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By BETH McKINTY

Baha'is from Chicago area gathered Thursday evening at the Baha'i House of Worship, Wilmette, to hear Dr. William Maxwell, associate Dean of Education at North Carolina State University, Raleigh, speak on "Naw-Ruz, the Festival". Marking the first day of the year on the Baha'i calendar, March 21 has an ancient history as the first day of Spring and is a day honored by many of the earlier religions, according to Dr. Maxwell. Dr. Bahia Mitchell was chairman of the meeting.

"This is a joyous festival, which this year begins the year 132 on the Baha'i calendar," said Dr. Maxwell. "In the Persian language, (the Prophet-Founder of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'llah, was born in Persia in 1817 and died in religious exile in the Holy Land in 1892), Naw-Ruz' simply means 'New Day'. This festival is, in actuality, several thousand years old, but the calendar given by the Bab, (a Prophet whose revelation preceded that of Baha'u'llah by nine years and who prophesied his coming) was accepted by Baha'u'llah and is now used by Baha'is all over the planet. Naw-Ruz occurs on the day the sun moves directly over the equator so that from any point on the equator, that day, you may

see the sun directly overhead as it traverses its course. For Baha'is, March 21st not only heralds the first day of spring but is also the first day of the New Year."

Recalling how in the past Prophets have been followed by ministers or other persons vested with authority in the religious community, Dr. Maxwell said that today, amongst the followers of Baha'u'llah, that authority rests with Local Spiritual Assemblies, elected each April by all the adult Baha'is in each community.

"We do not have clergy or ministers," he commented. "We do have servants elected by the community to fill the administrative needs of that community for the coming year." In effect, the speaker continued, God in each age bestows 'the keys to the kingdom' on a certain class of people. Formerly, these were priests, mullas or ministers, but in this age the authority is vested in spiritual institutions and the pure teachings of Baha'u'llah are offered through these institutions, unchanged by the personal opinions of Baha'i teachers.

Citing the necessity for following the spiritual instructions of the Prophets as a means of inner development and avoidance of severe tests, Dr. Maxwell affirmed how daily prayer,

and fasting during the nineteen days set aside by Baha'u'llah for that observance, together bring protection and inspiration to



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those believers who follow the law.

Dr. Maxwell gave many examples from his own experience as a Baha'i living in Korea, and later in West Africa, of the liberating effect of adherence to the law of God on the lives of those who believe.

He recalled how Martha gave her limited understand-

ing of the resurrection to Jesus Christ, and how that great Prophet resounded that He Himself was the resurrection, i.e. those who followed His teachings would be reborn.

He quoted from the Writings of Baha'u'llah; "O Son of Man! "Were thou to speed through the immensity of space and traverse the expanse of heaven, yet thou wouldst find no rest save in submission to Our command and humbleness before Our Face.

"O Son of Man! "Magnify My cause that I may reveal unto thee the mysteries of My greatness and shine upon thee with the light of eternity."

Now established in every country of the world, the Baha'i Faith teaches that all of the Prophets of God succeed each other in an orderly progression, bringing renewal of the same ethical teachings and new social teachings that meet the particular requirements of their age. They stress the oneness of religion and the oneness of mankind. In Chicago, a Baha'i Center is located at 116 South Michigan avenue.