

FATHER SAMAAN
and the
DEVIL

a story in verse by
CARL MULLER

*INSPIRED BY THE MYSTIC WRITINGS OF
KHALIL GIBRAN
THE 'PROPHET OF LEBANON'
TO WHOSE MEMORY THIS POEM IS
DEDICATED*

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‘Love is stronger than death, and death is stronger than life; it is sad that men divide amongst themselves’

– KHALIL GIBRAN (1833-1931)

In every mountain village, in huts beside the streams,
In pasture land and valley where sunfire, roseate, gleams,
They knew the saintly Father, his shoulders bowed in prayer,
His sandaled feet, his shaven head, his unrelenting stare.
For this is Father Samaan, so marvellous a priest,
Their shield against the torments and the fury of the Beast;
He is their guide, their leading light, their Jacob's stairs to bliss,
And women run to him and raise their children for his kiss.
What man is this, they sigh and sing, so versed in every lore,
So steeped in Heavenly wisdom; and when the heart is sore,
He talks of sin and shows the paths of Purgatory and Hell,
Of venial sin and mortal sin, and says that God is well;
"But God reclines in Paradise and leaves the work to me,
And when you know that that is God, you know that I am He!"

He goes his rounds from hut to hut, from farm, to mill, to store,
Preaching, teaching, cassock flapping at each peasant door,
Telling of the pits and traps of Satan and his ilk,
Angel dark that kills the babes and sours the mother's milk,
Oh, how they fall before him, entreating him to stay,
And listen to his rantings and vow to never stray,
And on he goes to wage his war against the demon hordes,
And fearful arte the villagers of evil's crushing load.

So rich was Father Samaan, he made the peasants pay
In finest fruit, in corn, in gold, to stay with them and pray,
And yet they said, 'tis nothing wrong to honour such a man;
And gave him wine and finest bread, and hither, thither ran
To serve him in the finest way with silver and with silk,
With figs and pomegranates and bowls of creamy milk.

'Twas Autumn and the falling leaves were gold and brown and red,
And naked-fingered branches creaked and quivered as they bled.
While winds of early Winter had begun to sing their dirge,
And darkness settled early on wold and hedge and verge.
On such a gloomy eventide did Father Samaan fare,
Walking by a village stream while whispering a prayer;