

Newark
Churches

Sure God'll Bless America With Mohammed 3d in U.S.

Grand Sheik of Newark's Moorish Science
Temple Explains His Beliefs

BY FRANKLIN H. ROMAINE

"People's right when they say 'God bless America,'" says Brother William Gravitt-El, Grand Sheik of the Moorish Science Temple. "Ain't nothing going to happen to this country while Mohammed the Third is livin' right here."

Brother Gravitt-El (the suffix is pronounced eel) is the leader of a sect of more than 1,200 Mohammedans in Newark. Their temple, at 230 Court street, was founded 15 years ago by Prophet Noble Drew Ali, known to his followers as Mohammed the Third. It is the oldest temple of the sect in this part of the country.

Mohammed the Third now lives in Chicago, where he may be visited only by true believers. His bodily form is not the same as that of the prophet who founded the Newark temple.

"That prophet died, as you call it," explains the grand sheik. "His reincarnation lives in Chicago."

What Sect Teaches

The sect teaches that all dark-skinned persons are descended from Moore and Mohammedanism is their true religion. Not one of the local true believers is of Asiatic birth but they are better Mohammedans than their brothers across the sea, in the opinion of the grand sheik.

Brother Gravitt-El, a Moor from Belleaire, O., pointed out that even Mohammed the Third is a native of North Carolina. "The prophet fooled everybody," he said with a chuckle. "Everybody looked for him to come in the East and he done come in the West."

We interviewed Brother Gravitt-El at his home, 46 West street. An imposing looking dark man, with a curly beard, he warmed to his subject as he went along and discussed his beliefs with dignified enthusiasm.

The sect teaches that all names borne by Negroes are "slave" names, and their first act on conversion is to add El or Bey, making them Moorish. "The black people here weren't brought here," the grand sheik says. "This country belongs to the Moors and we were here long before the Indians."

Really Northwest Africa

"This land you call North America really is Northwest Africa. There was all Moors here before an earthquake made that old Atlantic Ocean."

Brother Gravitt-El has been in Newark 14 years. He succeeded to the leadership of his flock after the prophet passed. He declares no white non-believers are admitted to their religious ceremonies, although dark-skinned prospective converts sometimes attend. He wouldn't even discuss the rites with a non-believer.

Although the Moors have occupied a lowly estate here of late, their day is coming through the presence of Mohammed the Third, Brother Gravitt-El says. "The common man has been blind to the truth, but we are waking him up."

"This is the last time Mohammed will return to earth, and the end is near at hand. All this trouble and war and depression is the beginning of the end."

Wouldn't Believe

"The prophet has told that all these things will come to pass, but the people wouldn't believe the truth. Now they're beginning to find out."

"Over in Europe they got bad troubles, but we don't have to worry

have lost respect for women, and let them do things the same as men, like smoking and drinking in taverns, that we have come to our low estate. Women must be restored to their place in the home."

The Moorish marriage ceremony, which follows civil rites, stresses the dedication of hearts between man and wife.

The local Moors do not drink or smoke, and abstain from meat and eggs. "Strictly a vegetable and fish diet," explains Brother Gravitt-El. "Lots of those Asiatic Mohammedans aren't as strict as we are and pollute themselves with flesh."

None of the men shave, and the combination of dignified beards and red fezzes, worn by elders of the flock, has a distinctly Moorish flavor.

"We live quietly, because we know the truths," said Brother Gravitt-El. "Other people, they run around like crazy, and worry all the time, because they don't know what's going to happen. If everybody knew they'd be killing themselves and sulcidin' all over the place."

here. We have the prophet here, and the land is blessed.

"In Europe they have no kind of God. They pray to their God but the bombs keep on killing women and children. Looks like their God, he must be on vacation."

At this point a Moorish sister, dressed in the conservative long skirts, long sleeves and high necks which the sect prescribes, passed by the grand sheik. She raised her hand in a gesture of respect which the sheik acknowledged in courtly fashion.

"Woman Is Nature"

"Woman is nature, and man the son of nature," he explained after she passed. "It's because people

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