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"How to Eat to Live": Dietetics and Economies of Salvation in the Nation of Islam, 1965-1975

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by

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Abstract

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This thesis examines Elijah Muhammad's preoccupation with and eclectic interpretation of Islamic diet as articulated in the *How to Eat to Live* series, published in articles as well as two books between 1965 and 1975. It argues that the gravity that Muhammad accorded to dietary practice offers important clues about the place of the body in a political economy of the sacred that was central to the Nation's activities during this period. A close reading of these texts complicates the view of the eating body as a "symbol" for social and political ambitions. Instead, it reveals how correct consumption was instrumental to the production of two sacred bodies: the physical body of the Original Man, and the political-economic body of the Nation of Islam. This thesis shows how Muhammad conceptualized eating as part of a set of divinely prescribed practices that aimed to discipline the body in order to liberate the members of the Lost-Found Nation from mental, physical, and economic slavery. Within this economy, the everyday matters of what, when, where and how to eat were far from trivial, or even "secular" concerns. On the contrary, they constituted a critical component in the technologies of the self which were, in Muhammad's view, the instruments of both individual and collective salvation.

Introduction

On June 11 1965, the Nation of Islam's official newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks,* launched a new column. Splashed in capital letters across the front page, with all the stylistic promise of a scandalous exposé, the headline itself – "MESSANGER OF ALLAH TELLS: HOW TO EAT TO LIVE A LONG LIFE" – seems strikingly banal. Indeed, compared with other headlines – such as "AMERICA IS FALLING!" (4 December 1964) or "THEY TALK PEACE, BUT KILL KILL" (14 January 1966) – a story on healthy eating appears out of place on the paper's front page, if not altogether un-newsworthy. Yet on more than one occasion, *Muhammad Speaks* elevated the *How to Eat to Live* articles to the top of its visual hierarchy. In doing so, it placed diet in a shared conceptual and material space with themes such as white supremacy, anti-colonial revolutions, racial uplift, economic development, and apocalypse.

This thesis seeks to make sense of Elijah Muhammad's preoccupation with and eclectic interpretation of Islamic diet as articulated in the *How to Eat to Live* series. Although baffling at first glance, the gravity that Muhammad accorded to dietary practice offers important clues about the place of the body in the Nation's economy of personal and collective salvation. A close reading of these texts – which appeared first as articles and were later republished in two volumes – suggests that following Allah's teachings on how to eat to live mattered not simply as a sign of inner piety or devotion. Instead, correct consumption was instrumental to the production of two sacred bodies: the physical body of the Original Man, and the political-economic body of the Nation of Islam. Eating was part of a set of divinely prescribed practices that aimed to discipline the body in order to liberate the members of the Lost-Found Nation from mental, physical, and economic slavery. Within this

economy, the everyday matters of what, when, where and how to eat were far from trivial, or even "secular" concerns. On the contrary, they were the indispensable instruments of individual and collective salvation.

Literature Review (Recipes for the Study of Food and Religion)

From 1965 until his death ten years later, Muhammad published columns on diet and healthy eating in a series called "How to Eat to Live" (henceforth, ETL) in *Muhammad Speaks (*MS), the Nation of Islam's official newspaper from 1960 to 1975. These articles were subsequently collated and published, in chronological order, as the chapters of two eponymous volumes (1967, 1972). In these texts, Muhammad promulgated the dietary laws that he claimed God had revealed to him in the person of W. D. Fard, the founder of the NOI.

Muhammad first met Fard in Detroit in 1931, and soon after joined the swelling ranks of converts at Fard's Allah Temple of Islam. Detroit was one of several major cities to witness a flourishing of black religious, social and political organization with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of black migrants from the rural South. Fard's revelations, including those concerning diet, took shape within a rich confluence of black social movements concerned with articulating the original identity and destiny of the black man in the United States. Noble Drew Ali, who established the Moorish Science Temple in Newark in 1913, taught that the true religion of black Americans was Islam, and set the trend for "sartorial Orientalism" by donning fezes and turbans.[1] At the same time, Islamic missionary movements from the Middle East and South Asia – in particular, the Ahmadiyya Mission – were actively targeting urban blacks for conversion, teaching them that slave-masters had

[1] Sally Howell, *Old Islam in Detroit: Rediscovering the Muslim American Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

stolen their true religion (Islam) and language (Arabic) from them. The MSA and the Ahmadiyya contributed to the framing of Islam as the original and natural religion of people of color and as a tool in a transnational struggle against white Christian domination.

Fard built on these ideas, teaching his followers that black Americans were not Africans but Asiatics of the Lost-Found Nation of Islam and members of the Tribe of Shabazz. Fard preached that all black people were originally and by nature Muslims, lured away from God's divine laws the "slave teachings" of white Christianity. Fard's message bears out the findings of more than two decades of scholarship that has insisted on race and religion as mutually co-constitutive categories.[2] Yet the teachings of Fard, whom Muhammad believed to be Allah, went further than this. Race and religion not only co-constituted one another; they were ontologically co-implied. To be black and to be Muslim were one and the same thing in essence, if not in practice. To be black and to identify as Christian meant to have become "other than self," and to have disobeyed God's laws for His Original People. Receiving knowledge of Allah's laws effected the return to self through the alignment of nature and praxis among the Original Muslim People.

While Muhammad represented ETL as God's laws for Muslims, its dietary rules prohibited not only pork and alcohol but also a wide range of food products and cooking methods mentioned neither in the Qur'an nor in the *hadith*. Muhammad's eclectic dietary system – whose proscriptions included items such as collard greens, deep-frying, and white sugar – rarely fails to garner a reference in book-length studies of the Nation of Islam. How

[2] See, e.g., Henry Goldschmidt and Elizabeth Mcalister, "Introduction," to *Race, Nation, and the Americas,* ed. Henry Goldschmidt and Elizabeth Mcalister (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3-34. For American Islam more specifically, see Zareena Grewal, *Islam is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), esp. chapter 2.

these dietary laws related to what Muhammad proclaimed as Allah's divinely revealed message has received less attention. Explicating the relation between diet and divine revelation, however, makes visible food's significance as a material object through which the NOI sought to challenge and redefine political and economic hierarchies.

Scholars have given little attention to the connection of dietetics to religion and economy in ETL. Recent studies of African-American foodways have generated rich insights on the legacy of folk culinary practices as well as food and gender in African-American history, but have given little attention to religion in general and the NOI in particular.[3] Similarly, Kyla Wazana Tompkin's recent and groundbreaking work on the racial politics of eating in the nineteenth-century United States makes little reference to religion, despite the deeply theological roots of American dietary reform.[4] Scholars of religion, by contrast, have shown little interest in Muhammad's writings on diet, despite recent interest in the topic of food and religion.[5] This is due, in part, to a politics of classification that has situated the NOI in a contested relation to "Islam" as well as "religion". These classificatory assumptions date from and are connected to state-sponsored efforts to destroy the NOI through infiltration, smear campaigns, and direct violence. From the NOI's founding in the 1930s, state security

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[3] See, e.g., Anne Bower, ed., *African American Foodways: Explorations of History and Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Jennifer Jensen Wallach, Psyche A. Williams and Rebecca Sharpless, eds., *Dethroning the Deceitful Pork Chop: Rethinking African American Foodways from Slavery to Obama* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2015).

[4] Kyla Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

[5] For recent approaches to food within religious studies, see Benjamin E. Zeller, ed., *Religion, Food, and Eating in North America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014). Kate Holbrook's essay in this volume, "Good to Eat: Culinary Priorities in the Nation of Islam and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints," argues that the dietary rules of both groups were framed in relation to the quintessentially "American" values of self-sufficiency and good health. It does not examine these rules in relation to NOI theology.

apparatuses, scholars, and journalists defined the organization not as a religion, but a "cult" promoting race hatred.[6]

Taxonomies of "orthodox" versus "unorthodox" Islam and "good/true" versus "bad/false" religion have persisted in scholarly treatments of the NOI until relatively recently. Before the 1990s, scholars of the NOI largely elided the categories of "Islam" and "religion" as relevant to the study of a movement defined instead as "black nationalist," "heterodox," or "political" (as opposed to "religious").[7] This taxonomy has informed the scholarly tendency to analyze Muhammad's theology as a byproduct of, or instrument for, "secular" aims such as personal enrichment or the creation of a separate black nation.

In contrast to the long-standing characterization of the NOI as a "political" or "heterodox" movement, a number of recent works have examined the NOI as a historically specific articulation of Islam in the African-American context.[8] While these interventions destabilize the taxonomic hierarchies of earlier literature, the specter of the "cult" has continued to hover over recent scholarship of the NOI. This specter is evident in the

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[6] Indeed, the first scholar to conduct research on the NOI – Erdmann D. Beynon, whose article was published in the American Sociological Review in 1938 – did so as an informant for the Detroit police department, as Dawn-Marie Gibson notes in *A History of the Nation of Islam: Race, Islam, and the Quest for Freedom* (Santa Barbara: ABC Clio, 2012), 16.

[7] The two classic early studies of the NOI - Eric C. Lincoln's *The Black Muslims in America*, first edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961) and E. U. Essien-Udom's *Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) – set the tone for this trend. See also, for instance, Clifton E. Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims: The Transition from Separatism to Islam, 1930-1980* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1984).

[8] Edward E. Curtis IV, *Islam in Black America: Identity, Liberation, and Difference in African-American Islamic Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002); Herbert Berg, *Elijah Muhammad and Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Gibson, *A History of the Nation of Islam*; Michael Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

persistent treatment Muhammad's conception of Islam as irrelevant for the task of explaining his understanding of diet, health, and the body.

A handful of short studies have nevertheless examined food and the NOI, and have followed three broad lines of interpretation. The first sees the concern for improving physical health as the key motivation of Muhammad's texts.[9] Health was certainly a prominent concern, but it was not the only one. Moreover, Muhammad viewed physical sickness and early death as scourges resulting from blacks' subjugation under white rule. In his account, therefore, health is inseparable from his theodicy.

A second interpretation follows feminist psychoanalytic theory, attributing Muhammad's writings to a racialized castration anxiety displaced through the abjection of black women's bodies.[10] Doris Witt, for instance, describes Muhammad's disgust for pork as an attempt to recover a "pure" black masculinity from the emasculating effects of white patriarchy, which works by displacing "filth" onto black female bodies.[11] Muhammad's condemnation of "soul food," in this argument, positions the women who prepare it as responsible for black male "contamination." This approach uncovers the complex ways in which gender informed Muhammad's imagining of his own salvific mission. The NOI's institutional structures, indeed, bear witness both to the quest for a redeemed masculinity (for instance, in the male-only paramilitary wing called the Fruit of Islam), and a scientifically domestic femininity (as in the Muslim Girls' Training classes). Witt's analysis, in particular,

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[9] Holbrook, "Good to Eat."
[10] Doris Witt, *Black Hunger: Food and the Politics of US Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Stephen C. Finley and Margarita L. Simon, "'That Girl is Poison': White Supremacy, Anxiety, and the Conflation of Women and Food in the Nation of Islam," in *Women and New and Africana Religions* (Santa Barbara: ABC Clio, 2010), 3-28; Stephen Carl Finley, "Re-Imagining Race and Representation: The Black Body in the Nation of Islam," PhD diss., Rice University, 2009.
[11] Witt, *Black Hunger*, chapter four.

highlights the co-constituted character of femininity and masculinity in the NOI and their connection to bourgeois capitalist morality.

A third interpretation also emphasizes the political significance of everyday practices in ETL. However, Carolyn Rouse and Janet Hopkins argue that, rather than linking black women and filth, Muhammad associated "slave foods" with "white supremacy, internalized racism (pollution), and partial citizenship."[12] By avoiding the polluting effects of the foods they had eaten under slavery, "Nation followers cleansed their minds of the ideological poisons that made them participants in their own degradation."[13] Edward E. Curtis affirms this reading, identifying ETL with a process of "ritualization" that sought to "islamicize" the black body.[14]

The ethnographic method yields a more sympathetic reading of Muhammad's dietary laws than the psychoanalytic argument described above. Yet both accounts share a conception of the body as a symbol of an existing or desired social order. This common perspective leads both accounts to "read" the body as a site of struggle over contested meanings and to interpret Muhammad's dietary laws primarily as an attempt to (re-)signify gendered black bodies.

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[12] Carolyn Rouse and Janet Hopkins, "Purity, Soul Food, and Sunni Islam: Explorations at the Intersection of Consumption and Resistance," *Cultural Anthropology* 19, no. 2 (2004): 237-44. See also Carolyn Rouse, *Engaged Surrender: African-American Women and Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

[13] Rouse and Hopkins, "Purity, Soul Food, and Sunni Islam," 236; Gilles Kepel, *Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe*, trans. Susan Milner (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 29-32.

[14] Edward E. Curtis IV., "Islamizing the Black Body: Ritual and Power in Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation,* 12, No. 2 (2002): 167-96. Curtis draws on Catherine Bell's theory of "ritualization," which resists the symbolic interpretation of the body. Despite this, Curtis's language at times suggests a reading of the body as a symbolic battleground, rather than a material instrument for producing selves.

The congruence between these interpretations emerges from their mutual theoretical debt to Mary Douglas's structural anthropological study of food and the body, as well as to its interpretation in Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory.[15] Douglas's structuralist approach, which has formed an influential current in the study of food and eating, took shape within broader debates on ritual in the anthropology of religion.[16] That this theoretical current in the study of food and eating has its source in debates over ritual is important, insofar as anthropologists have defined "ritual" as a "symbolic activity" over against the "instrumental behavior of everyday life" which, of course, includes eating.[17] The entanglement of food with ritual had led anthropologists of food and religion to privilege concepts of taboo, purity, and pollution, and it is these concepts that have guided analyses of food in the NOI. Viewing dietary rules as symbolic of social boundaries – that is, as marking the inside from the outside – produces an analytic privileging of a particular kind of dietary rule – that is, those which define what is permitted and prohibited. The rules outlined in ETL, however, concern not only in negative *proscriptions* of the "taboo," but positive *prescriptions* for when, how, and what to eat.

By fusing the imperatives of physical health and collective salvation, Muhammad's dietary rules unsettle the distinction between the symbolic and the instrumental on which

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[15] See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002); *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 1970); Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982). For a review of the symbolic approach to the body, see Erica Reischer and Kathryn S. Koo, "The Body Beautiful: Symbolism and Agency in the Social World," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 297-217.

[16] In insisting on the correspondence between social structures and food taboos, for instance, Mary Douglas was arguing against the Victorian anthropologists' association of ritual with primitive peoples' superstitious belief in efficacious magic. See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger,* chapter one.

[17] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 55.

early twentieth-century anthropologists grounded the concept of "ritual." More than this, his writings raise questions about an opposition of the "extraordinary" to the "ordinary" that has functioned, in various ways, to delineate the "religious" from the "secular." Understanding the centrality of the eating body in Muhammad's salvific mission requires that we pursue his insistence on the divine as, quite literally, the matter of everyday life. To do this, it is necessary to bracket some of the "habits of thought" that have permeated analyses of food and ritual, including thinking in terms of clear distinctions such as religious/economic, symbolic/instrumental, and, crucially, mind/body and action/knowledge.[18]

Talal Asad's genealogy of ritual provides a helpful starting point from which to re-examine Muhammad's writings on diet. In *Genealogies of Religion* (1993), Asad examined how the meaning of ritual shifted from "literally a script ... to behavior, which is *likened* to a text."[19] The early twentieth century reconceptualization of ritual as "symbolic behavior which is not necessarily religious," Asad argued, was inextricable from both Protestant normativity and colonial epistemologies.[20]

Asad's genealogy draws attention to two ways in which the specific historical concerns of late nineteenth-century European anthropologists assumed the form of universal theoretical concerns. On the one hand, the characterization of ritual as the "outward sign" of the "inward meaning" of doctrine and myth reproduced, in a secular and scientific form, the Protestant prioritization of correct belief over correct practice. In attempting to establish

[18] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 4.
[19] *Ibid*., 56.
[20] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 57.

authoritatively the meaning of "symbols" that inhere in ritual, Asad argued, anthropologists had "incorporated a theological preoccupation into an avowedly secular intellectual task."[21]

On the other hand, the Protestant ranking of belief over practice informed the evolutionist conception of history in Victorian anthropology. Within this teleological frame, "ritual" could mark the absence of higher stages of development, such as myth or religion. The association of ritual with "primitive" religion both reflected and reproduced a colonial epistemology that cast difference as "lack" and, in doing so, naturalized the colonizer's ability to "speak for" the colonized. In other words, the idea that ritual's significance lay in an "inner meaning" not always grasped by those who performed it helped to authorize the scholar's interpretative intervention. Producing the scholar's particular perspective as objective and universal depended on the silencing or trivialization of indigenous explanations.[22]

"Ritual" and "religion" are therefore far from neutral categories. Indeed, their "neutral" appearance marks them as hegemonic instruments *par excellence*. Defining religion in terms of its "essence," as Asad suggests, mystifies the concept's historicity – that is, its relation to the material and power relations that produce it as a category for the scholar.[23] In particular, the view of religion and ritual as transhistorical obscures their imbrication in liberal conceptions of subjectivity that developed from the specific historical contexts of

[21] *Ibid*., 60.
[22] See Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).
[23] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 28.

post-Reformation western Europe.[24] It also conceals the historical role of religion in constructing the category of race.

The search for an "essence" of religion, which was closely tied to what Marc Bloch described as the "idol of origins," was also prominent in the formation of the modern field of religious studies.[25] Mirroring processes of "Protestantization" and colonial epistemologies in anthropology, religious studies in its early articulations insisted on the transcendental applicability of the category of religion by linking it *to* the transcendental: that is, to the "extraordinary," "ultimate meaning," or the "numinous."[26] By the late 1970s, religious studies scholars – most famously Jonathan Z. Smith – were critiquing the field's Protestant assumptions and insisting on the constructed nature of the category of "religion" itself.

Despite his emphasis on religion as an "ordinary category of human expression and activity,"[27] Smith's treatment of ritual – which focuses particularly on its relation to emplacement – reaffirms its connection to the extraordinary: "Ritual relies for its power on the fact that it is concerned with quite ordinary activities placed within an extraordinary

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[24] *Ibid*., 28. Asad is critiquing Clifford Geertz, who defined religion as "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing those conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic". ("Religion as a Cultural System," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 87-125. This definition draws heavily on Max Weber's sociological method as outlined in his introduction to *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology,* ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

[25] Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (New York: Vintage Books, 1953).

[26] These terms were employed by Max Weber (for instance, on charisma), Paul Tillich, and Rudolph Otto respectively; I invoke them here simply as illustrations of a broader trend in the fields formerly known as the history of religions and the science of religion (*Religionwissenschaft*).

[27] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion from Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xii.

setting."[28] Smith critiques the symbolic interpretation of ritual, suggesting that ritual action "signals significance without contribution signification."[29] This is because what ritual points to is not a thing but a difference – specifically, the difference between the "is" and an "ought." Ritual, Smith argues, "is a means of performing the way things ought to be in *conscious* tension to the way things are."[30] Describing the work of ritual as reflecting on and rationalizing the discrepancies between the real and the ideal nevertheless risks reproducing the very Protestant biases that Smith is at pains to expunge from the category of religion. Reading ritual in intellectual terms subordinates the significance of its enacted performance to the psychological and mental effects induced in the performer.

Catherine Bell has built on Smith's work while critiquing the hierarchical dichotomy of thought over practice. Rather than focusing on ritual acts, Bell focuses on "ritualization" as the product of multiple strategies of action that embody, negotiate, and resist power relations. Bell describes ritualization as "a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities."[31] Drawing on Bourdieu, Foucault, and anthropologist Roy Rappaport, she suggests that ritualization is a set of strategic actions that produce ritualized actors. For instance, "kneeling does not so much communicate a message about subordination as it generates a body identified with subordination."[32] Ritual action produces hierarchical oppositions (male/female, high/low, spiritual/material) that are objectified in space and time

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[28] Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 109.
[29] *Ibid*., 108. Here Smith is also drawing directly from structural anthropology – this time from Claude Lévi-Strauss.
[30] *Ibid*., 109., italics added.
[31] *Ibid*., 74.
[32] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 99-100.

and thereby structure the subjectivities of ritualized actors.

The connection that Bell draws between ritualization and power is critical, and draws attention to the politics of reading ritual as symbol. To read the body as symbolic, when Muhammad never spoke of it as such, is not only to miss the full significance of diet in the NOI. It is also to participate in a politics of silencing that produces a "symbolic" body by erasing Muhammad's own preoccupation with bodies, minds *and* selves. Critiquing scholars' own participation in the politics of representation, as Bell rightly comments, requires complicating the ostensible neutrality of scholarly categories. If "ritual" and "religion" took shape as a result of specifically Protestant theological concerns, the anthropological and psychoanalytic catchwords of "taboo" and "fetish" are themselves the products of specific colonial encounters and expropriations (in Tonga and Guinea respectively). Far from neutral descriptors, these concepts are bound up with a long history of intellectuals' participation in dispossessing subjects by excluding them from the category of the fully human. To apply these categories to describe the NOI is to risk reproducing the imperialist logic that dispossesses black people by associating them with the figure of the child, the primitive, or the animal.

Yet treating dietetics under the rubric of "ritualization" raises questions about the usefulness of opposing "ritual" to "quotidian" action. Eating concerns both cultural contexts and bodily needs. The very mechanics of eating threaten the fantasy of the liberal, self-contained, autonomous subject by transcending the gap between self and other (and demonstrating the former's dependence on the latter) and by dissolving the boundary

between subject (eater) and object (eaten).[33]

Eating therefore provides a particularly interesting point from which to re-think the distinction between the symbolic and the instrumental that has undergirded theories of "ritual" in anthropology, as well as the dichotomy of extraordinary/ordinary that has haunted the concept in religious studies. This is particularly the case for ETL, which is concerned not only with the kind of "special", non-quotidian eating that we might typically consider under the rubric of "ritualization" (for instance, Passover or the Eucharist). Instead, its prescriptions are predominantly concerned with when, how, and what to eat in daily life. Its object is less the demarcation of extraordinary action from its "other" than the regimentation of ordinary actions as such.

In this light, we might consider ETL as a set of instructions for the cultivation of bodily techniques that Muhammad authorized.[34] This approach, taken up by Asad, follows from Michel Foucault's genealogy of "discipline," the modern technology of power whose origins he traced to the Christian monastic tradition.[35] In contrast to discipline, which he associated with the normalizing, totalizing drives of modern state power, Foucault in his final works dealt with the various techniques that he identified with the "care of the self." In the second volume of the *History of Sexuality,* Foucault developed a theory of morality that tied ascetic practices to the production of ethical selves. Foucault's analysis of the "use of pleasures" in Greek antiquity complicates the interpretation of dietary "taboos" as symbolic markers of social boundaries. Through the dialectic of "moral codes" and "modes of

[33] Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion,* 4.
[34] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion,* 62.
[35] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1995), 135-230.

subjugation," he instead suggests how prohibitions produce the ethical self through the "mastery of desires."[36] Austerity, abstinence, and restraint are not the repression of freedoms but the "elaboration and stylization of an activity in the exercise of power or in the practice of its liberty."[37] In particular, Foucault highlights dietetics as an art of caring for the soul through the care of the body.[38]

A critical aspect that distinguished ancient ethics from modern discipline, according to Foucault, was that the former targeted only a specific group of humans – that is, the adult, propertied, free Greek man who constituted the "citizen". The ostensible "inclusivity" of modern disciplinary regimes may certainly be put to question – particularly in light of Foucault's lack of engagement with race and colonialism.[39] What is critical here, however, is the suggestion that full membership within a particular category of being-human was both the condition for the possibility of freedom *and* the effect of its attainment. Freedom is the highest end of the particular class of human beings for whom freedom is possible. Foucault's insights point to a connection between ethics/ascetics (as tools for attaining self-mastery) and politics/economics (as technologies of government). At the same time, they complicate his voluntaristic characterization of the "arts of existence" as "a principle of stylization of conduct for those who *wished* to give their existence the most graceful and accomplished

[36] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 23-27.
[37] *Ibid*., 23.
[38] *Ibid*, 103-4.
[39] A thoroughgoing treatment of Foucault's thought on race can be found in Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

form possible."[40] The accomplishment of an ascetic and aesthetic ideal of self-mastery cannot be separated from the question of political authority.

The dietetics of ETL articulate a mode of subjugation that instructed the Original People – men and women alike – on the means to free oneself from slavery to desire. Yet the cultivation of self-mastery – the project of individual salvation – was inseparable from the ultimate end of political sovereignty – that is, the collective salvation that would be accomplished in the establishment of a sovereign Nation of Islam. Like the Rule of Saint Benedict, the NOI's prescribed practices of speech, diet, dress, social interaction, prayer, and industry were not simply ends in themselves, but cultivated skills put "*to the service of God*."[41] Through the dietary management of their bodies, NOI members sought to train their souls in preparation for the eventual government of their own body politic.

How to Eat to Live

The year that Muhammad launched his column in ETL was a momentous one not only for the NOI, but for black political struggles across the United States. 1965 marked a turning point for the rise of Black Power, following the legislative successes of the Civil Rights Movement. Scholars have identified two interconnected dimensions of the Black Power era as relevant for understanding two respective shifts in Muhammad's writings. First, the rise of an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and proudly "lumpen" black radicalism may have encouraged Muhammad to give greater focus on economic issues.[42] From the early 1960s, Muhammad began to give more attention to questions of economic self-determinism

[40] Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 250-51.
[41] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 61, emphasis added.
[42] Gibson, *A History of the Nation of Islam*, 67; Clegg, *An Original Man*, 241-2.

and to promote new savings programs, which will be discussed further below. Second, scholars have suggested that ETL was in part a reaction to the growing popularity of "soul food" with the ascendance of black cultural nationalism.[43]

If Muhammad was indeed criticizing the popularization of "soul food" – a term which appears nowhere in ETL – he was not alone. Leaders of the Marxist-Leninist Black Panther Party denounced black bourgeois enthusiasm for soul food as reactionary ideology that substituted cultural for political liberation. Huey Newton railed against this "pork-chop nationalism" and Eldridge Cleaver likened it derisively to "going slumming," a form of urban voyeurism that became popular among wealthy white New Yorkers in the early twentieth century.[44]

Personal concerns may have also motivated Muhammad to begin writing ETL. Muhammad's frail health had begun to limit his public activities by 1963. Already suffering from bronchial asthma, in May 1965 he was diagnosed with diabetes and prescribed insulin.[45] Muhammad, deeply suspicious of white-dominated medical science, refused to abide by his doctor's advice. Instead, he appears to have set almost immediately to writing articles on health and diet, the first of which appeared on 6 June 1965.

Whatever factors impelled Muhammad to write ETL, the dietary system he outlined was not simply a reaction to contemporary events. Considerable overlap, as well as the absence of any apparent structural logic, may yield an impression of improvisation. Compounding this, ETL contains not only dietary advice but a bewildering constellation of

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[43] Witt, *Black Hunger*,
[44] Witt, *Black Hunger*, chapter three. Malcolm X, in his autobiography, provides a powerful perspective on "slumming" in 1930s Harlem. See Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X as Told to Alex Haley* (New York: One World, 1964), chapters five and six.
[45] Clegg, *An Original Man*, 236-7.

medical theories, scriptural interpretations, mythic histories, and financial counsel. Yet this chaotic assemblage reflects not the novelty of ETL's content but the nature of its production. Muhammad wrote ETL intermittently as his health permitted, and his long spells of illness sometimes obliged MS to reprint previously published articles. In addition, Muhammad encouraged his followers to write to him with questions or feedback and sometimes adapted the content of his articles to address specific members' concerns. Yet the lack of systematization in ETL belies a relative coherence of ideas about eating, diet, and the self which, taken together, outline a mode of subjugation aimed at freeing the black Muslim from the slavery of unhealthy desires.[46]

Muhammad presented these ideas not as his own, but as the divine laws that Allah had revealed to him. As Muhammad claimed in the opening paragraph of the first article of ETL: "There is no way for us to learn the right way to eat in order to live a long life, except through the guidance and teachings of Allah. Who came in the Person of Master Fard Muhammad."[47] As leader of the NOI, Muhammad styled himself the "Messenger" of God. The author of his dietetic system was Allah, who, in the person of Fard, had taught him how to eat to live in order that Muhammad might enlighten black Americans about their original identity as members of the Lost-Found Nation of Islam. On twenty-seven occasions in the first volume, and thirty-two in the second, Muhammad invokes "Allah, in the person of Master Fard Muhammad" as the source of the teachings for which he acts as recipient and transmitter.

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[46] Foucault distinguishes helpfully between "moral codes" and "modes of subjugation," and emphasizes that the latter may assume a relatively unsystematized form. *The Use of Pleasure*, 26-27.

[47] Elijah Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live,* 2 vols (Chicago: Secretarius MEMPS Publications, 1967, 1972), 1:1:1. All subsequent numerical references refer to the volume, chapter, and subsection of the text respectively.

Scholars have elided the claim of prophetic revelation in the authorization of Muhammad's dietary writings. Moreover, studies of diet in the NOI have focused exclusively on what ETL prohibited. Examining dietary rules through the binaries of permitted/forbidden or pure/polluted parallels draws upon Emile Durkheim's theory of the sacred as constituted through its separation from the profane.[48] The God of Muhammad's ETL, however, does more than simply forbid. Among the titles of chapters contained in the index of ETL are: "Food God Suggests" (chapter 3) and "God of Right Prescribes Best Foods" (chapter 40). Moreover, not all "forbidden" food was equally forbidden in Allah's eyes. A different approach can begin by dividing the ETL into three kinds of rules. The first and most important was the frequency with which one ought to eat; second, the mechanics of food preparation and consumption; and third, the types of foods to eat.

Throughout both volumes, although more frequently in the second, Muhammad repeatedly emphasized the importance of eating only once a day.

> Eat one meal a day or one meal every other day, and it will prolong your life. Do not think that you will starve. On the contrary, you will be treating yourself to ... a life filled with sickless days.[49]

The injunction to eat only once a day appears on thirty-nine pages in the first volume of ETL and sixty-seven in the second. At times, Muhammad insisted that reducing the frequency of eating was the "main thing" and less important than the contents of the meal.[50] The sick, the frail, and children were exempt from this requirement, and Muhammad

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[48] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[49] Muhammad, *Eat to Live,* 1:7:1.
[50] *Ibid,* 1:15.

stipulated that they should eat at least twice daily. However, he made no distinction between men and women.

While one meal per day was the standard prescription, Muhammad encouraged members to eat as little as once every two or three days if possible. He also cautioned against sudden changes in diet, recommending a gradual reduction in food intake.[51] The timing of the meals is rarely emphasized, although one passage indicates 4 and 6 P.M as the optimal mealtime.[52] Black coffee and water could be consumed at any time throughout the day, but snacking was strongly discouraged. The texts also frequently extol fasting for a period for three days or more. Muhammad introduced December as the period for observing Ramadan, instructing members to refrain from eating and drinking during daylight hours and from consuming meat – as well as luxury non-food commodities – during that month.[53]

Muhammad also stipulated the correct way to prepare and eat food. Muhammad did not use the term "halal," but advised Muslims to buy kosher meat from Orthodox Jewish stores to ensure adherence to Allah's laws. He taught that all foods should be thoroughly cooked, except for fruit, which should be eaten raw. Processed and pre-packaged foods should be avoided as much as possible in favor of food cooked at home or at a NOI-operated restaurant. Members should not cook their food by deep-frying or by frying in animal fats, but shallow frying in vegetable oils was acceptable. Breads and cakes should be twice-baked (preferably at home) and eaten as stale as possible. Muhammad repeatedly exhorted his followers never to eat "freshly baked" bread products, which "buckled" the stomach. Flour

[51] *Ibid*., 2:9.
[52] *Ibid*., 1:11.
[53] Ibid., 2:16.

for baking should be as finely ground as possible, and dough proved "a couple of times."[54] Muhammad also insisted on eating slowly and chewing food thoroughly, "until it slips away into the throat."[55]

Finally, Muhammad described the kinds of food Allah had taught him to eat and avoid. The most frequently mentioned prohibited item was the filthy and "poisonous" swine, the only item which was a sin for Muslims to consume.[56] Injunctions against eating the flesh of the swine occur approximately four times as often as those against alcohol and tobacco, which were also "poisonous." Indeed, all foods were to some extent poisonous, but resting the stomach for twenty-four hours was sufficient to destroy the "minor food poison" from permitted foods.[57] The more "poisonous" a food, the more vehemently Muhammad insisted on its avoidance.

This logic illuminates some of the apparent inconsistencies in ETL's strictures. For instance, Muhammad forbids the consumption of meat and chicken in some passages ("Do not eat meat") while elsewhere merely discourages it ("no meat is good for us ... so that which we eat, try to eat the best of it").[58] These slippages must also be understood in light of the fact that ETL's dietary stipulations were expounded on a running basis and to some extent in correspondence with NOI members, whom Muhammad encouraged to write in to him to tell of their experience with the new regimen. Muhammad's instructions not to eat specific foods constitutes in some cases less of an absolute prohibition than an exhortation connected with the logic of poison.

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[54] *Ibid*., 1:13.
[55] *Ibid*., 2:55.
[56] *Ibid*., 1:11:3.
[57] *Ibid*.,1:9:7.
[58] *Ibid*., 2:17:11 and 2:36:6.

In the ETL, this ambiguity generally inheres in the question of animal flesh, such as fish weighing between twenty and fifty pounds,[59] horse meat, rabbit, chicken, beef, and lamb. These foods were discouraged since they were not "good for you," but Muhammad did not call their consumption a sin and he did not insist on abstaining from them. Some of these meats – such catfish (the "pig of the sea"), wild animals (possums, rabbit, deer), chicken, and the "scavengers" of the sea (shellfish) – were "filthy" like the swine, but fell short of sinful meats. The category of "filth" applies exclusively to animals. The vegetable products which Allah revealed to be highly poisonous – collards, turnip greens, kale, sweet and white potatoes, peas of any kind, soy, nuts, and corn – are not "filthy" but rather "rough" or "coarse." Muhammad also discouraged the consumption of foods treated with chemicals and pesticides.

Muhammad also explicitly recommended the consumption of certain foods and drinks. Apart from those mentioned above, all vegetables were recommended. In fact, Muhammad strongly encouraged vegetarianism. The navy bean of bean pie fame also appears on this list, alongside fruit, whole wheat, vegetable oils, young pigeons, fish weighing between one and ten pounds, milk, sweet peas, and cream cheese. Fresh milk, whole wheat bread, and butter were particularly encouraged. Rye bread was acceptable for those performing physically demanding work but not recommended for those with sedentary lifestyles.[60] Eggs and cheese were permissible in moderation. The texts also include a couple of articles in which Muhammad recommends breastfeeding, and advises against feeding animal milk to young infants.

[59] Muhammad, *Eat to Live*, 1:18:2, 2:2:19.
[60] *Ibid*., 1:3.

ETL presents itself as a series of instructions, warnings, prohibitions, and prescriptions on dietary practice according to Allah's divine teachings. The following section examines how these teachings connect to and shed light on the dietetic practices which they worked to authorize.

Allah's Teachings

Little is certain about the life of the man Muhammad called God. Yet while scarcely any of Fard's original teachings survived his disappearance, interviews with his early followers, conducted by sociologist Erdmann Beynon between 1930 and 1934, provide strong evidence of continuity between his teachings on diet and Muhammad's writings in ETL. Beynon's article indicates that Fard instructed his followers to eat only one meal a day, encouraged vegetarianism, and prohibited the flesh of "poison" animals: hogs, ducks, geese, possums and catfish, as well as from consuming alcohol and tobacco.[61] A female convert, Sister Majied, recalled of Fard:

> If we asked him to eat with us, he would eat whatever we had on the table, but after the meal he began to talk: "Now don't eat this food. It is poison for you. The people in your own country do not eat it. Since they eat the right kind of food they have the best health all the time. If you would live just like the people in your home country, you would never be sick any more." So we all wanted him to tell us more about ourselves and about our home country and about how we could be free from rheumatism, aches and pains.[62]

Crucially, Fard's disclosure of his followers' diet as "poison *for you*" accompanied and affirmed his revelation of the true and original identity of the "so-called Negroes." Fard

[61] *Ibid*., 901.
[62] Quoted in Erdmann D. Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult Among Negro Migrants in Detroit," *American Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 6 (1938): 895.

taught that:

> The black men in North America are not Negroes, but members of the lost tribe of Shebazz, stolen by traders from the Holy City of Mecca 379 years ago. The prophet [Fard] came to America to find and to bring back to life his long lost brethren, from whom the Caucasians had taken away their language, their nation, and their religion. Here in America they were living *other than themselves*.[63]

When, some thirty years later, Elijah Muhammad declared that he would instruct his followers about Allah's divine laws on how to eat to live, this was not mere cynicism. ETL did in fact expound (and likely elaborate on) the dietary laws that "Allah," in the person of Master Fard, had revealed to Muhammad in Detroit in the 1930s. Following Fard's original revelation, Muhammad's dietetics linked eating practices to the salvation of the Muslim self and nation.

As Rouse and Hopkins have noted, Muhammad tied the renunciation of slave foods to the "mental liberation" of black Americans.[64] Yet this does not entail that diet mattered only or primarily as a symbol or a mechanism for resignification. Indeed, to interpret diet in primarily symbolic terms is to ignore Muhammad's own far-reaching critique of Protestant epistemology - an epistemology which inheres in many social scientific categories and theories. Like many Garveyite proponents of black self-reliance, Elijah Muhammad explicitly criticized the Protestant doctrine of salvation by faith.[65] Muhammad denounced

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[63] *Ibid*., 901, italics added.
[64] Rouse and Hopkins, "Purity, Soul Food, and Sunni Islam."
[65] See Omar H. Ali, "Black Populism: Agrarian Politics from the Colored Alliance to the People's Party," in Debra A. Reid and Evan P. Bennett, eds., *Beyond Forty Acre and a Mule:*

Protestantism's deity as a "Spook God" concocted to pacify the oppressed black people through the promise of a better afterlife.[66] The "true God" and the "true religion" of Islam delivered "Heaven in this life", not the next.[67] Muhammad's critique of transcendent theology as white "tricknology" has its basis in a more fundamental rejection of the distinction between the spiritual and the material. In the opening chapter of *Message to the Blackman* (1965), Muhammad insisted that God must be a "material being" in order for humans to gain knowledge of Him:

> [The Prophets] tell us that they heard Gods voice speaking to them in their own language. Can a spirit speak a language while being an immaterial something? If God is not material, what pleasure would He get out of material beings and the material universe? What is the basis of spirit? Is the spirit independent of material?[68]

Against the double inheritance of Cartesian dualism and Christian trinitarianism, Muhammad insisted on a conception of the spirit as dependent on and emergent from material reality. Human beings indeed had "spirits", but these had no existence apart from the material body.[69] This materialist conception of the soul undergirds Muhammad's insistence on eating to *live* – that is, to prolong life. In an almost Nietzschean style, Muhammad wrote:

> The very law of nature teaches us to hold on to this life and not let it go if we can help it. We only know of this life and not any other life. You strong Christians

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African American Landowning Families since Reconstruction (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2012) 109-131.

[66] Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America* (Phoenix, AZ: Secretarius MEMPS Publications, 1963), 7-10.

[67] Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman,* 22.

[68] *Ibid*., 2.

[69] *Ibid*., chapter 9.

> and lovers of life beyond the grave -- and life somewhere in the skies that you imagine -- never prove to anyone that you would like to leave this life for that life by killing yourself or telling the doctor not to come to administer medicine or any aid that he can give you when death is approaching.[70]

Just as he denied the concept of a spirit independent of material human bodies, Muhammad rejected an idea of knowledge divorced from action. "Knowledge," he argued, "is the result of learning and is a force or energy that makes it's [sic] bearer accomplish or overcome obstacles, barriers and resistance."[71] For Muhammad, knowledge was not like a thing that one "had" and may or may not "use." It was, rather, like electricity: a force whose presence was inextricable from its effects.

A symbolic interpretation of the eating body in ETL fails to account for these critiques. Muhammad urged followers to obey Allah's dietary laws not to symbolize their obedience, but because obedience was the condition of their material and spiritual salvation in this life. To obey God's laws in everyday bodily practice *was* (and did not merely reflect) the attainment of revealed divine knowledge. Muhammad's epistemological system refuses a dualistic schema that separates thought from action, belief from practice, and doctrine from ritual. For this reason, eating to live cannot be understood in isolation from the "knowledge of self" to which its very practice bore witness.

[70] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live*, 1:17:2.
[71] Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman*, 41.

"Deaf, Dumb, and Blind": Disability, Animality and Theodicy

If gaining "knowledge of self" was the means through which blacks could achieve salvation, its loss constitutes the cornerstone of NOI theodicy. Muhammad's account of the origins and fall of the Original People provides the context for understanding how diet mattered for their personal and collective salvation. Saving the self and saving the Nation depended equally on the capacity for "self-rule": over appetites and desires, on the one hand, and over lands, capital, and the home, on the other. The NOI's theodicial schema outlines a civilizing mission and reformist project that contains echoes of imperialist and liberal ideology. Muhammad's deployment of the trope of woman-as-land evokes a common theme within settler colonial narratives, within and outside the United States.[72] Of equal importance are the ways in which Muhammad configures the fully human in racialized terms that draw on and conceptually link the figure of the animal and that of the cripple.[73] Muhammad's theodicy imagines the loss of knowledge of self as a disability, which whites had inflicted on blacks by treating them as animals. Muhammad's evocations of the violent dispossession of blacks through slavery and social policy nevertheless caution against interpreting his theology as a mere inversion of white liberalism, imperialism, or patriarchy. Such an interpretation risks flattening the steep racial hierarchies of the American historical landscape.

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[72] Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman,* chapter 32.

[73] Alison Kafer proposes the use of "cripped" over "disabled." She argues persuasively that the political power of the term "crip" lies in its capacity to make us "wince." *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 15. The conflation of blackness with disability has a long history in the United States; Leonard Kriegel wrote beautiful in 1969 of Uncle Tom and Tiny Tim as "brothers under the skin." See "Uncle Tom And Tiny Tim: Some Reflections On The Cripple As Negro," *The American Scholar* 38 (1969): 412-30.

Muhammad's salvific theology invoked the restoration of blacks to the true state of being-human which had been denied to them by the foreordained scourge of white rule. Muhammad described Fard (Allah) as a savior who came to save the Original People from sin: "not because you are by nature a sinner but because you have followed a sinner."[74] According to Muhammad, blacks imitated white culture only because the latter had made them "deaf, dumb and blind" to their true selves. Their true selves were the black Muslims, the Original People created by the self-created black God before all other races. This people, among whom were the Tribe of Shabazz, settled in Mecca near "Asia."

Muhammad taught that, until the final apocalypse and salvation, a varying proportion of the Original People were "satisfied" and "dissatisfied." Approximately 6,600 years ago, one of the "dissatisfied", a black scientist named Yakub, discovered that the original black man contained two "germs": one black, and one brown. Yakub and his 59,999 followers then began "grafting" a new race from the original, resulting in the creation of the brown, red, yellow races, and after 600 years, the white race. For Muhammad, Surat al-Hijr 15:28 ("Surely I am going to create a mortal of the essence of black mud fashioned in shape") referred not to God's creation of the human race, but to Yakub's creation of the white devils. As Muhammad explained: "The essence of black mud ... actually means the sperm of the black nation," the "germ" from which Yakub created all the other races.[75]

Muhammad's account of racial genesis evokes plainly and poignantly the violent history of eugenics and racial hygiene in the United States.[76] His language draws directly

[74] Quoted in Berg, *Elijah Muhammad and Islam*, 77.
[75] Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman,* 128.
[76] This context is also crucial for understanding other aspects of Muhammad's theological teachings. The forced sterilization of men and women of color under the auspices of "racial

from prominent racial scientific theories of the time, which identified "germ-plasm" as the mechanism of heredity and compared eugenics to plant breeding and "grafting."[77] Progressives were among the strongest proponents of both dietary reform *and* eugenics as a form of scientific government intervention to weed out the "unfit" – including cripples, moral "degenerates," the "inferior" races and the poor. The Progressive movement enthusiastically endorsed eugenics not only through the forced sterilization of the "unfit" but through euthanasia – including of neonates. While a substantial number of prominent lawyers, doctors, and politicians advocated letting "defective" infants die, there was also some support for the direct euthanasia of infants at the time of the NOI's founding and throughout its early history.[78] Eugenic infanticide found support in the same "faith in the divine beneficence of nature" prominent in dietary reform.[79] Both movements attributed disease to deviation from the law of nature – whether through improper eating or life-saving medical intervention.

Individuals and organizations promoted eugenics though mass media outlets, including in film and the press. Muhammad would certainly have encountered them during his time in Chicago and Detroit in the 1920s, as support for pro-eugenics legislation was especially strong in the Midwest.[80] While a recurring trope frames Muhammad's cosmogony as an inversion of white racial supremacy, the Yakub myth contains a stringent critique of eugenics as an evil and unnatural practice that transgresses God's law.

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hygiene" programs, for instance, provides a vital context for understanding Muhammad's vehement opposition to oral contraception.

[77] For more on these theories and the role of white religious leaders in promoting them, see Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[78] Martin S. Pernick, *The Black Stork: Eugenics and the Death of "Defective" Babies in American Medicine and Motion Pictures since 1915* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[79] *Ibid*., 86.

[80] *Ibid*., 24.

Yakub created the white race through a systematic eugenics program that destroyed darker-skinned babies:

> His aim was to kill and destroy the black nation. He ordered the nurses to kill all black babies that were born among his people, by pricking the brains with a sharp needle as soon as the black child's head is out of the mother. If the mother is alert (watching the nurse), then the nurse would lie and fool the mother to get possession of child to murder it.[81]

Over time, the evil of this eugenics program imprinted itself on the very nature of the white race:

> By teaching the nurses to kill the black baby and save the brown baby, so as to graft the white out of it; by lying to the black mother of the baby, this lie was born into the very nature of the white baby; and, murder for the black people also born in them -- or made by nature a liar and murderer.[82]

Whereas the Original People were by nature righteous and obedient to God's law, the white race was ontologically evil and naturally disobedient. This genetic predisposition to lying, deception, and violence provides the context for Muhammad's interpretation of Genesis. According to Muhammad, Adam and Eve were the first parents of the white race and the "first sinners."[83] God's expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, Muhammad suggested, referred to the "holy people of Islam" who cast out the "race of white made devils" from Mecca to Europe. For the first 2,000 years after their expulsion, the whites lived as "wild beasts" in Europe, "going upon all fours; eating raw and unseasoned, uncooked

[81] Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman*, 115.
[82] *Ibid*., 116.
[83] *Ibid*., 133.

food; living in caves and tree tops, climbing and jumping from one tree to the other."[84] Allah then sent Moses to civilize the white savages so that they could take their place as rulers over the righteous, as Yakub had intended. Allah had ordained that the white race would rule for a period of 6,000 years. The third and final stage of their reign began in 1555, when a white man named John Hawkins tricked the first Original People into slavery, precipitating the mass transportation of black people to the "wilderness" of North America.[85]

The creation of the white race parallels the biblical account of the Fall as an explanation of the origin of sin and evil. In Genesis 1-2, Adam and Eve eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and become ashamed of their nakedness. By contrast, the expulsion of the whites from Mecca caused them to become a people "without shame," like "wild animals."[86] While the Genesis story links shame and covering to the loss of original innocence, Muhammad inverts the schema, presenting the banishment from Paradise as a fall from civilization to brazen depravity and bestial shamelessness.

As the products of Yakub's experiments, deception, and murders, the white devils possessed an innate drive to experiment, lie, and kill. As they brought the black race under their rule, the white devils developed a science of "tricknology" aimed at disabling the Original People by making them "deaf, dumb and blind" to their origins. Christianity was a centerpiece of the white devils' tricknology, which caused the Muslims to lose "knowledge of self and kind." Its "slavery teachings" deceived blacks into worshipping an imaginary god and accepting their earthly fate through the promise of heavenly reward.[87] Through

[84] *Ibid*., 103.
[85] *Ibid*., 230-33.
[86] *Ibid*., 119.
[87] *Ibid*., 220-26.

Christianity, the grafted devils tricked the Original People into believing in the superiority of the white race even as they lynched, raped, and brutalized blacks.

Knowing and submitting to God's laws required shedding not only Christianity, but the habits, speech, dress, diet, and names that the white race had deceived black people into adopting as their own. Indeed, to keep the members of the black race "spiritually dead" whites employed not only Christianity but a wide range of tricks that made then "other than self." One critical tactic was to force Muslims to consume the "poison" foods that Allah had taught them not to eat. Muhammad taught that the white devils had used food to instill fear and respect for the white man in the Original People while they were "babies under slavery."[88] A point-by-point dialogue from Muhammad's *The Supreme Wisdom*, ostensibly between Muhammad and Fard, explains how eating the wrong food produces mental slavery:

7. Why does he like the Devil?

8. Because the Devil put fear in him when he was a little boy.

9. Why does he fear now, since he is a big man?

10. Because the Devil taught him to eat the wrong food.

11. Does that have anything to with the above question, No. 10?

12. Yes, sir! That makes him other than his own self.

13. What is his own self?

14. His own self is a righteous Muslim.[89]

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[88] *Ibid.,* 51.

[89] Elijah Muhammad, *The Supreme Wisdom* (Newport News, VA: National Newport News and Commentator, 1957), section vii.

The most important of these was the "poisoned swine," which the white slave-masters and jailers had forced Muslims to consume. Indeed, pork offal had been the main source of animal protein in the rations of African-American slaves.[90] In prison, the widespread use of pork had forced Muhammad and other Muslims to subsist of bread and white potatoes.[91] The swine, as mentioned above, was by far the most emphatically prohibited item in ETL and the only one whose consumption was a sin.

Doris Witt interprets Muhammad's obsession with the "filth" of the swine as articulating his "social and subjective need for control over African American women."[92] Muhammad, as Witt notes, argued that swine "takes away the shyness" and the beauty of those who eat it. She connects Muhammad's prohibition of pork to the control of sexuality, especially that of African-American women whom the ETL "rescripted ... as takers rather than givers of life."[93] Witt's analysis provides a powerful critique of the heteronormative and misogynistic underpinnings of Muhammad's writings. Her argument that Muhammad prohibited slave foods *because* of their association with black mothers is less persuasive. According to this view, Muhammad banned traditional diets in order to elide black women's role in the reproduction of the black race. The material struggle over dietary practices is thus a reflection of the symbolic struggle for pure black masculinity.

Taking into account the NOI's immanent theology complicates the argument that dietary practices mattered because of what they symbolized. Following ETL's instructions was not a case of "symbolizing" one's adherence to divine law, but of actually adhering to it

[90] William C. Whit, "Soul Food as Cultural Creation," in *African-American Foodways*, 45-58.
[91] Clegg, *An Original Man,* 92.
[92] Witt, *Black Hunger*, 113.
[93] *Ibid*.

in order to bring about concrete personal and social change. What, when and how a Muslim ate determined the character of their ethical "self," and not vice versa. Fard's and Muhammad's conception of the body as the instrument for the transformation of the self undergirds the logic of the dietary laws in ETL.

This perspective affords a different interpretation of the prohibition of swine. In ETL, Muhammad claimed that Allah had taught him the hog was a "grafted animal" made for white people only and for "medical purposes."[94] The swine is the only animal that Muhammad describes as "grafted," and this fact serves to underscore its connection with the "grafted" white devils. While harmless to whites, the "grafted" unnatural flesh of the swine was uniquely poisonous to bodies of the "original" unmade people and "cut up their intestines."[95] While all foods were to some extent poisonous, the swine had a particularly dangerous "live poison": trichina worms.[96] In cautioning against pork, Muhammad described the progression of trichinosis: "these worms begin in the stomach, weaving themselves to breed their families in the walls of the stomach; from there into the walls of the intestines; from there into our muscles, and from there into the spine and brains."[97]

This passage sheds light on the mechanisms through which Muhammad imagined the ingestion of poison altering not only the physical constitution of the body but the moral constitution of the self. Muhammad argued that "the poisonous hog flesh makes the color of many people's eyes muddy and reddish in appearance and makes the people who eat it

[94] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live*, 1:26:1, 1:4:5.
[95] *Ibid*., 1:4:8.
[96] *Ibid*., 1:38:11-12.
[97] *Ibid*., 1:25:9.

brazen, careless, easy to anger, fight, and oppose each other."[98] Bringing the flesh of the swine into the body had a direct effect on the mind: "The worms eat away our digestive tracts and cause bad thinking, because once they get into the spinal cord, they make their way to the brain and there they begin to affect the way of thinking."[99]

The filth of the pig – like the evil of the white race – was a function not only of its grafted nature but of its behavior. Similarly, it was not only eating the wrong kinds of foods that gave rise to physical sickness and spiritual death, but eating intemperately. Muhammad described the pig as the "greediest animal" and argued that "the nature of the hog is to eat and thrive on anything edible -- filth, or clean food."[100] The infinite and indiscriminate appetite of the pig parallels the white man's innate disobedience and lack of divine guidance. The filthiness of other animals, such as chickens and catfish, is similarly connected to their indiscriminate eating habits.

Filth was not coextensive with "poison" which inhered, to a greater or lesser extent, in every kind of food. It was rather characteristic of those creatures that acted according to their carnal appetites, rather than Allah's commandments. These beings were ontologically unlike the Muslims, who were by nature obedient to God's law. Through their imitation of white culture, Muslims "worshipped [their] appetite as though it was [their] God."[101] In their deafness, dumbness, and blindness to their true selves, the Original People acted as beasts enslaved to their animal drives and instincts.

Eating to live instructed Muhammad's followers in a disciplinary practice that aimed

[98] *Ibid.,* 1:11.
[99] *Ibid*., 1:38:12.
[100] *Ibid*., 1:36:4.
[101] *Ibid.,* 1:27:1.

to rid the body of the "poisons" that made the Muslim "other than self." This required not only the avoidance of filthy foods, but the management of the consumption of various "poisons" through dietetic asceitcs. Muhammad emphasized the especially toxic effects of "rough" or "coarse" foods. Many of these were vegetables and grains that slave-masters had fed their slaves. For instance:

> Allah forbids us to eat peas. He considers most peas fit for cattle and herds of animals but not for the delicate stomachs of human beings … Peas, collard greens, turnip greens, sweet potatoes and white potatoes are very cheaply raised foods. The Southern slave masters used them to feed the slaves, and still advise the consumption of them.[102]

While the slave-masters had treated the black body like an animal, Muhammad described black stomachs as "delicate" and implored his followers not to eat the "rough" foods made for the tough stomachs of animals: "The lima bean is another large bean advertised by the devil for you to eat which will almost burst the lining of the stomach and intestines of a Texas bull. They said 'that one is good for the nigger.'"[103]

Teaching blacks to eat animal fodder was yet another dimension of white tricknology. This coarse food wore out the delicate stomach, the barrier that prevented poison from entering the black body. Preserving the stomach was key to avoiding physical and spiritual illness. As Muhammad instructed his followers, "safeguard your delicate stomach that has to digest all that you eat by not over-burdening it with trying to digest half-cooked food or raw food and the acid gases from such foods. This is what hastens the doctor to your bedside – and after that, the undertaker, and after that, the grave digger."[104]

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[102] Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live,* 1:2.
[103] *Ibid*., 1:3:11.
[104] *Ibid*., 1:18:4.

The instructions on how to prepare and chew food aim to minimize the burden of digestion on the stomach. Muhammad argued that the constant ingestion of food wore on the stomach like "dripping water ... [on] a stone."[105] This conception of the body undergirds Muhammad's insistence on eating only once a day, so that the "idleness" of the stomach had time to destroy and neutralize the poisons.[106] Frequent consumption led to an accumulation of poison, which would seep into the body and mind. Hearing the message of Allah brought liberation from the debilitating effects of enslavement to the passions. Eating to live required therefore not simply abstaining from "taboo" foods. Rather, it involved a positive disciplining of the body through the attentive management of the timing, frequency, contents, and manner of eating. Retraining the stomach in accordance with Allah's teachings provided the techniques through which to regain the mastery over desire that was constitutive of the righteous original self.

Saving (for) the Nation: Dietetics in Muhammad's Salvific Economy

Correct dietary practice was essential to the salvation of the individual Muslim from bodily, mental, and moral enslavement to the white race. Dietary discipline was also a material aspect of the Nation's collective efforts to achieve salvation by separating from white America. In eating to live, Muslims were not only saving themselves from their own physical and spiritual death; they were also "saving" (for) the black Nation. Following Allah's instructions to eat only once a day, fast often, and abstain from prohibited foods,

[105] *Ibid*., 1:10:3.
[106] *Ibid*., 1:9:7.

Muhammad proclaimed, "would mean a great economic saving" for the Muslims.[107] In addition to the lowering the costs of food, correct diet would mean that the Muslims would "never be sick or have to pay hundreds, thousands and millions of dollars for doctor bills and hospitalization."[108]

In grounding dietary laws in scientistic constructions of racial difference, and in linking eating to health, morality, and national progress, Muhammad was far from unique. American social reformers had advocated proper eating as a tool for forging a moral consumers and good citizens since at least the 1830s. Campaigners such as Sylvester Graham, William Alcott, and William Metcalf were among the most renowned "nutritional moralists" to advocate abstention – especially from meat and alcohol – as an instrument for personal and political change.[109] Popular health movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries emphasized personal responsibility for physical health and advocated dietary wisdom as a substitute for doctor's visits. Marcus Garvey expressed this widely shared sentiment when he castigated black Americans in a speech on January 1928:

> Some of you are so ignorant that you give the doctor $5 or $10 to get you better; and all that is wrong with you is that you have lived for 10 or 20 years without taking a little castor oil or salts. No wonder that your system is like a dirty machine.[110]

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[107] *Ibid*., 1:5:5.
[108] *Ibid*., 1:1:8.
[109] Adam D. Shprintzen, *The Vegetarian Crusade: The Rise of an American Reform Movement, 1817-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 56-57.
[110] Marcus Garvey, "15 January: Speech by Marcus Garvey," *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, ed. Robert A. Hill, volume vii, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 107-8.

Garvey's insistence that disease was the result of violating "the code of God in nature" foreshadowed and likely influenced the NOI's theology.[111] Yet the view of nature's laws as a cure for the ills of modern living theory crystallized during the Second Great Awakening, articulated by a motley assortment of Christian, utopian, and spiritualist movements.[112] It became influential among proponents of "New Thought" and "mental science" – including Mary Eddy Baker and Noble Drew Ali - who advocated power of the mind to overcome bodily illness.[113] The Black Hebrew Israelites, by contrast, espoused a materialist theory of disease that bears close resemblance to that of the NOI. Like Muhammad, Ben Ammi Ben-Israel (1939-2014) taught the return to God's law as the means for earthly salvation and personal immortality.[114] Assumptions about racial difference and anxieties of racial "hygiene" were inalienable to all of these theories of diet and health, even as they moved back and forth across the color line.

Muhammad's writings thus participated in and creatively adapted ideas about the eating body and national progress that were widely disseminated in American dietary discourse. Diet was a tool for forging not only moral citizens, but moral consumers. Scholars have long recognized the role of consumption practices in producing, safeguarding, and

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[111] *Ibid*., 107. Both Fard and Muhammad were one-time Garveyites.
[112] Gayle V. Fischer, *Pantaloons & Power: A Nineteenth-century Dress Reform in the United States* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2001), 10-11; Catherine Albanese, "Physic and Metaphysic in Nineteenth-Century America: Medical Sectarians and Religious Healing," *Church History* 55, no. 4 (1986): 489-502.
[113] For the MSA see Emily Suzanne Clark, "Noble Drew Ali's "Clean and Pure Nation": The Moorish Science Temple, Identity, and Healing," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 16 no. 3 (2013): 31-51.
[114] John L. Jackson, Jr., "Emigrationism Afrocentrism, and Hebrew Israelites in the Promised Land," in Edith Bruder and Tudor Parfitt, eds., *African Zion: Studies in Black Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 280. Ben Ammi taught his followers to adhere to a purely vegan diet.

naturalizing class hierarchies.[115] Their work has shown the centrality of consumption in shaping social identities,[116] and in producing and resisting racial, gender, and class inequalities.[117] While most of this literature focuses on consumption in the "positive" sense of purchasing goods and ingesting foods, some recent studies draw attention to "thrift" and "temperance" as equally important categories for analyzing consumption.[118]

Muhammad's ascetic, once-a-day dietetic regimen highlights the productive dimensions of ascetic practice. His dietetics imagines consumption not simply as ingestion or purchase, but as an economy of eating and abstaining, ingesting and forgoing, doing and refusing. In ETL, abstaining from, rejecting, and reducing consumption often overshadow the specific contents of Muhammad's dietary advice. Within this framework, dietary abstention ceases to function merely in the negative form of a prohibition; instead, it is a positive act that *produces* specific economic outcomes. The act of *not* eating becomes an important activity in itself, linking the circuits of alimentation to the circuits of capital. Renouncing "poison" foods starves the white economy while feeding black bank accounts. The forging of the moral consumer and the "saving" of the black nation depend not only on ingestion but on

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[115] Two especially influential works for the study of class and consumption have been Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* [1899] (New York: Penguin, 1994) and Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

[116] Carol A. Breckenridge, ed., *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in a South Asian World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Brian Owensby, *Intimate Ironis: Modernity and the Making of Middle Class Life in Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Maureen O'Dougherty, *Consumption Intensified: The Politics of Middle Class Daily Life in Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

[117] Elizabeth Chin, *Purchasing Power: Black Kids and American Consumer Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 3.

[118] Sherene Seikaly, *Men of Capital: Economy and Scarcity in Mandate Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), chapter two; Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion*, especially chapter two.

fasting and temperance.

Muhammad imagined this bodily economy as constitutive of a salvific economy that whose aim was the creation of a separate and sovereign black Nation. In the early 1960s, Muhammad had announced the launch of his first Three-Year Economic Program. He called upon the entire nation to "sacrifice for three years," giving up all extravagances and putting money aside to build a black nation. He implored his followers to send every penny, nickel, dime, dollar to the Temple in Chicago in order to build a national savings bank and develop investment funds.[119] The language of Muhammad's economic program confirms the instrumentality of everyday consumption practices to the building of a separate and independent black nation:

> Suppose we spent ... 25 cents a week in tobacco (cigarettes, cigars, chewing or snuff dipping) ... Let us say we spent the same amount (25 cents a week) on beer. Again the actual amount would be more. This means $260 million a year spent for beer and the same spent for whiskey, wine, cigarettes and cigars... If five million wage earners saved just $47 per year, they could save over a billion dollars a year. And this figure would be far greater if we included extravagant buying of clothes, furniture and cars. Eating the hog, the Divinely forbidden flesh which keeps us filled with arthritis, rheumatism, high blood pressure and fever makes unnecessary doctor and drug bills. All of this wasteful spending should be checked and you will see within a one-year period that you have not saved one billion dollars, but several billions.[120]

It is perhaps tempting to dismiss this vision as either naïve or cynical. The idea of millions of black Americans founding a separate nation with spare dimes from quitting

[119] Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman,* chapter 84.
[120] *Ibid*., chapter 86.

cigarettes has, indeed, a somewhat utopic aura. Yet while the NOI's own records are unavailable, FBI reports suggest that member contributions provided the organization's main source of income.[121] The NOI required members to donate one tenth of their household income and encouraged additional donations, particular at ceremonial events such as Savior's Day. It also required members to purchase a set number of copies of its newspaper for resale every week.[122]

By 1959, the NOI's financial structures had enabled Muhammad to purchase a 160-acre farm in Michigan; a bakery and a restaurant in Chicago; a 65,000 dollar house; two 25,000 dollar apartments in Chicago; and four Cadillacs.[123] These assets exclude property owned by the individual temples and ministers with wealth acquired through their activities in the Nation. After 1965, the NOI's wealth expanded considerably. By 1970, its known assets included 4,200 acres of farmland, including a dairy, chicken-breeding and egg-laying plants, 600 head of sheep and 700 head of cattle, silos, a cannery, and a saw mill. In addition, it had acquired a slaughterhouse, a clothing factory, a printing press and substantial real estate holdings in Chicago (which also served as storage for meat and produce) as well as dozens if not hundreds of barbershops, restaurants, bakeries, supermarkets, and dry cleaning shops.[124] To supply its retail outlets with produce from the farms, the Nation owned a fleet of trailers and trucks as well as several planes, including a Lockheed jet that the NOI purchased

[121] Gibson, 40.
[122] *Ibid*., 160.
[123] Clegg, *An Original Man*, 113.
[124] Hans J. Massaquoi, "Elijah Muhammad: Prophet and Architect of the Separate Nation of Islam," *Ebony*, August 1970, 78-88.

in 1974 for Muhammad's personal use.[125] The organization also secured a contract with a Peruvian company to import whiting as a low-cost, high nutrient protein source for black Americans.[126] This large-scale operation employed hundreds of black employees and the NOI's import label, "H&G Whiting," became popular enough to achieve immortalization in an eponymously titled song by Kool and the Gang, whose members converted to the NOI in 1972. In 1973, the NOI purchased the Guaranty Bank and Trust Company of South Chicago.[127]

How much the disciplined saving of NOI members contributed to these developments is impossible to ascertain. Offshore contributions – notably a three million dollar interest-free loan from Libyan President Muammar al-Gaddafi in 1972 – accelerated the NOI's commercial expansion. Yet little such support was available before the early 1970s. Moreover, ethnographic evidence suggests that NOI members strove hard to retrain their bodies according to Allah's dietary laws. These efforts were by no means uniform or universally successful. Indeed, given that many prohibited items were staples of African-American diet in the mid-century United States, it is not surprising that members did not always adhere "religiously" to Muhammad's dietary regulations. One NOI-owned bakery, for instance, included prohibited ingredients such as white sugar and artificial flavoring in its recipe for the famous bean pie.[128] Many of the items that Muhammad enjoined his followers not to eat were not strictly forbidden, and whether or not a given member continued to eat

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[125] Doreen 2X, "Muslims Purchase Exclusive Jet for Muhammad," *Accomplishments of the Muslims* (Spring, 1975), 8-9.
[126] Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion*, 105.
[127] Martha Frances Lee, *The Nation of Islam: An American Millenarian Movement* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 53.
[128] Curtis, Black Muslim Religion, 107.

them depended on personal motivation, social environment, and the culture of the local Temple.[129]

There is little evidence that NOI leaders enforced ETL's prescriptions apart from the prohibition of pork, alcohol and tobacco. Yet many members appear to have seen Allah's dietetics as an aspirational model for achieving self-mastery and freedom from illness. Interviews conducted in Chicago in the early 1950s indicate that NOI members ate only once a day, fasted often, and avoided pork, alcohol, starchy foods, and non-kosher meat.[130] One member, Brother Carl X, converted to the NOI after his friend, an existing member, showed him passages from the Bible prohibiting pork. This led him to become "doubtful about Christianity" and to gradually "quit eating pork and drinking and many other bad habits."[131] Members reported that they were able to gradually reduce their diet from three times to once a day and eventually to fast for two or three days at a time. Some also declared that Muhammad's diet had significantly improved their health, reducing or removing the need for drugs and doctor's visits.[132]

The significance of diet in the NOI was not merely symbolic. It was, in multiple ways and to a considerable if uncertain extent, a material factor in a collective struggle for salvation. Reducing the consumption of food and "luxury" items such as tobacco and alcohol, Muhammad argued, saved selves as well as money. The benefits of eating to live accrued in the form of a physical health that translated into a financial one, as freedom from

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[129] Ethnographic evidence of laxity in NOI dietary rules can be found in Dawn-Marie Gibson and Jamillah Karim, *Women of the Nation: Between Black Protest and Sunni Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), chapter one.
[130] Hatim A. Sahib, "The Nation of Islam," *Contributions in Black Studies* 13, no. 3 (1995): 106.
[131] *Ibid*., 125.
[132] Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion*, 109.

disease liberated black people from the "unnecessary" costs of medicines, drugs, and frivolous pleasures, all of which were incurred through unclean and "foreign" habits.

The body's centrality to the task of salvation is underscored by the latter's own material meaning. Whereas scholars have long associated ritual and religion with the "extraordinary," Muhammad understood as the "religion of Islam" emphasized neither extraordinary experience nor correct belief. Its primary object was the bodily, mental, and social practices that made up the familiar fabric of everyday life, particularly among poor black migrants in the urban North. Dietetics was an ethical and ascetic technology through which the "so-called Negroes" liberated themselves from an enslavement that denied them their true humanity.

Conclusion

ETL's dietary prescriptions position the body at the center of the NOI's economy of "saving" between 1965 and 1975. By following the dietary laws of Allah, Muhammad promised NOI members that they would achieve much more than gaining "knowledge of self" and purging themselves of the foreign libidinal appetites acquired under white rule. They would also rid themselves of physical weaknesses and disease, live longer lives, and save thousands of dollars on medical bills, intoxicants and unnecessary food. By linking alimentary to pecuniary consumption, the Messenger of Allah insisted on the inextricable connection of individual dietary discipline to the destiny of the Nation as a whole. The individual Muslim's renunciation of the clothes, names, foods, and lifestyles adopted under white rule was an act of separation that mirrored and enabled the Nation's spatial, political, and economic separation from white society.

Muhammad's economy of salvation linked the rationalization of individual consumption to the eschatological goal of "saving" individual Muslims and the Nation of Islam. In this vision, the conscious calculation of everyday consumption was the matter of the sacred, a technique for the cultivation of the true Muslim self as well as an instrument directing worldly action towards this-worldly eschatological ends. In positioning the everyday practices of the body at the center of its salvific economy, Muhammad's theology troubles the categorical cleaving of symbolic from instrumental action, as well as extraordinary religion from ordinary life. The force of Muhammad's message consisted, perhaps, precisely in exposing the ordinary and mundane facts of existence as the key to both suffering and salvation. Embracing the religion of Islam meant "entire submission to the will of Allah" in every minute detail of life. This submission, an ongoing task that required discipline and training, was the means for producing sovereign selves and a sovereign Nation.

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