

Gibran's Anniversaries

The years 1981 and 1983 were officially proclaimed respectively commemorative of the fiftieth anniversary of Gibran's death and the centennial of his birth.

"Why this double honor?" Some might ask.

The immediate answer would be that Gibran was an international writer whose works have been translated into most of the living languages. But this is not all. Probably many people do not know that the anniversaries of this eminent emigrant have been celebrated not only in Lebanon, his birthplace, but also in many lands of Lebanese emigration which cover North America, Latin America, Africa, Australia and other parts of the world. The Lebanese emigrants number about four times as many as those residing in their country of origin. This love for their homeland remains deep-rooted and the tragic years which have recently swept over Lebanon have only served to kindle their love and strengthen the World Union of Lebanese Emigrants.

Another reason for Gibran's renown is the fact that he ranks among the few contemporary figures who devoted a large share of their efforts and works to the cause of international understanding and world peace. He was an officer of the New Orient Society in New York, which comprised cosmopolitan leaders of thought and citizens of the world. Arthur Upham Pope, Julia Ellsworth Ford, Witter Bynner, John Dewey, Bertrand Russell and H.G. Wells belonged to that group, but first among them was Mahatma Gandhi whom Gibran believed to be "one of the greatest men living".

It is a good omen that while people in Lebanon have been reading Gibran, attending lectures and panels about him, and visiting exhibits of his books and paintings; they have been, at the same time, watching the great Academy — Award winning film on Gandhi, the apostle of peace and non-violence. This film has been playing simultaneously in three cinema houses of Beirut for about two months and will probably continue to pass from one screen to another for many months more.

Champions of peace have always existed everywhere but in our time they are becoming more numerous, more vehement and their message is likely to spread more widely and rapidly due to the amazing progress of communications; which is in itself, one of the blessings of technological development.