

Naturalized American Converts Boroites to Mohammedanism

By **LESLIE HANSCOM**

Of the five Moslem converts who stood in a respectful row before their instructor, Shaik Daoud Ahmed Faisal, one was of Scottish descent, two were English and one was born a Jew.

The Shaik, seated on the floor of what was once the Victorian living room of the brownstone house at 143 State St., addressed them in Arabic, the language of the Prophet Mohammed.

His pupils understood and responded. It is one of the functions of The Islamic Mission of America to teach the Arabic tongue and literature as well as the precepts of the Moslem faith.

The work goes on daily behind the quiet facade of the house which is separated in appearance from its brownstone neighbors only by an unimposing sign.

In Arabic and English, the words identify the mission and broadcast the central doctrine of the Moslem religion which is the oneness of God.

Forbids Term 'Unbeliever'

So firm is Shaik Faisal in his belief that there is only one religion that he will not permit Christians and Jews to be called unbelievers in his presence.

These groups believe in God, they therefore believe in Allah and his law consequently they cannot be called unbelievers. It is not at all surprising to him that there are native born Americans among his converts.

When the evening's lesson was over, the Shaik talked about his work and his religion, in a room below the Majid (place of worship). Strange chants from above accompanied his voice as the hour arrived for the last evening prayer.

Being a Moslem is not easy for a working man in America, he said. The religion enjoins five periods of prayer daily and it is necessary that the believer wash himself entirely, before each one.

Finds Americans Co-operative

"However," he added, "Americans will not keep a man from worshipping God." Christian and Jewish employers are on the whole co-operative.

Born in Morocco, Shaik Faisal is now an American citizen. There is much to be grateful for in the U. S., he finds. Also there are things to criticize.

Being a Moor, he is deeply concerned over the condition of the American Negro. He praised the Constitution as the greatest

document since the revelation of Allah, but pointed out that when it was written, no thought was taken for the colored man.

Two young Negro converts interrupted him, coming in to wish him good night. When the boys were gone, the shaik pointed after them. "Two months ago," he said, "those two were second class human beings, American Negroes. Today they are equal to any man alive, as children of Allah."

Turning to the subject of American journalism, the spiritual leader made it clear to his questioner that he had no high opinion of it.

Why, he wanted to know, had the irregular marital behavior of one American Moslem recently been smeared all over the front pages while the peace plan which he had requested permission to present to the U. N. had been sent to all the newspapers and ignored.

This bad publicity wounded the shaik. Because of it, he has circulated a letter among the Moslems of New York exhorting them to decorum and propriety in order that Islam be not lowered in the eyes of non-Moslems.

Shaik Faisal has too much of the prophet in him to leave the subject of doctrine for very long. He is reluctant to talk about the period of his life which preceded his present religious work.

Educated at Cambridge

He revealed, however, that he came to this country as a student in 1913, with a Cambridge education and a sojourn in the West Indies behind him.

At one time or another, he has been dramatic teacher, concert violinist and proprietor of the "Donald" Faisal Concert Bureau. "Never, however," he said, "have I left the faith and culture of my people for a moment."

Eleven years ago, he became fully aware for the first time of the world's need for prayer. That was what propelled him into his present work.

Today he is writing a book. It will be called "Islam, the Religion of Humanity" and will contain something "more explosive than the atom bomb." This element will be "the truth of Allah."