

Islam Called Faith Of Christians, Jews

Is Religion Of All Who Believe In One True God, Moslem Leader Explains

By GEORGE W. CORNELL

New York, Dec. 3 (AP) — Even if you call yourself a Christian, you also may qualify as a good Moslem. "Millions of Christians in this country are true Moslems," said Sheikh Daoud Ahmed Faisel, spiritual leader of the Islamic Mission of America. "They just don't know it."

BROTHERLY ATTITUDE

That may sound incongruous to some people, steeped in grade-school notions of the bloody Middle-Ages crusades against so-called infidels of Mohammed, but it is the brotherly attitude of Mohammed's followers today.

Basically, it always has been.

"The average American simply knows nothing about Islam," Sheikh Faisel said. "It is the religion of Christians and Jews and all who believe in one true God and who have surrendered to his will and guidance of his laws."

But in the United States, he said, there has been little recognition of the Jewish-Christian roots of Islam, or that Abraham, Jesus, and Mohammed are all seen equally as prophets of the faith.

"Prejudice, egotism, and ignorance have robbed many of the truth about Islam," the Moroccan-born Imam said. "Some sneer and joke and mock, because of greed for power, fear of exposure, or the evil idea they are better than every one else."

In North and South America, the only two major continents to which Islam has not spread in vast numbers and influence, Sheikh Faisel's mission as the representative organ for Moslems has set these objectives:

"The propagation of Islam, the true faith . . . the defense of the faithful . . . the re-establishment of peace, love, good will, and human brotherhood through belief in the oneness of the one true God as revealed in Islam."

GROWING SPIRIT

Practicing Moslems constitute only a small minority in this country — about 100,000 by Sheikh Faisel's estimate — but he believes the spirit of Islam is moving rapidly toward wider acceptance.

"Within the next few years, I see it coming," he said. "This is the best educated nation on earth, and people are willing to see the truth. Eventually Islam will be the governing basis of America."

There are fairly large Moslem communities in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Phoenix, Washington, D. C., New York City, Detroit, and Dearborn, Mich.

Moslem societies, clubs, and academies are scattered throughout this region. The finest mosques are in Sacramento, Dearborn — and a new one in Washington.

Every day at dawn, midafternoon, dusk and after dusk, the faithful wash, remove their shoes, cover their heads and prostrate themselves in prayer to Allah — at home or in mosques.

In these devotions, they always face east toward Mecca, the birthplace of Mohammed—and someday before they die, all Moslems

yearn to make a pilgrimage to their holy city.

Sheikh Faisel's mosque, with its thick Oriental rugs, is in a large hall of a stone building on a tree-lined street in Brooklyn. Here, each Friday noon, Moslems gather for regular weekly worship.

As in church services, there is a sermon, preceded by prayer. A typical prayer, from Sura I of the Scriptures (Koran):

"Praise be to God, the lord of the worlds, the merciful, the compassionate, the ruler of judgment day! Thee we serve and thee we ask for aid. Guide us in the right path, the path of those who are gracious; not of those with whom thou art wroth; nor of those who err."

Islam, in Arabic, simply means submission to God. Moslem merely means believer. The religion is the newest and most rapidly expanded of all the world's great faiths.

Its teachings embrace ancient Hebrew laws, including the 10 commandments, and bans against usury and pork eating. It also incorporates tenets of Jesus, all as expounded by Mohammed.

Although Islam permits a man to marry more than one woman, it also teaches obedience to state laws which bar polygamy in this country. As for the religious view of the matter, Sheikh Faisel said:

"A man can have one or a hundred wives, so long as he is physically, mentally, financially, materially, morally, and spiritually able to care for each of them equally. Each must have a full share of a man's life and capacities. That imposes some real obligations. To take care of two, a man is doing very well."

Sheikh Faisel, 63, who became an American citizen because he thinks the U. S. Constitution is Islamic in principle, has one wife, an attractive poised woman who served coffee and cakes throughout the 4-hour interview.

Since the religion condemns payment of alimony, Sheikh Faisel has couples whom he marries sign a special contract, specifying that the bride's dowry will be the only alimony in case of divorce.

Moslems affirm the virgin birth of Jesus and his miracles, but they do not conceive of him as God, or a crucified redeemer. They see him as a great prophet, who died in secret, was lifted up to God, leaving a spirit-shadow.

Non-Moslems (nonbelievers) are considered destined for hell's tortures.

"No man can enter paradise except as a Moslem," Sheikh Faisel said. "But Christians and Jews who live righteously, in accordance with God's laws of justice and submission to his will are really Moslems, and will accomplish paradise and eternity."