

Baha'is To Observe Anniversary Of 'Prophet's' Visit To City

Prediction of the discovery of "a force that can poison the earth's atmosphere," coupled with the hope that this would not happen until man progressed sufficiently to put this force to peaceful use, was voiced 50 years ago in this country by a noted Baha'i, Abdu'l-Baha, son of the founder of the Baha'i Faith.

The anniversary of his visit to Chicago will be marked with a public meeting in the Fine Arts building, 410 So. Michigan, Friday, Nov. 2, at 8:15 p.m. Guest speaker will be John Bustard, of Champaign, Ill., who will speak on "The Promised One Has Come."

A religious prisoner and exile from childhood until the age of sixty-four, Abdu'l-Baha was released following the Young Turk rebellion in 1908. He immediately laid plans for a trip to the United States, to further the knowledge in this country of the principles enunciated by his father, Baha'u'llah, as a basis for uniting mankind.

Headlines from that visit to the United States and Canada read like newspaper stories of today. "Racialism Wrong, Says Eastern Sage—Strife and War Caused By Religious and National Prejudice" heads one newspaper account. Another begins, "Canada Should Prepare for a Great War Coming, Says Apostle of Peace—Universal Peace Possible Only by Common Disarmament." That story, of a meeting held several years before the First World War, quotes Abdu'l-Baha as follows:

"As to the question of disarmament, all nations must disarm at the same time. It will not do at all, and it is not proposed, that some nations shall lay down their arms while others, their neighbours, remain armed. The peace of the world must be brought about by international agreement. All nations must agree to disarm simultaneously . . . No nation

can follow a peace policy while its neighbour remains warlike. There is no justice in that. Nobody would dream of suggesting that the peace of the world could be brought about by any such line of action.

"It is to be brought about by a general and comprehensive international agreement, and in no other way . . ."

Speaking before the fourth annual conference of the NAACP, in Chicago, Abdu'l-Baha declared: "God does not look at



ABDU'L-BAHA

color. He looks at the human heart." He went on to demonstrate the visible variety in nature, where diverse colors blend, and pointed out that difference in human color was a gift from God, that should bring pleasure to the viewer.

Wherever Abdu'l-Baha spoke, he demonstrated in his own behaviour a simplicity and authority that elevated the humble and subdued the proud. When in New York City he was called upon by a group of young people, he noticed that the one Negro boy present had withdrawn to the outskirts of the group and seemed unsure of his welcome. Abdu'l-Baha asked for a box of chocolates and proceeded to

offer the box to each young person. When he reached the Negro youth, he picked out a rich, dark chocolate and held it up to the boy's cheek. Then he looked at the group and said: "Here is a black rose!"

At a time when there was little acceptance of integration, Abdu'l-Baha spoke repeatedly of the importance of America leading the way in demonstrating equality for all its citizens. Louis Gregory, a distinguished Negro lawyer and a long-time resident of Chicago, was in Washington during Abdu'l-Baha's visit there. Abdu'l-Baha waited until all the guests were seated at a huge reception, then strode into the room with one arm around Gregory's shoulder and insisted that a place be laid for him at the head table. After dinner, Abdu'l-Baha spoke eloquently on the differences in color being surface differences, comparable to the color variety in a flower garden.

To scholars, philosophers and scientists all across America, Abdu'l-Baha stressed the crucial stage being reached by mankind. Always he underlined the need of elimination of prejudice, for recognition of the basic unity between science and religion, and for co-operation between individuals and nations in this new era that man is entering.

Among those who requested meetings with him were ex-President Theodore Roosevelt and Andrew Carnegie, and Alexander Graham Bell invited him to speak to a scientific society in his home. David Starr Jordan, president of Stanford university, said that the teachings he proclaimed would unite the world, for he walked "the mystic way with practical feet."

Abdu'l-Baha uttered this warning to the western world: "There is in existence a stupendous force, as yet, happily undiscovered by man. Let us supplicate God that this force be not discovered until spiritual civilization shall dominate the human mind. In the hands of men of lower material nature, this power would be able to destroy the earth."

A number of Baha'is who met Abdu'l-Baha on this visit will be present at the commemorative services. Among them is Joseph Hadley, of Evanston, and Miss Alphie Lundberg and Lloyd Robinson, of Chicago.

The laying of the cornerstone for the Baha'i House of Worship Wilmette, is still remembered clearly by Miss Lundberg. "It was a chilly day and a tent was pitched for the ceremony. The mayor of Chicago attended, along with other civic notables.

Although there were then just a few Baha'is in this country, Abdu'l-Baha assured us that there was no doubt about our being able to complete the Temple already stands. Abdu'l-Baha rejected a carefully polished stone, in favor of an uneven, damaged one that an onlooker offered him. He drew the attention of his audience to the passage in the Bible referring to the "stone rejected by the builder" becoming the cornerstone of the House of God.

Completed in 1953, and given by Baha'is as a gift to all people the House of Worship now dominates the Wilmette landscape. Crowned with a beautiful dome and surrounded by nine formal gardens, the House of Worship attracts 100,000 visitors a year and welcomes persons of all religious beliefs to its worship services each Sunday afternoon. No sermon is ever preached here. Instead, the Holy Scriptures of all the world's religions are read, with music provided by Northwestern A Capella choir.

Other Baha'i activities planned during the time of commemorating Abdu'l-Baha's visit include a week-end institute at Green Lake, Wisc., where Baha'is and their friends will gather at the Baptist Assembly for informal study of Baha'i teachings.

Borah Kavelin, chairman of the National Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and winner of a real estate "Man of the Year" award in New York, will come here to speak at the Baha'i House of Worship, Sunday, November 4, at a meeting marking the birth of the founder of the Baha'i Faith. Baha'u'llah, Kavelin is one of the nine Baha'is elected from all over the world to serve on the Baha'i International Council, which meets in Haifa, Israel.

Baha'i communities are now located in every country of the world.



TWO MEMBERS of the National Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States are shown in front of the Baha'i House of Worship in Wilmette. They are Dr. Sarah Pereira, a professor of romance languages in Washington, D. C., and Amoz Gibson, a school principal at Gallup, N. M.



MRS. R. JAVID, left, formerly of Teheran, Iran, and now a Baha'i pioneer in Switzerland, is shown chatting with Mr. and Mrs. J. Yates of Detroit at the annual Baha'i convention in Wilmette. Mrs. Yates is a Korean war bride.