milk of my breast be forgotten for a fountain not yet tasted? And the warmth of my arms be forsaken for the Northland, cold and unfriendly?

Aye, I hate the Nazarene, and I shall hate Him to the end of my days, for He has robbed me of my first-born, my only son.
JUDAS THE COUSIN OF JESUS

UPON a night in the month of August we were with the Master on a heath not far from the lake. The heath was called by the ancients the Meadow of Skulls.

And Jesus was reclining on the grass and gazing at the stars.

And of a sudden two men came rushing towards us breathless. They were as if in agony, and they fell prostrate at the feet of Jesus.

And Jesus stood up and He said: "Whence came you?"

And one of the men answered: "From Machaerus."

And Jesus looked upon him and was troubled, and He said: "What of John?"

And the man said: "He was slain this day. He was beheaded in his prison cell."

Then Jesus lifted up His head. And then He walked a little way from us. After a while He stood again in our midst.

And He said: "The king could have slain the prophet ere this day. Verily the king has tried the pleasure of His subjects. Kings of yore were not so slow in giving the head of a prophet to the head-hunters."
“I grieve not for John, but rather for Herod, who let fall the sword. Poor king, like an animal caught and led with a ring and a rope.

“Poor petty tetrarchs lost in their own darkness, they stumble and fall down. And what would you of the stagnant sea but dead fishes?

“I hate not kings. Let them rule men, but only when they are wiser than men.”

And the Master looked at the two sorrowful faces and then He looked at us, and He spoke again and said: “John was born wounded, and the blood of his wound streamed forth with his words. He was freedom not yet free from itself, and patient only with the straight and the just.

“In truth he was a voice crying in the land of the deaf; and I loved him in his pain and his aloneness.

“And I loved his pride that would give its head to the sword ere it would yield to the dust.

“Verily I say unto you that John, the son of Zachariah, was the last of his race, and like his forefathers he was slain between the threshold of the temple and the altar.”

And again Jesus walked away from us.

Then He returned and He said: “Forever it has been that those who rule for an hour would slay the rulers of years. And forever they would hold a trial and pronounce condemnation upon a man not yet born, and decree his death ere he commits the crime.

“The son of Zachariah shall live with me in my kingdom and his day shall be long.”

Then He turned to the disciples of John and said:
“Every deed has its morrow. I myself may be the morrow of this deed. Go back to my friend’s friends, and tell them I shall be with them.”

And the two men walked away from us, and they seemed less heavy-hearted.

Then Jesus laid Himself down again upon the grass and outstretched His arms, and again He gazed at the stars.

Now it was late. And I lay not far from Him, and I would fain have rested, but there was a hand knocking upon the gate of my sleep, and I lay awake until Jesus and the dawn called me again to the road.
THE MAN FROM THE DESERT

I was a stranger in Jerusalem. I had come to the Holy City to behold the great temple, and to sacrifice upon the altar, for my wife had given twin sons to my tribe.

And after I had made my offering, I stood in the portico of the temple looking down upon the money-changers and those who sold doves for sacrifice, and listening to the great noise in the court.

And as I stood, there came of a sudden a man into the midst of the money-changers and those who sold doves.

He was a man of majesty, and He came swiftly.

In His hand He held a rope of goat’s hide; and He began to overturn the tables of the money-changers and to beat the pedlars of birds with the rope.

And I heard Him saying with a loud voice: “Render these birds unto the sky which is their nest.”

Men and women fled from before His face, and He moved amongst them as the whirling wind moves on the sand-hills.

All this came to pass in but a moment, and then the court of the temple was emptied of the money-changers. Only the man stood there alone, and His followers stood at a distance.
Then I turned my face and I saw another man in the portico of the temple. And I walked towards him and said: "Sir, who is this man who stands alone, even like another temple?" And he answered me: "This is Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet who has appeared of late in Galilee. Here in Jerusalem all men hate Him."

And I said: "My heart is strong enough to be with His whip, and yielding enough to be at His feet."

And Jesus turned towards His followers who were awaiting Him. But before He reached them, three of the temple doves flew back, and one alighted upon His left shoulder and the other two at His feet. And He touched each one tenderly. Then He walked on, and there were leagues in every step of His steps.

Now tell me, what power had He to attack and disperse hundreds of men and women without opposition? I was told that they all hate Him, yet no one stood before Him on that day. Had He plucked out the fangs of hate on His way to the court of the temple?
ONCE at sundown Jesus led us into the village of Bethsaida. We were a tired company, and the dust of the road was upon us.

And we came to a great house in the midst of a garden, and the owner stood at the gate.

And Jesus said to him: “These men are weary and footsore. Let them sleep in your house. The night is cold and they are in need of warmth and rest.”

And the rich man said: “They shall not sleep in my house.”

And Jesus said: “Suffer them then to sleep in your garden.”

And the man answered: “Nay, they shall not sleep in my garden.”

Then Jesus turned to us and said: “This is what your tomorrow will be, and this present is like your future. All doors shall be closed in your face, and not even the gardens that lie under the stars may be your couch.

“Should your feet indeed be patient with the road and follow me, it may be you will find a basin and a bed, and perhaps bread and wine also. But if it should be that you find none of these things, forget not then that you have crossed one of my deserts.

“Come, let us go forth.”
And the rich man was disturbed, and his face was changed, and he muttered to himself words that I did not hear; and he shrank away from us and turned into his garden.

And we followed Jesus upon the road.
MELACHI OF BABYLON, AN ASTRONOMER

YOU question me concerning the miracles of Jesus.

Every thousand thousand years the sun and the moon and this earth and all her sister planets meet in a straight line, and they confer for a moment together.

Then they slowly disperse and await the passing of another thousand thousand years.

There are no miracles beyond the seasons, yet you and I do not know all the seasons. And what if a season shall be made manifest in the shape of a man?

In Jesus the elements of our bodies and our dreams came together according to law. All that was timeless before Him became timeful in Him.

They say He gave sight to the blind and walking to the paralysed, and that He drove devils out of madmen.

Perchance blindness is but a dark thought that can be overcome by a burning thought. Perchance a withered limb is but idleness that can be quickened by energy. And perhaps the devils, these restless elements in our life, are driven out by the angels of peace and serenity.
They say He raised the dead to life. If you can tell me *what is death*, then I will tell you *what is life*.

In a field I have watched an acorn, a thing so still and seemingly useless. And in the spring I have seen that acorn take roots and rise, the beginning of an oak tree, towards the sun.

Surely you would deem this a miracle, yet that miracle is wrought a thousand thousand times in the drowsiness of every autumn and the passion of every spring.

Why shall it not be wrought in the heart of man? Shall not the seasons meet in the hand or upon the lips of a Man Anointed?

If our God has given to earth the art to nestle seed whilst the seed is seemingly dead, why shall He not give to the heart of man to breathe life into another heart, even a heart seemingly dead?

I have spoken of these miracles which I deem but little beside the greater miracle, which is the man Himself, the Wayfarer, the man who turned my dross into gold, who taught me how to love those who hate me, and in so doing brought me comfort and gave sweet dreams to my sleep.

This is the miracle in my own life.

My soul was blind, my soul was lame. I was possessed by restless spirits, and I was dead.
But now I see clearly, and I walk erect. I am at peace, and I live to witness and proclaim my own being every hour of the day.

And I am not one of His followers. I am but an old astronomer who visits the fields of space once a season, and who would be heedful of the law and the miracles thereof.

And I am at the twilight of my time, but whenever I would seek its dawning, I seek the youth of Jesus.

And for ever shall age seek youth. In me now it is knowledge that is seeking vision.
A PHILOSOPHER

WHEN He was with us He gazed at us and at our world with eyes of wonder, for His eyes were not veiled with the veil of years, and all that He saw was clear in the light of His youth.

Though He knew the depth of beauty, He was for ever surprised by its peace and its majesty; and He stood before the earth as the first man had stood before the first day.

We whose senses have been dulled, we gaze in full daylight and yet we do not see. We would cup our ears, but we do not hear; and stretch forth our hands, but we do not touch. And though all the incense of Arabia is burned, we go our way and do not smell.

We see not the ploughman returning from his field at eventide; nor hear the shepherd’s flute when he leads his flock to the fold; nor do we stretch our arms to touch the sunset; and our nostrils hunger no longer for the roses of Sharon.

Nay, we honour no kings without kingdoms; nor hear the sound of harps save when the strings are plucked by hands; nor do we see a child playing in our olive grove as if he were a young olive tree. And all words must needs rise from lips of flesh, or else we deem each other dumb and deaf.

99
In truth we gaze but do not see, and hearken but do not hear; we eat and drink but do not taste. And there lies the difference between Jesus of Nazareth and ourselves.

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 less 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.
URIAH, AN OLD MAN OF NAZARETH

He was a stranger in our midst, and His life was hidden with dark veils.

He walked not the path of our God, but followed the course of the foul and the infamous.

His childhood revolted, and rejected the sweet milk of our nature.

His youth was inflamed like dry grass that burns in the night.

And when He became man, He took arms against us all.

Such men are conceived in the ebb tide of human kindness, and born in unholy tempests. And in tempests they live a day and then perish for ever.

Do you not remember Him, a boy overweening, who would argue with our learnèd elders, and laugh at their dignity?

And remember you not His youth, when He lived by the saw and the chisel? He would not accompany our sons and daughters on their holidays. He would walk alone.

And He would not return the salutation of those who hailed Him, as though He were above us.

I myself met Him once in the field and greeted
Him, and He only smiled, and in His smile I beheld arrogance and insult.

Not long afterwards my daughter went with her companions to the vineyards to gather the grapes, and she too spoke to Him and He did not answer her.

He spoke only to the whole company of grape-gatherers, as if my daughter had not been among them.

When He abandoned His people and turned vagabond He became naught but a babbler. His voice was like a claw in our flesh, and the sound of His voice is still a pain in our memory.

He would utter only evil of us and of our fathers and forefathers. And His tongue sought our bosoms like a poisoned arrow.

Such was Jesus.

If He had been my son, I would have committed Him with the Roman legions in Arabia, and I would have begged the captain to place Him in the forefront of the battle, so that the archer of the foe might mark Him, and free me of His insolence.

But I have no son. And mayhap I should be grateful. For what if my son had been an enemy of his own people, and my grey hairs were now seeking the dust with shame, my white beard humbled?
NICODEMUS THE POET,  
THE YOUNGEST OF THE ELDERS  
IN THE SANHEDRIN

Many are the fools who say that Jesus stood  
in His own path and opposed Himself; that  
He knew not His own mind, and in the absence of  
that knowledge confounded Himself.  
Many indeed are the owls who know no song  
unlike their own hooting.  
You and I know the jugglers of words who would  
honour only a greater juggler, men who carry their  
heads in baskets to the market-place and sell them to  
the first bidder.  
We know the pygmies who abuse the sky-man.  
And we know what the weed would say of the oak  
tree and the cedar.  
I pity them that they cannot rise to the heights.  
I pity the shrivelling thorn envying the elm that  
dares the seasons.  
But pity, though enfolded by the regret of all the  
angels, can bring them no light.  
I know the scarecrow whose rotting garments  
flutter in the corn, yet he himself is dead to the corn  
and to the singing wind.  
I know the wingless spider that weaves a net for all  
who fly.
I know the crafty, the blowers of horns and the beaters of drums, who in the abundance of their own noise cannot hear the skylark nor the east wind in the forest.

I know him who paddles against all streams, but never finds the source, who runs with all rivers, but never dares to the sea.

I know him who offers his unskilled hands to the builder of the temple, and when his unskilled hands are rejected, says in the darkness of his heart: “I will destroy all that shall be builded.”

I know all these. They are the men who object that Jesus said on a certain day: “I bring peace unto you”, and on another day: “I bring a sword.”

They cannot understand that in truth He said: “I bring peace unto men of goodwill, and I lay a sword between him who would peace and him who would a sword.”

They wonder that He who said: “My kingdom is not of this earth” said also: “Render unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar’s”; and know not that if they would indeed be free to enter the kingdom of their passion, they must not resist the gate-keeper of their necessities. It behooves them gladly to pay that dole to enter into that city.

These are the men who say: “He preached tenderness and kindliness and filial love, yet He would not heed His mother and His brothers when they sought Him in the streets of Jerusalem.”

They do not know that His mother and brothers in their loving fear would have had Him return to
the bench of the carpenter, whereas He was opening our eyes to the dawn of a new day.

His mother and His brothers would have had Him live in the shadow of death, but He Himself was challenging death upon yonder hill that He might live in our sleepless memory.

I know these moles that dig paths to nowhere. Are they not the ones who accuse Jesus of glorifying Himself in that He said to the multitude: “I am the path and the gate to salvation,” and even called Himself the life and the resurrection?

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

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

He indeed said that He was the way and the life and the resurrection of the heart; and I myself am a testimony to His truth.

Do you remember me, Nicodemus, who believed in naught but the laws and decrees and was in continual subjection to observances?

And behold me now, a man who walks with life and laughs with the sun from the first moment it smiles upon the mountain until it yields itself to bed behind the hills.

Why do you halt before the word salvation? I myself through Him have attained my salvation.

I care not for what shall befall me tomorrow, for I know that Jesus quickened my sleep and made my distant dreams my companions and my road-fellows.

Am I less man because I believe in a greater man?
The barriers of flesh and bone fell down when the Poet of Galilee spoke to me; and I was held by a spirit, and was lifted to the heights, and in mid-air my wings gathered the song of passion.

And when I dismounted from the wind and in the Sanhedrin my pinions were shorn, even then my ribs, my featherless wings, kept and guarded the song. And all the poverties of the lowlands cannot rob me of my treasure.

I have said enough. Let the deaf bury the humming of life in their dead ears. I am content with the sound of His lyre, which He held and struck while the hands of His body were nailed and bleeding.
JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA:
TEN YEARS AFTER

THERE were two streams running in the heart of the Nazarene: the stream of kinship to God whom He called Father, and the stream of rapture which He called the kingdom of the Above-world. And in my solitude I thought of Him and I followed these two streams in His heart. Upon the banks of the one I met my own soul; and sometimes my soul was a beggar and a wanderer, and sometimes it was a princess in her garden.

Then I followed the other stream in His heart, and on my way I met one who had been beaten and robbed of his gold, and he was smiling. And farther on I saw the robber who had robbed him, and there were unshed tears upon his face.

Then I heard the murmur of these two streams in my own bosom also, and I was gladdened.

When I visited Jesus the day before Pontius Pilatus and the elders laid hands on Him, we talked long, and I asked Him many questions, and He answered my questionings with graciousness; and when I left Him I knew He was the Lord and Master of this our earth.

It is long since the cedar tree has fallen, but its fragrance endures, and will for ever seek the four corners of the earth.
GEORGUS OF BEIRUT

He and His friends were in the grove of pines beyond my hedge, and He was talking to them. I stood near the hedge and listened. And I knew who He was, for His fame had reached these shores ere He Himself visited them.

When He ceased speaking I approached Him, and I said: “Sir, come with these men and honour me and my roof.”

And He smiled upon me and said: “Not this day, my friend. Not this day.”

And there was a blessing in His words, and His voice enfolded like a garment on a cold night.

Then He turned to His friends and said: “Behold a man who deems us not strangers, and though He has not seen us ere this day, he bids us to His threshold.

“Verily in my kingdom there are no strangers. Our life is but the life of all other men, given us that we may know all men, and in that knowledge love them.

“The deeds of all men are but our deeds, both the hidden and the revealed.

“I charge you not to be one self but rather many selves, the householder and the homeless, the ploughman and the sparrow that picks the grain ere it slumber in the earth, the giver who gives in gratitude,
and the receiver who receives in pride and recognition.

"The beauty of the day is not only in what you see, but in what other men see.

"For this I have chosen you from among the many who have chosen me."

Then He turned to me again and smiled and said: "I say these things to you also, and you also shall remember them."

Then I entreated Him and said: "Master, will you not visit my house?"

And He answered: "I know your heart, and I have visited your larger house."

And as He walked away with His disciples He said: "Good night, and may your house be large enough to shelter all the wanderers of the land."
MARY MAGDALEN

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.

I would speak of His face, but how shall I? It was like night without darkness, and like day without the noise of day.

It was a sad face, and it was a joyous face.

And well I remember how once He raised His hand towards the sky, and His parted fingers were like the branches of an elm.

And I remember Him pacing the evening. He was not walking. He Himself was a road above the road; even as a cloud above the earth that would descend to refresh the earth.

But when I stood before Him and spoke to Him, He was a man, and His face was powerful to behold. And He said to me: "What would you, Miriam?"

I did not answer Him, but my wings enfolded my secret, and I was made warm.

And because I could bear His light no more, I turned and walked away, but not in shame. I was only shy, and I would be alone, with His fingers upon the strings of my heart.
JOThAM OF NAZARETH,
TO A ROMAN

My friend, you, like all other Romans, would conceive life rather than live it. You would rule lands rather than be ruled by the spirit.
You would conquer races and be cursed by them rather than stay in Rome and be blest and happy.
You think but of armies marching and of ships launched into the sea.
How shall you then understand Jesus of Nazareth, a man simple and alone, who came without armies or ships, to establish a kingdom in the heart and an empire in the free spaces of the soul?
How shall you understand this man who was not a warrior, but who came with the power of the mighty ether?
He was not a god, He was a man like unto ourselves; but in Him the myrrh of the earth rose to meet the frankincense of the sky; and in His words our lisping embraced the whispering of the unseen; and in His voice we heard a song unfathomable.
Aye, Jesus was a man and not a god, and therein lies our wonder and our surprise.
But you Romans wonder not save at the gods, and no man shall surprise you. Therefore you understand not the Nazarene.
He belonged to the youth of the mind and you belong to its old age.
You govern us today; but let us wait another day.
Who knows but that this man with neither armies nor ships shall govern tomorrow?
We who follow the spirit shall sweat blood while journeying after Him. But Rome shall lie a white skeleton in the sun.
We shall suffer much, yet we shall endure and we shall live. But Rome must needs fall into the dust.
Yet if Rome, when humbled and made low, shall pronounce His name, He will heed her voice. And He will breathe new life into her bones that she may rise again, a city among the cities of the earth.
But this He shall do without legions, nor with slaves to oar His galleys. He will be alone.
WHEN He came again to Jericho I sought Him out and said to Him: "Master, on the morrow my son will take a wife. I beg you come to the wedding feast and do us honour, even as you honoured the wedding at Cana of Galilee."

And He answered: "It is true that I was once a guest at a wedding feast, but I shall not be a guest again. I am myself now the Bridegroom."

And I said: "I entreat you, Master, come to the wedding feast of my son."

And He smiled as though He would rebuke me, and said: "Why do you entreat me? Have you not wine enough?"

And I said: "My jugs are full, Master; yet I beseech you, come to my son's wedding-feast."

Then He said: "Who knows? I may come, I may surely come, if your heart is an altar in your temple."

Upon the morrow my son was married, but Jesus came not to the wedding-feast. And though we had many guests, I felt that no one had come.

In very truth, I myself, who welcomed the guests, was not there.

Perhaps my heart had not been an altar when I invited Him. Perhaps I desired another miracle.
I believe that neither the Romans nor the Jews understood Jesus of Nazareth, nor did His disciples who now preach His name.

The Romans slew Him, and that was a blunder. The Galileans would make a god of Him, and that is a mistake.

Jesus was of the heart of man.

I have sailed the Seven Seas with my ships, and bartered with kings and princes and with cheats and the wily in the market-places of distant cities; but never have I seen a man who understood merchants as He did.

I heard Him once tell this parable:

“A merchant left his country for a foreign land. He had two servants, and he gave each a handful of gold, saying: ‘Even as I go abroad, you also shall go forth and seek profit. Make just exchange, and see that you serve in giving and taking.’

“And after a year the merchant returned.

“And he asked his two servants what they had done with his gold.

“The first servant said: ‘Behold, Master, I have bought and sold, and I have gained.’

“And the merchant answered: ‘The gain shall be
yours, for you have done well, and have been faithful to me and to yourself.’

‘Then the other servant stood forth and said: ‘Sir, I feared the loss of your money; and I did not buy or sell. Behold, it is all here in this purse.’

‘And the merchant took the gold, and said: ‘Little is your faith. To barter and lose is better than not to go forth. For even as the wind scatters her seed and waits for the fruit, so must all merchants. It were fitter for you henceforth to serve others.’”

When Jesus spoke thus, though He was no merchant, He disclosed the secret of commerce.

Moreover, His parables often brought thoughts to my mind more distant than my journeys, and yet nearer than my house and my goods.

But the young Nazarene was not a god; and it is a pity His followers seek to make a god of such a sage.
TAKE your harps and let me sing.
Beat your strings, the silver and the gold;
For I would sing the dauntless Man
Who slew the dragon of the valley,
Then gazèd down with pity
Upon the thing He had slain.

Take your harps and sing with me
The lofty Oak upon the height,
The sky-hearted and the ocean-handed Man,
Who kissed the pallid lips of death,
Yet quivers now upon the mouth of life.

Take your harps and let us sing
The fearless Hunter on the hill,
Who marked the beast, and shot His viewless arrow,
And brought the horn and tusk
Down to the earth.

Take your harps and sing with me
The valiant Youth who conquered the mountain
cities,
And the cities of the plain that coiled like serpents
in the sand.
He fought not against pygmies but against gods
Who hungered for our flesh and thirsted for our blood.

And like the first Golden Hawk
He would rival only eagles;
For His wings were vast and proud
And would not outwing the less wingèd.

Take your harps and sing with me
The joyous song of sea and cliff.
The gods are dead,
And they are lying still
In the forgotten isle of a forgotten sea.
And He who slew them sits upon His throne.

He was but a youth.
Spring had not yet given Him full beard,
And His summer was still young in His field.

Take your harps and sing with me
The tempest in the forest
That breaks the dry branch and the leafless twig,
Yet sends the living root to nestle deeper at the breast of earth.

Take your harps and sing with me
The deathless song of our Belovèd.
Nay, my maidens, stay your hands.
Lay by your harps.
We cannot sing Him now.
The faint whisper of our song cannot reach His tempest,
Nor pierce the majesty of His silence.

Lay by your harps and gather close around me,
I would repeat His words to you,
And I would tell you of His deeds,
For the echo of His voice is deeper than our passion.
BENJAMIN THE Scribe

It has been said that Jesus was the enemy of Rome and Judea.

But I say that Jesus was the enemy of no man and no race.

I have heard Him say: "The birds of the air and the mountain-tops are not mindful of the serpents in their dark holes.

"Let the dead bury their dead. Be you yourself among the living, and soar high."

I was not one of His disciples. I was but one of the many who went after Him to gaze at His face.

He looked upon Rome and upon us, who are the slaves of Rome, as a father looks upon his children playing with toys and fighting among themselves for the larger toy. And He laughed from His height.

He was greater than State and race; He was greater than revolution.

He was single and alone, and He was an awakening.

He wept all our unshed tears and smiled all our revolts.

We knew it was in His power to be born with all who are not yet born, and to bid them see, not with their eyes but with His vision.

Jesus was the beginning of a new kingdom upon the earth, and that kingdom shall remain.
He was the son and the grandson of all the kings who builded the kingdom of the spirit.
And only the kings of the spirit have ruled our world.
YOU believe in what you hear said. Believe in the unsaid, for the silence of men is nearer the truth than their words.

You ask if Jesus could have escaped His shameful death and saved His followers from persecution.

I answer: He could indeed have escaped had He chosen, but He did not seek safety nor was He mindful of protecting His flock from wolves of the night.

He knew His fate and the morrow of His constant lovers. He foretold and prophesied what should befall every one of us. He sought not His death; but He accepted death as a husbandman shrouding his corn with earth accepts the winter, and then awaits the spring and harvest; and as a builder lays the largest stone in the foundation.

We were men of Galilee and from the slopes of Lebanon. Our Master could have led us back to our country, to live with His youth in our gardens until old age should come and whisper us back into the years.

Was anything barring His path back to the temples of our villages where others were reading the prophets and then disclosing their hearts?

Could He not have said: “Now I go east with the
west wind," and so saying dismiss us with a smile upon His lips?

Aye, He could have said: "Go back to your kin. The world is not ready for me. I shall return a thousand years hence. Teach your children to await my return."

He could have done this had He so chosen.

But He knew that to build the temple invisible He must needs lay Himself the corner-stone, and lay us around as little pebbles cemented close to Himself.

He knew that the sap of His sky-tree must rise from its roots, and He poured His blood upon its roots; and to Him it was not sacrifice but rather gain.

Death is the revealer. The death of Jesus revealed His life.

Had He escaped you and His enemies, you would have been the conquerors of the world. Therefore He did not escape.

Only He who desires all shall give all.

Aye, Jesus could have escaped His enemies and lived to old age. But He knew the passing of the seasons, and He would sing His song.

What man facing the armèd world would not be conquered for the moment that he might overcome the ages?

And now you ask who, in very truth, slew Jesus, the Romans or the priests of Jerusalem?

Neither the Romans slew Him, nor the priests. The whole world stood to honour Him upon that hill.
JONATHAN

UPON a day my belovèd and I were rowing upon the lake of sweet waters. And the hills of Lebanon were about us.

We moved beside the weeping willows, and the reflections of the willows were deep around us.

And while I steered the boat with an oar, my belovèd took her lute and sang thus:

What flower save the lotus knows the waters and the sun?
What heart save the lotus heart shall know both earth and sky?
Behold my love, the golden flower that floats ’twixt deep and high
Even as you and I float betwixt a love that has for ever been
And shall for ever be.

Dip your oar, my love,
And let me touch my strings.
Let us follow the willows, and let us leave not the water-lilies.

In Nazareth there lives a Poet, and His heart is like the lotus.
He has visited the soul of woman,
He knows her thirst growing out of the waters,
And her hunger for the sun, though all her lips are fed.
They say He walks in Galilee.
I say He is rowing with us.
Can you not see His face, my love?
Can you not see, where the willow bough and its reflection meet,
He is moving as we move?

Belovèd, it is good to know the youth of life.
It is good to know its singing joy.
Would that you might always have the oar,
And I my stringèd lute,
Where the lotus laughs in the sun,
And the willow is dipping to the waters,
And His voice is upon my strings.

Dip your oar, my belovèd,
And let me touch my strings.
There is a Poet in Nazareth
Who knows and loves us both.
Dip your oar, my lover,
And let me touch my strings.
HANNAH OF BETHSAIDA:
THE YEAR 73

The sister of my father had left us in her youth to
dwell in a hut beside her father's ancient vine-
yard.

She lived alone, and the people of the countryside
sought her in their maladies, and she healed them
with green herbs, and with roots and flowers dried
in the sun.

And they deemed her a seeress; but there were
those also who called her witch and sorceress.

One day my father said to me: "Take these loaves
of wheaten bread to my sister, and take this jug of
wine and this basket of raisins."

And it was all put upon the back of a colt, and I
followed the road until I reached the vineyard and
the hut of my father's sister. And she was gladdened.

Now as we sat together in the cool of the day, a
man came by upon the road, and He greeted the
sister of my father, saying: "Good-even to you, and
the blessing of the night be upon you."

Then she rose up; and she stood as in awe before
Him and said: "Good-even to you, master of all
good spirits, and conqueror of all evil spirits."

The man looked at her with tender eyes, and then
He passed on by.
But I laughed in my heart. Methought my father’s sister was mad. But now I know that she was not mad. It was I who did not understand.

She knew of my laughter, though it was hidden.

And she spoke, but not in anger. She said: “Listen, my daughter, and hearken and keep my word in remembrance: the man who but now passed by, like a shadow of a bird flying between the sun and the earth, shall prevail against the Cæsars and the empire of the Cæsars. He shall wrestle with the crownèd bull of Chaldea, and the man-headed lion of Egypt, and He shall overcome them; and He shall rule the world.

“But this land that now He walks shall come to naught; and Jerusalem, which sits proudly upon the hill, shall drift away in smoke upon the wind of desolation.”

When she spoke thus, my laughter turned to stillness and I was quiet. Then I said: “Who is this man, and of what country and tribe does He come? And how shall He conquer the great kings and the empires of the great kings?”

And she answered: “He is one born here in this land, but we have conceived Him in our longing from the beginning of years. He is of all tribes and yet of none. He shall conquer by the word of His mouth and by the flame of His spirit.”

Then suddenly she rose and stood up like a pinnacle of rock; and she said: “May the angel of the Lord forgive me for pronouncing this word also: He shall be slain, and His youth shall be shrouded,
and He shall be laid in silence beside the tongueless heart of the earth. And the maidens of Judea shall weep for Him.”

Then she lifted her hand skyward and spoke again, and she said: “But He shall be slain only in the body.

“In the spirit He shall rise and go forth leading His host from this land where the sun is born, to the land where the sun is slain at eventide.

“And His name shall be first among men.”

She was an aged seeress when she said these things, and I was but a girl, a field unploughed, a stone not yet in a wall.

But all that she beheld in the mirror of her mind has come to pass even in my day.

Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead and led men and women unto the people of the sunset. The city that yielded Him to judgment was given unto destruction; and in the Judgment Hall where He was tried and sentenced, the owl hoots a dirge while the night weeps the dew of her heart upon the fallen marble.

And I am an old woman, and the years bend me down. My people are no more and my race is vanished.

I saw Him but once again after that day, and once again heard His voice. It was upon a hill-top when He was talking to His friends and followers.

And now I am old and alone, yet still He visits my dreams.

He comes like a white angel with pinions; and
with His grace He hushes my dread of darkness. And He uplifts me to dreams yet more distant.

I am still a field unploughed, a ripe fruit that would not fall. The most that I possess is the warmth of the sun, and the memory of that man.

I know that among my people there shall not rise again king nor prophet nor priest, even as the sister of my father foretold.

We shall pass with the flowing of the rivers, and we shall be nameless.

But those who crossed Him in mid-stream shall be remembered for crossing Him in mid-stream.
YES, I used to hear Him speak. There was always a ready word upon His lips.

But I admired Him as a man rather than as a leader. He preached something beyond my liking, perhaps beyond my reason. And I would have no man preach to me.

I was taken by His voice and His gestures, but not by the substance of His speech. He charmed me but never convinced me; for He was too vague, too distant and obscure to reach my mind.

I have known other men like Him. They are never constant, nor are they consistent. It is with eloquence, not with principles, that they hold your ear and your passing thought, but never the core of your heart.

What a pity that His enemies confronted Him and forced the issue. It was not necessary. I believe their hostility will add to His stature and turn His mildness to power.

For is it not strange that in opposing a man you give Him courage? And in staying His feet you give Him wings?

I know not His enemies, yet I am certain that in their fear of a harmless man they have lent Him strength and made Him dangerous.
JEPHTHA OF CÆSAREA

THIS man who fills your day and haunts your night is repellent to me. Yet you would tire my ears with His sayings and my mind with His deeds.

I am weary of His words, and all that He did. His very name offends me, and the name of His countryside. I will none of Him.

Why make you a prophet of a man who was but a shadow? Why see a tower in this sand-dune, or imagine a lake in the raindrop gathered together in this hoof-print?

I scorn not the echo of caves in valleys nor the long shadows of the sunset; but I would not listen to the deceptions that hum in your head, nor study the reflections in your eyes.

What word did Jesus utter that Halliel had not spoken? What wisdom did He reveal that was not of Gamaliel? What are His lisplings to the voice of Philo? What cymbals did He beat that were not beaten ere ever He lived?

I hearken to the echo from the caves into the silent valleys, and I gaze upon the long shadows of sunset; but I would not have this man’s heart echo the sound of another heart, nor would I have a shadow of the seers call himself a prophet.

What man shall speak since Isaiah has spoken?
Who dares sing since David? And shall wisdom be born now, after Solomon has been gathered to his fathers?

And what of our prophets, whose tongues were swords and their lips flames?

Left they a straw behind for this gleaner of Galilee? Or a fallen fruit for the beggar from the North Country? There was naught for Him save to break the loaf already baked by our ancestors, and to pour the wine which their holy feet had already pressed from the grapes of old.

It is the potter’s hand I honour, not the man who buys the ware.

I honour those who sit at the loom rather than the boor who wears the cloth.

Who was this Jesus of Nazareth, and what is He? A man who dared not live His mind. Therefore He faded into oblivion and that is His end.

I beg you, charge not my ears with His words or His deeds. My heart is over-full with the prophets of old, and that is enough.
JOHN THE BELOVED DISCIPLE:
IN HIS OLD AGE

YOU would have me speak of Jesus, but how can
I lure the passion-song of the world into a
hollowed reed?

In every aspect of the day Jesus was aware of the
Father. He beheld Him in the clouds and in the
shadows of the clouds that pass over the earth. He
saw the Father’s face reflected in the quiet pools, and
the faint print of His feet upon the sand; and He often
closed His eyes to gaze into the Holy Eyes.

The night spoke to Him with the voice of the
Father, and in solitude He heard the angel of the Lord
calling to Him. And when He stilled Himself to
sleep He heard the whispering of the heavens in His
dreams.

He was often happy with us, and He would call us
brothers.

Behold, He who was the first Word called us
brothers, though we were but syllables uttered
yesterday.

You ask why I call Him the first Word.

Listen, and I will answer:

In the beginning God moved in space, and out of
His measureless stirring the earth was born and the
seasons thereof.
Then God moved again, and life streamed forth, and the longing of life sought the height and the depth and would have more of itself.

Then God spoke, and His words were man, and man was a spirit begotten by God’s spirit.

And when God spoke thus, the Christ was His first Word and that Word was perfect; and when Jesus of Nazareth came to the world the first Word was uttered unto us and the sound was made flesh and blood.

Jesus the Anointed was the first Word of God uttered unto man, even as if an apple tree in an orchard should bud and blossom a day before the other trees. And in God’s orchard that day was an æon.

We are all sons and daughters of the Most High, but the Anointed One was His first-born, who dwelt in the body of Jesus of Nazareth, and He walked among us and we beheld Him.

All this I say that you may understand not only in the mind but rather in the spirit. The mind weighs and measures but it is the spirit that reaches the heart of life and embraces the secret; and the seed of the spirit is deathless.

The wind may blow and then cease, and the sea shall swell and then weary, but the heart of life is a sphere quiet and serene, and the star that shines therein is fixed for evermore.
MANNUS THE POMPEIAN,
TO A GREEK

THE Jews, like their neighbours the Phœnicians and the Arabs, will not suffer their gods to rest for a moment upon the wind.

They are over-thoughtful of their deity, and over-observant of one another’s prayer and worship and sacrifice.

While we Romans build marble temples to our gods, these people would discuss their god’s nature. When we are in ecstasy we sing and dance round the altars of Jupiter and Juno, of Mars and Venus; but they in their rapture wear sackcloth and cover their heads with ashes—and even lament the day that gave them birth.

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.

Even Jesus’ friends and disciples, who knew His mirth and heard His laughter, make an image of His sorrow, and they worship that image.

And in such worship they rise not to their deity; they only bring their deity down to themselves.

I believe, however, that this philosopher, Jesus,
who was not unlike Socrates, will have power over His race and mayhap over other races.

For we are all creatures of sadness and of small doubts. And when a man says to us: "Let us be joyous with the gods", we cannot but heed his voice. Strange that the pain of this man has been fashioned into a rite.

These peoples would discover another Adonis, a god slain in the forest, and they would celebrate his slaying. It is a pity they heed not His laughter.

But let us confess, as Roman to Greek. Do even we ourselves hear the laughter of Socrates in the streets of Athens? Is it ever in us to forget the cup of hemlock, even at the theatre of Dionysus?

Do not rather our fathers still stop at the street corners to chat of troubles and to have a happy moment remembering the doleful end of all our great men?
PONTIUS PILATUS

My wife spoke of Him many times ere He was brought before me, but I was not concerned.

My wife is a dreamer, and she is given, like so many Roman women of her rank, to Eastern cults and rituals. And these cults are dangerous to the Empire; and when they find a path to the hearts of our women they become destructive.

Egypt came to an end when the Hyksos of Arabia brought to her the one God of their desert. And Greece was overcome and fell to dust when Ashtarte and her seven maidens came from the Syrian shores.

As for Jesus, I never saw the man before He was delivered up to me as a malefactor, as an enemy of His own nation and also of Rome.

He was brought into the Hall of Judgment with His arms bound to His body with ropes.

I was sitting upon the dais, and He walked towards me with long, firm steps; then He stood erect and His head was held high.

And I cannot fathom what came over me at that moment; but it was suddenly my desire, though not my will, to rise and go down from the dais and fall before Him.
I felt as if Cæsar had entered the Hall, a man greater than even Rome herself.

But this lasted only a moment. And then I saw simply a man who was accused of treason by His own people. And I was His governor and His judge.

I questioned Him, but He would not answer. He only looked at me. And in His look was pity, as if it were He who was my governor and my judge.

Then there rose from without the cries of the people. But He remained silent, and still He was looking at me with pity in His eyes.

And I went out upon the steps of the palace, and when the people saw me they ceased to cry out. And I said: “What would you with this man?”

And they shouted as if with one throat: “We would crucify Him. He is our enemy and the enemy of Rome.”

And some called out: “Did He not say He would destroy the temple? And was it not He who claimed the kingdom? We will have no king but Cæsar.”

Then I left them and went back into the Judgment Hall again, and I saw Him still standing there alone, and His head was still high.

And I remembered what I had read that a Greek philosopher said: “The lonely man is the strongest man.” At that moment the Nazarene was greater than His race.

And I did not feel clement towards Him. He was beyond my clemency.

I asked Him then: “Are you the King of the Jews?”

140
And He said not a word.
And I asked Him again: "Have you not said that you are the King of the Jews?"
And He looked upon me.
Then He answered with a quiet voice: "You yourself proclaimed me king. Perhaps to this end I was born, and for this cause came to bear witness unto truth."

Behold a man speaking of truth at such a moment!
In my impatience I said aloud, to myself as much as to Him: "What is truth? And what is truth to the guiltless when the hand of the executioner is already upon him?"

Then Jesus said with power: "None shall rule the world save with the Spirit and truth."
And I asked Him, saying: "Are you of the Spirit?"
He answered: "So are you also, though you know it not."

And what was the Spirit and what was truth, when I, for the sake of the State, and they from jealousy for their ancient rites, delivered an innocent man unto His death?

No man, no race, no empire would halt before a truth on its way towards self-fulfilment.
And I said again: "Are you the King of the Jews?"
And He answered: "You yourself say this. I have conquered the world ere this hour."

And this alone of all that He said was unseemly, inasmuch as only Rome had conquered the world.
But now the voices of the people rose again, and the noise was greater than before.
And I descended from my seat and said to Him: “Follow me.”
And again I appeared upon the steps of the palace, and He stood there beside me.
When the people saw Him they roared like the roaring thunder. And in their clamour I heard naught save “Crucify Him, crucify Him!”
Then I yielded Him to the priests who had yielded Him to me and I said to them: “Do what you will with this just man. And if it is your desire, take with you soldiers of Rome to guard Him.”
Then they took Him, and I decreed that there be written upon the cross above His head: “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.” I should have said instead: “Jesus of Nazareth, a King.”
And the man was stripped and flogged and crucified.
It would have been within my power to save Him, but saving Him would have caused a revolution; and it is always wise for the governor of a Roman province not to be intolerant of the religious scruples of a conquered race.
I believe unto this hour that the man was more than an agitator. What I decreed was not my will, but rather for the sake of Rome.
Not long after, we left Syria, and from that day my wife has been a woman of sorrow. Sometimes even here in this garden I see a tragedy in her face.
I am told she talks much of Jesus to other women of Rome.
Behold, the man whose death I decreed returns
from the world of shadows and enters into my own house.
   And within myself I ask again and again, What is truth and what is not truth?
   Can it be that the Syrian is conquering us in the quiet hours of the night?
   It should not indeed be so.
   For Rome must needs prevail against the nightmares of our wives.
THE enemies of Jesus say that He addressed His appeal to slaves and outcasts, and would have incited them against their lords. They say that because He was of the lowly He invoked His own kind, yet that He sought to conceal His own origin.

But let us consider the followers of Jesus, and His leadership.

In the beginning He chose for companions a few men from the North Country, and they were freemen. They were strong of body and bold of spirit, and in these past two score years they have had the courage to face death with willingness and defiance.

Think you that these men were slaves or outcasts? And think you that the proud princes of Lebanon and Armenia have forgotten their station in accepting Jesus as a prophet of God?

Or think you the high-born men and women of Antioch and Byzantium and Athens and Rome could be held by the voice of a leader of slaves?

Nay, the Nazarene was not with the servant against his master; neither was He with the master against his servant. He was with no man against another man.

He was a man above men, and the streams that
ran in His sinews sang together with passion and with might.

If nobility lies in being protective, He was the noblest of all men. If freedom is in thought and word and action, He was the freest of all men. If high birth is in pride that yields only to love and in aloofness that is ever gentle and gracious, then He was of all men the highest born.

Forget not that only the strong and the swift shall win the race and the laurels, and that Jesus was crowned by those who loved Him, and also by His enemies though they knew it not.

Even now He is crowned every day by the priestesses of Artemis in the secret places of her temple.