Identity and Destiny

The Formative Views of the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam

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Since whiteness is a mark of degeneracy in many animals near the pole, the negro has as much right to term his savage robbers albinos and white devils, degenerated through the weakness of nature, as we have to deem him the emblem of evil, and a descendant of Ham, branded by his father's curse. I, might he say, I, the black, am the original man. I have taken the deepest draughts from the source of life, the Sun: on me, and on everything around me, it has acted with the greatest energy and vivacity.

—Johann Gottfried Herder, 1784

The original man, Allah has declared, is none other than the black man. The black man is the first and last, maker and owner of the universe. From him came brown, yellow, red and white people. By using a special method of birth control law the black man was able to produce the white race. . . . The white race is not, and never will be, the chosen people of Allah (God). They are the chosen people of their father Yakub, the devil.

—Elijah Muhammad, 1965

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The embrace of Islam by African Americans in the twentieth century is a phenomenon perhaps as understandable as it is mystifying. Understandable, to a certain extent anyway, in that a not insignificant number of enslaved Africans carried to the Americas in chains were already practicing Muslims when they arrived. In this way contemporary African-American Islam may be viewed—but with great difficulty, one might add—as a historical revival or recovery of practices thought to be long-buried. Somewhat mystifying, on the other hand, in that by the early nineteenth century African Americans had overwhelmingly converted to Christianity, and for over a century and a half had held fast to their adopted religion as if it were a mighty rock in a weary land.

That devotion was breached in the 1970s by a widespread African-American conversion to Islam. Ultimately, what we wish to understand is the historical process underlying this phenomenon. The final stage of that process—the transition from an African-American syncretic or “proto” version of the Islamic faith to a more traditional Sunni Islam—is more than a twice-told tale, and will not be replicated here. The initial African-American passage from Christianity to syncretic Islam in the 1920s and 1930s, on the other hand, is a story which, up until now, has been largely confined to sociological description or to folklore.

The present chapter approaches this unruly task by means of a comparative study of the world views of the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA) and the Nation of Islam (NOI)—sometimes referred to in the early years as the Lost Found Nation of Islam. More precisely, we shall find ourselves intensely concerned with the ways in which these two organizations, themselves purveyors of syncretic versions of Islam, addressed issues of African-American identity and a corresponding, predetermined destiny, one either foretold by the scriptures or prescribed in self-ordained myths. Although the elaboration of such identities and prophetic destinies do not wholeheartedly coincide with the overall world views of either organization, they come close to doing so, and in any case promise an engaging perspective from which to view the phenomenon of African-American Islam as a whole.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the most significant, sacred identities appropriated by African-American Christians in the service of their own national identity were those of the Hamitic, Ethiopian, and Hebrew class. By the mid-1920s the Moorish Science Temple (reportedly founded in Newark, New Jersey, in 1913) established headquarters in Chicago, declaring Islam to be the true religion of Asiatic (blacks and other “peoples of color”) in North America, while at the same time claiming descent from biblical Moabites. An amalgam of theosophically-inspired Christian writings, this sacred Moorish text bore the name of Holy Koran. In 1930 a competing proto-Islamic world view issued forth from a similar group based in Detroit and known as the Nation of Islam, an organization which eschewed
biblical identity pretty much altogether, but drew support for its views from biblical scripture as readily as from the passages of the Qur'an.

The syncretic tendencies of both organizations, it turns out, had much in common with African-American syncretic Judaism which, beginning in the 1880s, eventually wound its way from the upper South to urban areas of the Midwest and Northeast before World War I. A separate, less heterodox stream of syncretic Black Hebrewism arrived via West Indian and African immigrants to the United States, probably around the turn of the century. Taken together, however, these disparate Hebraic influences were hardly sufficient to explain all the vital elements of proto-Islamic beliefs and practices which coalesced in the 1920s and 1930s. Freemasonry and its attendant creeds, the fallout from an internal crisis besetting late nineteenth-century American Protestantism, and African-American reactions to the rise of political and cultural pan-Asianism at century's end also would contribute their share to the eclectic and dynamic doctrines of Moors and Lost-Founds alike.

The Core Narratives of Syncretic Islam

Stripped down to their basic details, the Moorish Science and Nation of Islam world views shared partially similar narrative structures bearing on the origins of, and solutions to, the miseries of African Americans as a people. While containing within themselves an outline of almost all the essential features of both theologies, what these scripts revealed in particular was an affirmation of close linkages between the prophetic destiny and identity (or identities) of black folk considered as a whole. In response to the plaint, “Why Do Black People Suffer?” MSTA and NOI narratives at first diverged, with the Moorish Science Temple placing the initial blame for black affliction on the blacks themselves and the Nation of Islam laying it squarely at the door of white America. As for the follow-up inquiry, “How Can This Suffering Be Brought to an End?” MSTA and NOI commentaries tended towards broad-scale agreement, with both groups casting primary responsibility upon black people themselves to improve their condition. Here the shadow of the Apocalypse encouraged not only righteous behavior, but also an ultimate sense of futility regarding human initiative.

Black people suffered, according to the MSTA's Noble Drew Ali, more or less in the following way. Having once led an implied, idyllic existence, blacks fell into a state of material and existential deprivation hundreds of years ago because they turned away from God. Forcibly snatched from their ancestral home and cast into slavery as a consequence, they adopted a counterfeit identity, a false religion and culture, and a God which was not their own. NOI leader W. D. Fard, on the other hand, departed from familiar African-American theodicies, ascribing black suffering to the work of the devil incarnate, the white man, whom God had capriciously allowed to reign
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on earth for a prescribed number of years. Tricked into slavery, blacks subsequently adopted a counterfeit identity, a false religion and culture, and a God which was not their own.

With regard to bringing black suffering to an end, however, Prophets Ali and Fard were basically in accord—at least regarding the broad contours of their respective outlooks. In order to place themselves once more in harmony with their Creator, African Americans first had to recover their true faith and authentic sense of self. Second, while black peoples' reclaiming of their original identity would transport them from the periphery to the very center of spiritual existence, such a step remained insufficient. Although God provides for those who believe in Him, African Americans had to take the initiative in attending to their material condition—such as, for example, maintaining orderly families and proper eating habits, adopting frugal practices, observing appropriate behavior in public, and engaging in gainful employment. Sacrifices thus made bore a two-fold character: not only would they lead practitioners to a state of spiritual and material fulfillment in the here and now, but they would also serve as preparation for the final call.

To facilitate the process, God had sent a prophet, a Messiah, to direct African Americans along the true and only path to redemption. Salvation's goals, moreover, could best be accomplished by a turning inward socially as well as economically, thereby maintaining a social existence apart from that of Euro-Americans. And, ultimately, inevitably, the Apocalypse: if the attractions of a marvelously uplifted way of life proved insufficient to black folk, the promise of an imminent judgment visited upon them by God would provide additional impetus to turn them from their dissolute ways. The principal difference between the two groups in this regard was that the NOI actually named a date for the final battle between Good and Evil, whereas the MSTAS timeline remained open-ended.

The core narratives of MSTAS and NOI world views partly overlapped, but even in their congruencies God often appeared radically dissimilar in the details. Both accounts claimed the existence of a plethora of secular/sacred group identities among blacks prior to the arrival of the slave trade. For the MSTAS, for example, African Americans were primordially identified as Asiatics, as Muslims, as biblical Moabites, and as Moors. An affirmation of semi-deific status added yet another element to the constellation of Moorish self-naming practices. And in accord with their claim to American citizenship, Moors also wished to be known as Moorish Americans. The NOI world view, on the other hand, fully endorsed the MSTAS notion that the primeval identities of blacks were both Muslim and Asiatic. But appearing to shun biblical identities altogether, it additionally offered up the Lost Tribe of Shabazz and the Original People as ostensible substitutes, drawing upon a cosmogony all its own. The term, "Lost Found Nation," was used collectively to describe converts to NOI teachings. And the NOI, for its part, claimed full deific status for black people, with the proviso that all such mortals were subordinate to the supreme God, Allah, who was also mortal.
Both groups were also certain as to what they were not. According to Moorish Americans, the fall from grace had resulted in “marks”—the designations Negro, Black, Colored and Ethiopian—being placed upon uprooted Moroccans. But these marks, or ascribed identities, had been imposed not by the Creator, but by Europeans, and were vigorously contested by the Moors. The Lost-Founds, for their part, repudiated the label “African” applied by whites to the black American population. And where the MSTA denied the existence of the “colored” man altogether, for the NOI said “colored” man was the Caucasian.

The Permanent Struggle for Recentering and Restoring

One way black Americans have responded to their psycho-social marginalization in American society has been to exert a countervailing movement toward demarginalization. Marginalization rests upon the ability of the powerful successfully to turn the perceived differences of the weak into a sense of “otherness.” Paradoxically, the enduring struggle for African-American existential recentering often proceeds down the opposite path or sometimes both at the same time. One route has tended to stress sameness, or the indistinguishability of African Americans from the whole—for example, Christians as a group or, say, humanity writ large. In itself, this trend would seem to suggest assimilationist tendencies of one sort or another.

An opposing tendency is for African Americans to emphasize their differences relative to other ethno-racial groups, but with the category of difference treated not as otherness, but as a special dispensation. This reaction would seem to suggest a nationalist option. Both in addition and in contrast to the broad-based Christian identity historically embraced by black Americans are the frequent connections made to particular biblical peoples such as Hamites, Ethiopians, or Hebrews. Thus, beneath an overarching, universal Christian identity which denies difference flourishes a handful of singular identities that extol it. But whether by eradicating perceived distinctions altogether, or, conversely, by consecrating and transforming distinctions into a special status, or “chosen-ness,” the aim is to eliminate the pejorative or marginalized status of black folk. In the example of particularity within universality, both tasks are fulfilled simultaneously, with African Americans sharing in a universal Christianity while celebrating distinctive group characteristics of their own.

Treading the path where difference is treated as a special dispensation, the process of recentering has occasionally taken the form of a quest for the restoration of, or return to, origins. (This individual/collective restoration is not to be confused with a “restoration” of the African continent to its former glory, a related but separate matter.) One factor tending to strengthen the sense of group identity among African Americans has been the collective sense of loss associated with their uprooting from the African continent.
Fortified by the perdurably marginalized status of black people in American society, this feeling of deracination evokes a desire for the physical or existential restoration of their original condition, whether in the form of an actual physical return to Africa or in the ostensive reclaiming of their lost heritage: original names, languages, cultures, and religions. Invariably, such longings became intertwined with complementary notions of religious redemption, with their attendant, overlapping emphasis on rebirth; of a return to a primordial, blessed state; of salvation through intervention of a divine power; and of millenarianism as well.

Historically, the theme of restoration has been most strongly associated with the idea of emigration. An early example is the petition of 73 black Freemasons to the Massachusetts legislature in 1787, in which they expressed a "desire to return to Africa, our native country ... for which the God of nature has formed us." The same desire was expressed most dramatically, of course, by Marcus Garvey's Back to Africa movement of the 1920s. The pursuit of spiritual and cultural redemption lay at the heart of African-American Hebrew sects that began to appear in the 1880s and reach its peak in the African-American cultural nationalism of the 1960s. This restorative theme, in its existential aspects, is central to the world views of the MST and NOI as well.

Christian Identity, Universal and Particular

There was, of course, no text more centrally regarded by nineteenth-century African Americans than the Bible. While there were many reasons why African Americans both free and slave were attracted to Christianity's fold, a not insignificant one was the leveling effect offered by Christian universality: no matter what one's station in life, all human beings were equal in the sight of the Lord. But equally attractive to African Americans were some of the more narrowly conceived particular identities and, less unanimously, corresponding destinies found in the powerful Old Testament books of Genesis, Psalms, and Exodus. "That blacks had a divinely appointed destiny," Raboteau notes, "no black Christian in the nineteenth century denied. But what was it? Since its fulfillment was yet to come, who could be certain of its features?" These destinies, African Americans believed, were inscribed in the scriptures, with several in particular having been located in favored scriptural identities.

The ninth chapter of Genesis, for example, contains the "Table of Nations," a detailed description of Noah's progeny following the Deluge and their subsequent peopling of specific regions of the earth. Instructed by Euro-American men of the cloth in the Bible's revelations, African Americans soon discovered that they were really Hamites, descendants of the second son of Noah, who were eventually to fill the African continent with the strength of their numbers after migrating from western Asia. Due to the disrespect
shown by Ham to his father, God in his infinite wisdom determined that Ham’s fourth son, Canaan, should bear a curse. He and his heirs were to be as servants—“hewers of wood, and drawers of water”—unto the extended families of Shem and Japhet, the brothers of Ham (Gen. 9:22–27). However, the popular Antebellum interpretation of the fable, having dispensed with the subtleties concerning which of Ham’s sons actually received the imprecation, concluded simply that all blacks had been cursed by God to serve as slaves in the New World.10

Ambivalence thus beclouded the black folks’ embrace of their accursed Hamitic identity. On the one hand, they tended to accept the Hamite (and, by extension, Cushite and Canaanite) designations for a very good number of reasons. Affirming black membership in the universal tribe of humanity, these scriptural identities not only confirmed black people’s existence on earth immediately following the Flood, but also established them—by way of Mizraim and Cush, the sons of Ham—as the progenitors of the ancient civilizations of Ethiopia and Egypt.11 Hamitic destiny was severely flawed in its social implications, however, and in assenting to the Hamite designation, African Americans at the same time tended to reject the notion that God had intended their fate to be that of slaves. Indeed, the Book of Exodus, as we know, was seen to provide exculpatory evidence to that effect. Some black preachers declared the curse of Ham to have been invalidated due to Noah’s state of inebriation. Others optimistically viewed the imprecation as the sign of a more positive role that the race was eventually destined to play. But there were still others, such as the reverent Sierra Leone preacher who, turning the Hamitic tables, argued that the mark bestowed by God upon Cain (Gen. 4:15) was none other than “white” skin coloring:

My brethren you see white man bad too much, ugly too much, no good. You want sabby how man liked at come to lib in de world? Well, I tell you. Adam and Eve, dey colored people, berry handsum, lib in one beautiful garden. Dere dey hab all things dat be good. Plaintains, yams, sweet potatoes, foofoo[,] palm wine, he-igh, too much! Den dey hab two childrum, Cain and Abel. Cain no like Abel’s palaver; one day he kill ‘m. Den God angry and he say, Cain! Cain go hide himself: he tink him berryclebber. Heigh-heel! God say again, Cain, you tink I no see you, you bush-nigger—eh? Den Cain come out, and he say yes massa, I lib here,—what de matter massa? Den God say in one big voice, like de tunder in de sky, “Where’m broder Abel?” Den Cain turn white all ober wid fear—that de first white man, breddren!12

An equivalent African-American version of God’s confrontation with Cain gained currency in the United States as early as the 1820s.13 Having been subjected to racial tinkering by Euro-Americans, the Book of Genesis now faced a corrective which would not be the last. In the process the African origin of God’s first human creatures, Adam and Eve, was clearly affirmed as well.

Ethiopia, too, was mentioned in the Bible, most frequently in Isaiah. But far more important in this regard was a single, prophetic verse in the Book
of Psalms: "Princes shall come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God" (Ps. 68:31). "Ethiopianism" is a term frequently used to describe African as well as African-American religious and political responses to this ambiguous biblical passage, and it would be difficult to improve on Shepperson's transcontinental overview of the phenomenon:

In 1611 the Authorized or King James Version of the Bible was first issued. Its translation from the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures frequently employed one of the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English words for a black man: Ethiopian. Indeed, the word "Ethiopia" was given a much wider significance than modern Ethiopia and was often used for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. In this way, as the Bible was read, openly or surreptitiously, to the slave populations of the British North American and Caribbean colonies, which were established in the seventeenth century, persons of African descent learned to recognize their lost country and heritage in the references to Ethiopia and Ethiopians. They began to cherish all Ethiopian references in the Bible which had a liberatory promise and which, when contrasted with the indignities of plantation bondage, showed the black man in a dignified and humane light. With the growth of the abolitionist movement and the development of independent Negro Churches in the New World in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, one of these references, the thirty-first verse of the sixty-eighth Psalm, became a standard slogan for Negro aspirations wherever the King James Version was understood. The spread of Christian missionary activity in West Africa in the nineteenth century, particularly in areas such as Sierra Leone and Liberia where Negro evangelists from the United States and the British West Indies were at work, extended the process. "Ethiopia" had begun to stretch out her hands unto God in both the New World and the Old by the middle of the nineteenth century in the form of independent Churches, schools, and States: uprooted black men had begun to get ideas above the humble and humiliating stations in life to which white men had assigned them. The term "Ethiopianism" was not, at this time, applied to this process; but the years in which it was first extensively employed, from the 1870s to the 1920s, drew heavily on these pre-1871 experiences of Negro liberation.14

Psalm 68:31 was open to diverse interpretation, but following Raboteau, three major clusterings of African-American expressions of Ethiopianism (a term which he does not employ) may be identified. There once was a time, according to one of these accounts, when the African race enjoyed a glorious past in both Egypt and Ethiopia, and presently the moment was nigh for African peoples to be restored to their rightful dignity among the nations.15 Ironically, the identification with ancient Africa was accompanied by an extreme aversion to contemporary African life. This negative ranking achieved even more prominence in a second theme, which held that Africa's redemption could be accomplished only through knowledge of Christ, and
that the prophetic task of African-American Christian missionaries was to raise the inhabitants of the Dark Continent to a more enlightened spiritual state. Finally, in the coming new age it would be “the destiny of those who were oppressed but did not oppress, those who were enslaved but did not enslave, those who were hated, but did not hate, to realize the gospel on earth.” Several of these themes at least continued well into the era of African decolonization in the late 1950s and early 60s.

In African-American eyes, the Book of Exodus emerged as one of most attractive accounts of the Bible, since it registered God’s assistance to an enslaved people. Central tropes included the positing of divine leadership in the person of Moses, deliverance through migration, and the divine punishment of one’s oppressors. From the late eighteenth century onward, most African-American Christians tended to embrace Hebrew identity in a metaphorical, not literal, way. One of the earliest recorded manifestations of millenarian sentiment among African Americans is found in Gabriel’s 1800 slave conspiracy in Virginia, where would-be insurrectionists closely identified themselves with the Israelites of the Old Testament. Denmark Vesey’s attempted rebellion in 1822 was similarly tinged with Hebrew identification on the part of slave conspirators. Towards the latter part of the nineteenth century, however (but possibly much earlier), a small number of believers—primarily of rural and urban working-class background—managed to cross the slender divide separating identification with from identification as. Moving beyond a self-comparison with the ancient Hebrews, some African Americans began to think of themselves as the Hebrews of the nineteenth century; for others, the full transformation into the people of the Pentateuch would not be far behind. As will soon become apparent, this discussion of Black Hebrew identity is especially important in that it provides valuable insight into the structure of African-American Islamic identity as well.

Origins of Black Hebrew Identity and Syncretic Judaism

It was apparently left to the Church of the Living God, Pillar Ground of Truth for All Nations, to provide the first documented instance of an African-American house of worship based on a literal identification of its members as the scriptural Hebrews. Founded in Chattanooga, Tennessee, by Prophet F. C. Cherry in 1886, the church later moved to Philadelphia where it flourished well into the World War II era and beyond. The Church of the Living God was the forerunner of numerous Black Hebrew sects ranging from Christian churches espousing little more than a formal Jewish identity to groups embracing the Torah and following Jewish Law. In 1896 another Black Hebrew congregation, the Church of God and Saints of Christ, was initiated by Father William Saunders Crowdy in Lawrence, Kansas. It moved to Philadelphia four years later, and eventually to a previously established
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colony at Belleville, Virginia, near Portsmouth. By 1909 a South African branch was in existence as well.26

Somewhat closer to orthodox Jewish religious practices were the observances of a number of New York City congregations. In Brooklyn an organization known as the Moorish Zion[ist?] Temple was founded by Leon Richlieu in 1899. The Moorish Zionist Temple begun by Mordecai Herman in 1921, and which soon established additional temples in Harlem, Philadelphia, and Newark, was either a reorganization of Richlieu’s group, or a new organization altogether.27 By the 1920s a host of other Black Hebrew-identified houses of worship had surfaced in Harlem, including Warren Robinson’s infamous and decidedly heterodox Temple of the Gospel of the Kingdom (1917), with branches in Atlantic City, Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, and Abescon, New Jersey;28 Wentworth Arthur Matthew’s well-known Commandment Keepers of the Living God (1919);29 and Arnold J. Ford’s Beth B’nai Abraham (House of the Sons of Abraham, 1924),30 which maintained ambivalent ties to the Garvey movement. The membership of a number of the more or less orthodox New York sects sometimes included immigrant Jews from North Africa, Ethiopia, and India as well.31 Chicago, too, had its Hebrew-identified groups, including one known as the International Peace and Brotherly Love Movement (1913).32 And sometime in the mid-twenties or slightly later, the Spiritual Israel Church was formed in Kansas City, Missouri.33

In many cases the actual or anticipated migration experiences of African Americans fortified their embrace of Hebraic literalism. That the Church of God and Saints of Christ should have originated in Kansas at the time that it did, for example, seems entirely appropriate. The recipient of some 6,000 migrants from Texas, Mississippi, and Louisiana in the late 1870s, Kansas was viewed by dusky migrant sharecroppers—“Exodusters,” in their own parlance—as a prairie Canaan for those oppressed by white supremacist pharaohs of the Deep “Egyptian” South.34 Several decades later a member of an Arkansas-based group of Black Cherokees seeking emigration to Africa sermonized: “We is de Lord’s chillen of Israel of de nineteenh centery; dere ain’t no doubt at all about dat.... If we can’t get to Liberia any oder way, de Lord he’ll just open up a parf through the ‘Lantic ocean jes’ as he did for dem oder chillen through the Red Sea.”35 An analogous situation prevailed during the Great Migration of World War I:

Thus it was, for example, that the movement was called the “exodus” from its suggestive resemblance to the flight of the Israelites from Egypt, The Promised Land, Crossing over jordan (the Ohio River), and Beulah Land. At times demonstrations took on a rather spectacular aspect, as when a party of 147 from Hattiesburg, Mississippi, while crossing the Ohio River, held solemn ceremonies. These migrants knelt down and prayed; the men stopped their watches and, amid tears of joy, sang the familiar songs of deliverance, “I done come out of the Land of Egypt with the good news.” The songs following in order were “Beulah Land”
and “Dwelling in Beulah Land.” One woman of the party declared that she could detect an actual difference in the atmosphere beyond the Ohio River, explaining that it was much lighter and that she could get her breath more easily.36

From Syncretic Judaism to Syncretic Islam

The often contradictory and incomplete information available for the majority of syncretic congregations noted above makes for tortuous, if not impossible, comparisons. Nonetheless, for most Black Hebrews it appears that Ethiopia (broadly or strictly considered), but not Palestine, was considered the original homeland. For Beth B’nai Abraham in particular, the Arabic and Hebrew taught to its members were considered the original languages as well.37 Most communicants claimed parentage from several or more of the original Twelve Tribes of the House of Israel; some insisted that those tribes were African in origin, and that European Jews originated in intermarriages across the color line. Members of both the Commandment Keepers and the Moorish Zionist Temple claimed to be the descendants of either two or three Jewish tribes driven into Africa as a result of strife among Hebrews.38 But Moorish Jews also supported the creation of a Palestinian homeland which would be open to all of Jewish descent.39 One of Beth B’nai Abraham’s several legends claimed that Black Jews originated in Carthage (the northernmost strip of present-day Morocco, Libya, Algeria, and Tunisia). Yet another affirmed that the original Hebrews were the ancestors of the Hausa peoples, and “that the ancient path of Jewish migration” was from Ile Ife in southwest Nigeria “eastward to Egypt and thence north to Palestine.”40

The syncretic practices of Black Hebrews all drew upon Christian and Jewish traditions in differing measures, but Beth B’nai Abraham appears to have been unique in its observance of Ramadan.41 Views ranged from the avowedly Christian, such as the Church of God and Saints of Christ, to fiercely anti-Christian, such as the Commandment Keepers, though the Commandment Keepers embraced Christ as the Savior, which the Beth B’nai Abraham and Moorish Zionist Temple congregations did not. Among the more Judaic-oriented Black Hebrew groups a pairing of Hebrew and Ethiopian identities appears to have been the rule. Like the later Rastafarians, Beth B’nai Abraham, the Moorish Zionists, and the Commandment Keepers invoked Ethiopian as well as Hebrew lineage, enjoined identities resulting from the physical union of Solomon and Sheba (1 Kings 10; 2 Chron. 9). In combining their Hebrew and Ethiopian loyalties, congregants thus experienced a kind of “double chosen-ness”: two divine prophecies dwelling in one.42

Whether oriented more towards Judaism or Christianity, a number of Black Hebrew congregations were in accord regarding the need for economic self-sufficiency. As Rabbi Arnold J. Ford put the question, “The Negro must turn his thoughts and energies to his own miserable condition on this
Long before the genesis of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), the Church of God and Saints of Christ had established a colony at Belleville, Virginia, where a company of several hundred black folk owned and cultivated a thousand acres of land and operated “several small industries, a commissary, school, and homes for orphans and the aged.” The Commandment Keepers, too, established “a home for the aged,” and operated “several cigar and stationery stores, a laundry, and some other business enterprises in co-operation with white Jewish merchants in Harlem.” Rabbi Ford, for his part, formed the short-lived Beth B'nai Abraham Corporation, a joint-stock company devoted to the promotion of industry and commerce relative to West Africa. In this case, especially, one can see the overarching influence of the UNIA, for which Ford once served as choir director.

Black Hebrew identity thus flowed from two apparently independent sources. On the one hand, by virtue of a Hebrew identity gleaned from the Bible, a relatively small band of native-born Black Americans executed selective breaks with the Christianity of their birth while at the same time embracing an eclectic range of Judaic religious practices. On the other could be counted a smaller number of West Indian and African immigrants to the United States, some claiming actual Jewish spiritual heritage, but embracing similarly eclectic religious practices. Together they discovered a pas sageway that would soon be filled by practitioners of a nominal Islam. The actual historical link between syncretic Judaism and syncretic Islam may yet be found in influences transmitted in one way or another by the Moorish Zionist Temple to its probable namesake, the Moorish Science Temple. But aside from similarity in name, the appeal to Moorish heritage, and the fact that both conducted religious affairs at one time or another in Newark, New Jersey, there is little else at the moment to render the argument conclusive.

Without benefit of latent fingerprints or DNA samples it would seem, nonetheless, that Black Hebrewism contributed at least four essential characteristics to the emerging African-American syncretic Islam of the 1920s and 1930s. First of all, the enjoining of Christian and Judaic elements in Black Hebrewism provided a rough paradigm for the merging of Christianity and Islam in the world views of both the Moorish Science Temple of America and the Nation of Islam. Second, in naming Judaism as the original religion to which people of African descent had purportedly turned their backs, Black Hebrews of more orthodox mien for the first time brought a sense of the “concrete”—if that is the appropriate term—to the African-American incorporation of Hebrew destiny invoked by Deuteronomy 28. Third, Black Hebrews broadened the field of possibilities regarding the territorial origins of African Americans from a historically grounded West and Central Africa to a mythical North Africa and Palestine. And last, while the notion of black economic self-sufficiency hardly originated with Black Hebrews, their particular embrace of the doctrine of economic uplift, in combination with the previously noted characteristics, may certainly have inspired the MSTA and
the NOI along similar lines. Apart from these congruencies, however, there remain significant differences between African-American syncretic Judaism and syncretic Islam to be accounted for.

The Crisis of Late Nineteenth-Century Protestantism

Migrations of southern blacks to the upper South, and ultimately to destinations further north, began building slowly in the wake of Reconstruction’s collapse. That these population movements prepared the ground for many to accept the truly novel world views and new identities which burst upon the scene in the years spanning World War I and the Great Depression constitutes only one side of a complicated story. But that the content of some of these views was largely rooted in the well-known doctrinal and organizational crises of late nineteenth-century American Protestantism, on the one side, and in influences occasioned by the rise of Asian cultural and political resistance to European colonial intrusions, on the other, may come as something of a surprise. After all, rural black churches of the fire-and-brimstone variety—to which the majority of black Christians of the late nineteenth century overwhelmingly belonged—manifested few signs of having been affected by evolutionist teachings, higher criticism, secularist yearnings, or mysterious influences from the East48 (although among the Prince Hall Masonic lodges of the South which, along with other fraternal organizations, came to rival the popularity of the Black Church toward the end of the century, expressions of Eastern metaphysics may have found a certain resonance).49 By the time African Americans had settled in northern cities in large numbers, these scientific and ideological challenges, as well as responses to them from within the white church establishment, had been underway for well over a generation. Yet the delayed impact of this crisis within Protestant Christianity would be felt by African Americans nonetheless, but in ways so unique and so complex as to obscure knowledge of the relations between cause and effect even into our own era.

The significance of the political and cultural influences of robust Asian nationalism and religions on African-American life from the turn of the century onward are also just beginning to be contemplated.50 While we are becoming more aware of the political effects of Japanese and Indian nationalism on African-American aspirations for social justice and the religious influence of Ahmadi Islam from India’s former Punjab region, the impact on Black Americans of other forms of Eastern religious and cultural importations to the United States remains uncharted territory.51

The challenges leading to the crisis of American Protestantism in the late nineteenth century were basically of two kinds: to Christianity as a system of thought and to Protestant Christianity as an institution.52 Within Christian thought a family of dichotomies neatly bisected the universe into the grand realms of the natural and supernatural, where visible matter was
counterposed to invisible spirit, the human to the divine, the here to the hereafter, reason to revelation, rational to metaphysical knowledge, and belief in human efficacy to an opposing faith in divine determination. Soon such dualisms would be challenged in everyday experience and on the terrain of science as well. On the experiential side, from 1860 to 1890 widespread urbanization emerged as one of the multifaceted results of rapid American industrial growth. Urban existence posed a fundamental problem for organized religion in that it seemed to render irrelevant the relationship between everyday life, itself characterized by intense human activity leading to material progress, and the realm of the supernatural as taught by the church.\textsuperscript{53}

The experiential confrontations with late nineteenth-century Christian orthodoxy were in many ways linked to the doctrinal challenges posed by science. Darwin's theory of evolution, of course, flew squarely in the face of the Creation as recounted in the Book of Genesis. Archbishop James Ussher had argued two hundred years earlier that the earth had come into being in 4004 B.C. Although many continued to accept his "proof-text" calculations as infallible wisdom, the contemporary findings of paleontologists, archeologists, and geologists had effectively relegated such biblical timelines to the dustbin.\textsuperscript{54} Finally, the ever mounting "higher criticism" of Christian texts, a trend "which began to arouse popular interest in the 1880s, was akin to Darwinism both in principle and effect. For it represented the application in biblical studies of the same evolutionary principle that Darwinism had applied so convincingly in biology."\textsuperscript{55} Resulting pressures led to a greater concern on the part of Christian theologians with making spiritual life more immediate, on the one hand, and coming to some form of accommodation with science, on the other.\textsuperscript{56} In response to this spiritual upheaval an abundance of religious doctrines imported from the "mysterious East" began to turn up as well.

Held in conjunction with the 1893 Columbia Exposition in Chicago, the Parliament of Religions was apparently the first ecumenical world religious gathering of its kind.\textsuperscript{57} The Parliament's convening attracted Indian, Japanese, and other Asian missionaries to the United States, to a gathering that eventually included Hindus, Sikhs, Babists, Baha'is, Buddhists, Sufis, Jainists, and Ahmadi Muslims as well. An American interest in Buddhism could be traced backed to the Transcendentalists, of course, and the Theosophical Society, founded a generation later, in 1875, had done much to popularize—if not obfuscate—Buddhist and Hindu ideals.\textsuperscript{58} But here were actual foreign missions on American soil, spreading word of the superiority of Eastern spiritual teachings. Among the very first was the Vedanta Society, initiated in New York City by Swami Vivekananda in 1894. His goal of propagating knowledge of Hinduism throughout the United States was fortified by the presence, over the next three and a half decades, of sixteen additional Ramakrishna swamis.\textsuperscript{59} Five years later the Japan-based Jodo Shinshu mission, which subsequently became a separate organization known
as the Buddhist Churches of America, was established in California. But the most far-reaching spiritual event for Black Americans was the arrival in Detroit of the Ahmadi Muslim missionary Mufti Mohammed Sadiq in 1920. As fate would have it, of the Ahmadiyya movement's thousand plus converts over the next five years, many, if not most, would turn out to be of African-American descent.

Identity and Destiny in Syncretic Islam

As with Christianity, one of the principal attractions of Islam for African Americans had to do with its professed racial egalitarianism: all human creatures were equal in the sight of God. In contrast to their life-long encounters with American Christians, however, scores of black folk soon learned from their interaction with Ahmadis that Islam could rightfully claim a better record when it came to relations between practitioners of the same faith. It is hardly surprising, then, that some African Americans would begin to regard Islam as the "opposite" of Christianity. "Go to the East and you will find the fairest people of Syria and Turkestan eating at the same table with darkest Africans and treating each other as brothers and friends," counseled the journal Moslem Sunrise. Echoing the African-American nationalist theme of "restoration" on another occasion, the journal extended a special embrace to black Americans in a way that radical organizations like the Socialist Party, in their own language, had proved incapable of doing:

My Dear American Negro—Assalaam-o-Alaikum. Peace be with you and the mercy of Allah. The Christian profiteers brought you out of your native lands of Africa and in Christianizing you made you forget the religion and language of your forefathers—which were Islam and Arabic. You have experienced Christianity for so many years and it has proved to be no good. It is a failure. Christianity cannot bring real brotherhood to the nations. So, now leave it alone. And join Islam, the real faith of Universal Brotherhood.

Ahmadiyya Islam also promised to fill the void between everyday life and the world of the spirit, a gap that had recently thrown American Protestantism into a state of urgent reflection and reform: "It is Islam alone which teaches its followers that the door of Divine revelation can never be closed," wrote the head of the Ahmadiyya movement in 1923, "and that it is impossible that God, who at one time used to hold converse with men, now has ceased to guide His people and discontinued speaking to them."

Some of the enduring qualities of Moorish Science and Nation of Islam cosmologies were connected with their religious esotericism: the union of God and humanity; the notion that thought transcends both time and space; the supposition that heaven and hell were lived experiences on earth, rather than actual locations to which one's spirit would be dispatched following
physical death; the MSTA's belief in metempsychosis; the denial of spiritual existence on the part of the NOI; and the divergence of both regarding traditional Christian and Islamic concepts of Satan (the devil as the "lower self," in the case of the MSTA; and as "the white man," according to the NOI). Finally, in common with the Black Hebrews, an essential distinguishing feature of both organizations was their shared belief that the existential and physical fate of black Americans was inextricably tied to their claiming their pre-slave, "original" identities—a line of reasoning that seemed to harbor Gnostic overtones.

Reincarnation and the notion of upper and lower spiritual selves were the provinces of Hinduism by way of Theosophy. Among mystical Islamic sects such as Isma'ilis and Druzes one could find ample references to numerology, gnosticism, and, within the views of the latter group, the presence of God in human form. The Druze, for example, recognized one God, without seeking to discover the nature of his being or his attributes; asserted that he can neither be apprehended by the senses nor defined by discourse; believed that Divinity is revealed to men of different epochs in a human form, but without the weaknesses and imperfections of humanity; that he became visible, finally, in the person of al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah at the beginning of the fifth century of the hijra; that this was his final manifestation, after which no other could be anticipated; that al-Hakim had disappeared in the year 411 of the hijra in order to test the faith of his followers and to allow reign to the apostasy of hypocrites as well as to those who had embraced the true religion only in anticipation of worldly and immediate gain; and that shortly he would appear, filled with glory and majesty, in order to vanquish his enemies, extend his empire over the entire earth, and bring eternal happiness to the faithful.

Here one may recall some rather intriguing parallels to Nation of Islam dogma surrounding the disappearance of NOI founder W. D. Fard in 1934! But these Eastern elements need not be accounted for, necessarily, by the legendary sojourn of Noble Drew Ali in Egypt or even the professed Meccan origins of Prophet W. D. Fard, for many such ideas could readily be found within the borders of the United States by the first quarter of the twentieth century.

For the MSTA as well as the NOI, both of which appear to have been significantly influenced by Ahmadiyya thought, Muslim identity became a new universal supplanting the former Christian one, enjoining their members to millions of co-religionists worldwide. But for black folk with a penchant towards nationalism the Holy Qur'an contained no reference to any tribe or group that might serve as a suitable point d'appui for a sense of African-American peoplehood. If particular identities (in the manner of Hamites, Ethiopians, or Israelites in the Christian tradition) were going to find expression under these circumstances, they would be forced to do so outside existing Islamic conventions. Accordingly, compared to Black Hebrews the
proponents of the new Islamic heterodoxies would have even greater recourse to syncretic borrowings, mythopoeic license, and the creation of multiple fictive identities.

Sacred Identity: Relationship to God and the Scriptures

We shall now examine in some detail those plural identities articulated by the NOI and MSTA, and the related subject of prophetic destiny. To compare them these identities have been given the descriptive rubrics of Sacred, Territorial, Civic, and Personal.¹⁰

Islamic. As has frequently been noted, the Moorish Holy Koran was derived largely from apocryphal, Christian-based scriptures: The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ (1907) and Infinite Wisdom (1923).¹¹ But the fact that the Aquarian Gospel was based in part on a similarly inauthentic work by Nicholai Notovich, The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ (1894), provided the Holy Koran with an unanticipated link to Ahmadiyya Islam as well.⁷² However that might be, a number of Prophet Ali’s remarks indicate that he was not totally unfamiliar with traditional Islamic precepts: “The cardinal doctrine of Islam is the unity of the Father—ALLAH,” he maintained. “We believe in one God, Allah who is all God, All mercy, and All Power. He is perfect and holy, All Wisdom, All Knowledge, and All Truth. . . . This unity of Allah is the first and foremost pillar of Islam and every other belief hangs upon it.”⁷³ On at least one occasion Ali admitted that his version of Islam departed from that of the Prophet Muhammad. In announcing a forthcoming, new edition of the Moorish Holy Koran in late 1928, he wrote, intriguingly, that “to Americanize the Oriental idea of Islam involves many changes that are more or less negative to the main purpose of the Islamic Religion. . . .” Without volunteering any hints as to what that “main purpose” might have been, he continued:

The philosophy of the ancient Prophets is the main initiative in the compilation of the [Moorish] Koran. No thoughts of propaganda enter this work, as has been the case of many former religious works, such as the Bible and other books of creed. . . .

All of the secrets of the ages known to man are put into this work. The secrets, known only to the Magi, are here revealed: the reading of the stars, the interpretation of marriage relationships, the understanding of the span of life and other[s] such as has been kept from the occidental world are in this book boldly brought out.⁷⁴

No such admission seems to have slipped from the pen of W. D. Fard, who never claimed to be teaching anything other than a traditional form of Islam.⁷⁵ Beynon noted that the Qur’an itself “was soon introduced as the most authoritative of all texts for the study of the new faith. The prophet, however, used only the Arabic text which he translated and explained to the believers. Here too they were completely dependent upon his interpreta-
tion.” But the extent to which Fard’s teachings were actually informed by Islamic scripture remains an open question. True, Elijah Muhammad reported that he first received copies of the Ahmadiyya English translation of the Holy Qur’an from Prophet Fard several months before Fard left in 1934. But when apprehended by the Detroit police in late 1932, Fard was reported to have had a “Bible of Islamism” in his possession: “On page 354 of the ‘Bible,’” reported the Detroit Free Press, “is the following quotation, which was underlined, and which Farad [sic] claimed he used as part of his teachings—‘God is liar. Ignore Him and do away with those who advocate His cause.’ He stated that this was a favorite passage of his and that he used it often in his teachings.”

In an apparent melding of organization and religion itself, and with a depiction more appropriate to the Vedas, say, than to Islamic scripture, Fard declared Islam and the Nation of Islam to be timeless:

9. Q: What is the birth record of the said Nation of Islam?
   A: The said Nation of Islam has no birth record. It has no beginning nor ending.

10. Q: What is the birth record of said others than Islam?
    A: Buddhism—35,000 years old
        Christianity—551 years old.

Freemasonry and Islam. A Masonic legacy equating Freemasonry with Islam also contributed to the syncretic character of MSTA and NOI religions. One of the enduring threads of that legacy was constituted by the self-identification of the Bektashi Sufis of Anatolian Turkey with Freemasons. As Zarcone recently observed,

The resemblance between Freemasonry and the Islamic brotherhoods coalesced around two principal points: in terms of structure, the ceremonial practices—perhaps even pagan ones in the case of the Bektashis— inherited from an ancient cultural source; and, from a socio-religious perspective, the Sufist philosophical tradition in Islam and the hermetic-alchemic and corporative one in Christianity.

Seizing upon these Sufist-Masonic affinities, the American Masonic Order known as the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine elevated them to mythical status. The “Bektasheeyeh’s representative at Mecca,” one of its manuals claimed, was “the chief officer of the Alee Temple of Nobles, and in 1877 was the Chief of the Order in Arabia.” Initiates into the Order of Nobles were greeted with the phrase, “By the existence of Allah and the creed of Mohammed: by the legendary sanctity of our Tabernacle at Mecca.” Via the Black Shriners (Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine), whose autonomous organization, provocatively enough, was founded in Chicago at the time of the 1893 Columbia Exposition, such ideas filtered into the ranks of African-American Freemasons as well.
Freemasonry's role in African-American syncretic Islam seems to have been as a provider of symbols and rituals—in the case of the MSTA, especially—as well as a carrier of metaphysical creeds (e.g., numerology and astrology, and perhaps even gnosticism and alchemy) whereby the mysteries of the universe might be more readily contemplated and manipulated in concert with God's grand designs. Its practitioners became bearers of a secret knowledge available only to the elect. In the solemn struggle between prophetic destiny and human efficacy, Freemasonry and its attendant doctrines weighed in on the side of organizational and individual initiative.

Father Hurley's Universal Hagar's Spiritual Church provided a colorful model for the blending of Christian and Masonic rituals. But if his was a Christian house of worship that appropriated Masonry into its daily life, then Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple of America might be characterized as a Masonically tinged fraternal organization transformed into an Islamic house of worship. Nor were such combinations particularly unusual: the Royal Order of Ethiopian Hebrews (fraternal arm of the Commandment Keepers), formed in 1936, was also said to have Masonic affinities, and during the Great Depression as well a nationalist-emigrationist group known as the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World incorporated Masonic rituals into its operating structure.

Neither the MSTA nor NOI imported degree structures or their corresponding rituals into their respective organizations, but Prophet Drew Ali's "Noble" title does seem to have been appropriated from the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine. The representation of a Masonic "grip" (graced by the underlying caption, "Unity") graced the pages of the weekly Moorish Guide as well as other MSTA publications. Gardell has noted a reference to Masonic symbolism in the Moorish Holy Koran describing Jesus as "climbing up a twelve step ladder" and carrying "in His hands a compass, square and ax." How many of the Moors considered themselves to be Masons, though, is anyone's guess. Save for Elijah Muhammad, the number of Masons, former or active, who joined the Nation of Islam in its earliest years is also unknown. However, in the late 1940s some 145 of the NOI's 172 male converts to Islam claimed membership in the order. Prophet Fard, too, acknowledged an affinity between Freemasonry and Islam that would be elaborated upon later by his favored lieutenant. Whether he believed black Shriners to be authentically Muslim is not clear from extant documents, but that he considered their white counterparts to be "Moslem sons," there is no doubt:

Q: Why does Mohammed make the devil study from 35 to 50 years before he can call himself a Moslem son and wear the greatest and only flag of the universe? And why must he add a sword to the upper part of the holy and greatest universal flag of Islam?
A: So that he could clean himself up. A Moslem does not love the devil regardless to how long he studies.

All Shriners were Freemasons, but the reverse was not necessarily the case. For the later twentieth century one writer has estimated that three-fourths
of all eligible Masons (i.e., of the highest degree) were members of the Shrine.88

Divinity and Humanity. The interpenetration of the human and the divine was a feature common to both MSTMA and NOI teachings. For Moorish Science, God and humanity were one, but not identical: "Man himself is not the body, nor the soul; he is a spirit and a part of Allah." Conversely, "spirit-man as seed of Allah held deep within himself the attributes of every part of Allah." As in traditional Islam and Christianity, God was a spirit: "Who is ALLAH? ALLAH is the Father of the Universe. Can we see him? No." And God as spirit, according to Moorish Science teachings, constituted one's "upper self." Conversely, the devil, too, as spirit, inhabited one's "lower self."89 For the Nation, on the other hand, the mutual permeation was complete, if not dualistic: the original people were God, and God was also a specifically designated man. "The Holy Qur'an or Bible is made by the original people who is Allah, the Supreme Being or (Black man) of Asia," proclaimed Master Fard in one of his Lost Found Lessons.90 He decried, on the other hand, false teachings which claimed "that the almighty true and living god is a spook and cannot be seen with the physical eye."91 The only god was the Son of Man, and the Son of Man was known by the name of none other than Prophet W. D. Fard.92 In the same way that God was a man, according to Nation of Islam theology, so, too, was Satan "the white man."

There were many sources which W. D. Fard might have been drawn upon to support the concept of God as a human being. The esoteric tradition in Islam endorsed such a notion, but home-grown variations of this theme were also available. An early nineteenth-century Mormon document, for example, posed the question: "What is God? He is a material intelligence, possessing both body and parts. He is in the form of man, and is in fact of the same species...."93 Father Divine, whose ministry covered the period under discussion, was considered by his followers to be the personification of God, of course.94 But also let us not overlook the possible influence of the mainstream Christian tradition that held Jesus to be the manifestation of God in the flesh.

Scriptural. For purposes of self-identification, the Moorish Science Temple selected two biblical tribes: the Canaanites (linked to their Hamitic progenitors) and the Moabites (a case of mistaken identity). By way of contrast, Nation of Islam doctrine declined to employ scriptural identities in any direct way. Bypassing Genesis altogether, the NOI introduced its own, unique cosmogony and corresponding sacred identities to African-American religious life.

"The inhabitants of Africa," averred the Moorish Holy Koran, "are the descendants of the ancient Canaanites from the land of Canaan" (ancient Palestine, presumably located in West Asia). The eventual founders of the Moroccan empire, the Moabites from the land of Moab, in turn "received
permission from the Pharaohs of Egypt to settle and inhabit North-West Africa, and were joined by “their Canaanite, Hittite and Amorite brethren seeking new homes.” Hence, claimed the Koran Questions for Moorish Americans, “Moroccans” was the modern name for the ancient Moabites.95

But how had biblical Moabites, who inhabited what is now the nation-state of Jordan, become modern-day Moroccans occupying the northwest corner of the African continent? Noble Drew Ali’s intention, it seems, was to lay claim to the grandeur of the former Moorish empire while at the same time grounding Moorish American identity in biblical antiquity. From the scriptures Prophet Ali extracted a Moabite identity for African Americans, but his real goal, or so it appears, was to appropriate the more recently arrived and decidedly non-biblical Morabites, or Almoravids—an error no doubt attributable to post-vocalic -r deletion in African-American speech patterns (Ebonics be praised!). The term Morabite was derived from the Arabic word murabti, meaning “bound,” as in a religious order.96 Murabti was the name assumed by North African Muslims who submitted to a purified Islamic doctrine during the period spanning the mid-eleventh to the mid-twelfth centuries. After conquering North Africa, the Murabtin (Almoravids) traversed the Straits of Magellan (Gibraltar?) and gave renewed impetus to the Moorish empire in Spain. Hence Morabites were indeed Moors who inhabited the northwestern shores of Africa and beyond. And were it actually possible for Moorish Americans to trace their ancestry directly to the Moors of Morocco, Morabite—but not Moabite—ancestors likely would be found among them.97

Lost Tribe of Shabazz. Although the Nation of Islam as a rule shunned biblical identities long favored by black Christians, at least one of its own innovations appears to have been biblically inspired. A less-developed aspect of NOI identity, the Lost Tribe of Shabazz—a generic name assigned to African Americans—was a riff on the theme of the “mysterious” disappearance of the Lost Tribes of Israel98 (the notion of the Lost Found Nation of Islam undoubtedly derives from this theme as well). The term Lost Tribes, of course, refers to ten of the twelve tribes which constituted the Northern Kingdom of Israel in ancient times, and which were carried away by the King of Assyria in 722–721 B.C.E., never to be seen again (2 Kings 17:6).99 Old Testament prophets kept alive the hope that the Lost Tribes would one day be reunited with their brethren: “I will take the people of Israel from among the nations,” proclaimed Ezekiel, “and gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land” (Ezek. 37:21).100 The meaning of the “Lost Tribe of Shabazz” thus carried with it a sense of African Americans as a “lost people” who, prophetically, would eventually be reunited with their own kind on their own soil.

The name Shabazz was pure NOI invention, however, and one is tempted to see in its pronunciation a corruption of the Arabic word al-Hijaz, the Kingdom of Hijaz, wherein are located the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The Hijaz came into prominence in the years 1916–1924, when it secured
and successfully defended its independence from Ottoman rule. In 1932 it became a province of the newly formed Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Since Master Fard considered the Asiatic black man to have been carried away from his original home in Mecca—not unlike the fate of the Lost Tribes of Israel—it is conceivable that he also may have viewed African Americans as belonging to a mythical "Lost Tribe of Hijaz," with Hijaz subsequently transformed into an unrecognizable signifier.

Original People. The "Lost Tribe" nomenclature was also tied to the NOI's notion of blacks as the "Original People" of the planet, thereby calling into question traditional Muslim and Christian teachings regarding the origins of humanity. At issue were three imponderables: who was the first human being; when and where did the first humans originate; and what was the genetic relationship between peoples with widely varying physical characteristics? For the Bible, in any case, Adam was the original man, created in the Garden of Eden some 4,000 years before the birth of Christ, following Archbishop Ussher's timeline. The Qur'an (49:13) and the Bible (Acts 17:26) had declared all of humanity to be descended from a single genetic pair. Finally, the biblical conundrum denoting Ham, Shem, and Japhet, the sons of Noah and his wife, as the forebears of Africans, Asians, and Europeans respectively was simply a truth that had to be accepted on faith.

Not everyone was prepared to do that. The discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus raised questions in Europe as to whether or not the people he found there were descended from the biblical Adam. Following a series of related debates, in the mid-seventeenth century the French writer Isaac de La Peyrère advanced the thesis that there existed, in biblical times,

other men beside the family of Adam, which then consisted of only three persons; and that these other men, or this other race, must have been previously created. They were, he thought, the ancestors of the Gentiles, while Adam was the ancestor of the Jewish race, with whose creation and history the Bible is mainly occupied.\textsuperscript{101}

The concept of Prae-adamitae, as one of La Peyrère's works was entitled, was soon to take a racial turn in the justification of New World slavery. Long before Darwinist influences allowed racists to contemplate black people as the "missing biological link" between humans and beasts, the Pre-Adamite construct would serve a similar purpose.\textsuperscript{102}

The more general question of Pre-Adamism was revived two centuries later when the excavations of ethnologists and paleontologists brought an indirect challenge to Ussher's chronology. If Adam had been created some 6,000 years earlier, how might one explain the discovery of human remains whose age could be calculated at tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of years? In the defense of biblical integrity it could be conceded there were, indeed, documented human beings who preceded Adam, and that
these were none other than angels or devils present in the scriptures who had assumed corporal form. Others, however, were prepared in the name of science to jettison what they deemed to be insupportable, biblical conjecture. "There are . . . very learned ethnologists," complained James Gall in \textit{Primeval Man Unveiled} (1871), "who assert that the existing varieties of the human race can only be accounted for by the creation of several Adams—a white Adam and a black Adam, a red Adam and a yellow Adam, as the case may be; each deriving his existence from his Maker independently of the others."\textsuperscript{103}

In his \textit{Pre-Adamite Man} (1863), the spiritualist Paschal Beverly Randolph, a self-identified African American until late adulthood, opined that Adam "was the Hebraic, and, possibly, the Caucasian protoplast," but that he was not "the originator of either the Negro, Egyptian, Assyrian, Chinese or American Indian races of men."\textsuperscript{104}

Alexander Winchell's \textit{Preadamites} (1901) held that blacks were the first peoples on earth, predating the biblical Adam, whom he considered to be white. But while not exactly holding to a strict polygenetic argument, Winchell's results were the same: Adam the white, having been divinely created, was superior to his dark human predecessors.\textsuperscript{105} Arguing outside the Pre-Adamic framework in his \textit{Origin and Evolution of the Human Race} (1921), the prolific writer of Masonic tracts, Albert Churchward, went against the grain of perceived wisdom by arguing that "man originated in Africa." But the triumph was short-lived. Considering Africans to be on a lower scale of evolution, Churchward argued that the "True Negroes" of West Africa, who remained in a state of arrested development, "never left Africa except as Slaves."\textsuperscript{106}

Here lay the immediate background to W. D. Fard's ruminations concerning the biological origins of whites and blacks. Master Fard may have learned of "Rousseau's belief in the superior virtues of Original Man" from Van Loon's \textit{Story of Mankind} (1921), a work which he reportedly recommended to his followers.\textsuperscript{107} In any event, claiming that blacks were indeed God's Original People, Fard postulated that whites were grafted into existence by Yakub, an evil black scientist, around 6,000 years ago.\textsuperscript{108} The theme of black people as originators of civilization had an African-American pedigree dating back to the 1830s.\textsuperscript{109} Ironically, however, in combining the notions of black people as the "original people" and as "originators of civilization," Prophet Fard also separated "civilized blacks" from the continent of Africa.

\textbf{Territorial Identity: Primordial Homeland}

\textit{African}. The Hamitic and Ethiopian scriptural identities of African Americans were also \textit{African} identities, to be sure. But at the turn of the century, even for Black Christians who viewed the continent in a positive light, Africa's glory tended to repose in the ancient past, not the present. Moorish
Science Temple and Nation of Islam communicants alike considered themselves to be Muslims and Asiatics, above all, but MSTA members also freely acknowledged their African heritage: "We, as a pure and clean nation descended from the inhabitants of Africa," averred the Moorish Holy Koran, "do not desire to amalgamate or marry into the families of the pale skin nations of Europe." The NOI was not so generous. As one of Master Fard's Lost Found Moslem Lessons formulated the issue:

Q: Why does the devil call our people Africans?  
A: Answer: To make the people of North America believe that the people on that continent are the only people they have and are all savage. ... The original people live on this continent and they are the ones who strayed away from civilization and are living a jungle life. The original people call this continent Asia, but the devils call it Africa to try to divide them. He wants us to think that we all are different.

Although whites were charged with being the source of a taxonomic distinction between civilized and uncivilized Asiatics, the more important schism was the one lodged between African Americans and Africans by W. D. Fard's Asiatic schema itself, a division compounded by an apparent ignorance of, and consequent antipathy toward, the African continent both past and present. But Fard's aversion to contemporary Africa, one should not forget, was shared by his Black Christian peers.

Asiatic. One of the hallmarks of both Moorish Science and Nation of Islam worldviews was the claim that people of African descent were of Asiatic stock. The notion originated with the MSTA, and was given fullest expression in its Holy Koran. Asiatic identity was universal in the sense that it appeared to incorporate the overwhelming majority of humankind. Moreover, the consequent subordination or eradication of African identity, secular as well as scriptural, relieved both organizations of having to concern themselves with the fulfillment of prophetic destiny relative to the continent of Africa.

According to Prophet Drew Ali, the key of civilization was in the hands of the Asiatic nations, comprised of a motley assemblage of Moors, Egyptians, Arabsians, Japanese, Chinese, Hindus, Moorish Americans, Mexicans, Brazilians, Argentines, Chileans, Colombians, and San Salvadorans, not to mention Turks. All were descended from the Moabites, "the founders and true possessors of the present Moroccan Empire" whose dominion—prior to "the great earthquake, which caused the Atlantic Ocean"—extended from Africa to North, Central, and South America, as well as the Atlantis Islands.

An acquaintance with the Atlantis legend, as it turned out, was indispensable to comprehending Ali's curious collection of Asiatic peoples. One of the late nineteenth-century popularizers of this and a great many other
imaginative accounts was Madame Blavatsky, who affirmed that the "perfect identity of the rites, ceremonies, traditions, and even the names of the deities, among the Mexicans and ancient Babylonians and Egyptians, are a sufficient proof of South America being peopled by a colony which mysteriously found its way across the Atlantic." However, for a "handful of thoughtful and solitary students," the mystery was resolved. The cataclysm that separated the continents and doomed Atlantis to the bottom of the sea also scattered a once-unified culture to many different sectors of the globe.

Noble Drew Ali, for his part, was able to contribute an Asiatic gloss to one of the more ingenious models of imaginary cultural diffusion of his time. Documents from the NOI's earliest years seem to indicate that Prophet W. D. Fard made no attempt to deduce an Asiatic identity for African Americans using biblical sources, as had Noble Drew Ali, but simply affirmed that Asia was the original and true name of the African continent.

In the absence of documentation, one can only speculate as to how Black American identification with Asia was ultimately transformed into a relative handful of black folk claiming identification as Asiatics. Although by the first quarter of the twentieth century a number of African Americans continued either to extract a sense of dignity and pride from the glories of ancient Ethiopia and Egypt or to seek Africa's redemption through missionary activity, others had begun to look to contemporary Asia for salvation. Several factors account for the shift. Most important, by the turn of the century Asian reactions to European colonial expansion had taken a dramatic turn on the political as well as cultural plane. Politically speaking, the Japanese naval defeat of the Russians in 1905–1906 had a tremendous impact not only on Asians but African Americans. As John Edward Bruce noted in 1913, "Around the Japanese question the hopes and aspirations of the darker races of the world are centered. Whatever its solution is to be no man living can now tell. But there is a strong conviction that the disillusionment of the 'superior' race is an event scheduled to take place on this earth in the next few years." Japan's rapid economic development proved attractive to African American would-be entrepreneurs. "Speaking for the masses of my own race in this country," wrote Booker T. Washington the previous year,

I think I am safe in saying that there is no other race living outside of America whose fortunes the Negro people of this country have followed with greater interest or admiration. The wonderful progress of the Japanese people and their sudden rise to the position of one of the great nations of the world has nowhere been studied with greater interest or enthusiasm than by the Negroes of America.

With the success of the Turkish revolution in 1908, Western colonialism in Asia was now menaced by an independent and modernizing Turkish nation on the western border and a Japanese nation of similar description in the Far East. (On the other hand, despite Ethiopia's military victory over
Italy at Aduwa in 1896, and the determined but ultimately ill-fated rebellion of the Rif people of Morocco led by Abd El-Krim against Spanish colonizers in 1920, neither event seems to have registered with African Americans now looking to Asia for deliverance.) Japan’s rise to global prominence especially had unleashed a spate of books in the West—for example, Bertram Lenox Simpson, *The Conflict of Colour: The Threatened Upheaval Throughout the World* (1910); Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (1920); Maurice Muret, *The Twilight of the White Races* (1926); and Upton Close, *The Revolt of Asia: The End of the White Man’s World Dominance* (1927)—analyzing (and in some cases lamenting) what appeared to be the imminent fall of global white supremacy. The alarms were premature, to say the least, but the underlying realities were not entirely clear in the 1920s and 1930s.

Religious Offerings from the East. Meanwhile, African Americans—especially those residing in northern urban centers—began to be apprised of the existence of spiritual offerings from Southeast Asia. Small but determined bands of proselytizers representing a select number of Eastern religions—Islam included—had begun entering the United States in the 1890s. The transmission of Orientalist notions from West to East had convinced many Asians that their ideals stood in some sort of diametrical opposition to those of the Western world, but with a reversal of the valuations traditionally assigned the two hemispheres by Westerners. In the face of the growing industrial and military might of Europe and the United States, East Indians and Japanese especially were prepared to claim the superiority of Eastern spirituality over the materialist preoccupation of the West, not to mention the parity of Japan’s developing military-industrial machine. All these events were connected to the rise of cultural and political pan-Asianism in India, China, and Japan at the turn of the century. Counterbalancing the imposed racial categories of the West, pan-Asianism frequently couched itself in terms of racial solidarity, pointing the way to a unified resistance to Euro-American colonialism. Nicolaevsky noted that the Japanese

tried to combine their pan-Asiatic ideals with efforts towards a new social order. All of them had in common an aversion for the “capitalistic,” “plutocratic,” “imperialistic” political and social order of Western Europe and America. Even greater was their hostility toward the socialist ideals of the Western world. European culture itself was repugnant to them and aroused their deep antipathy. They aimed at eliminating the domination and hegemony of the “white race” not only in the economic field but also in that of ideas. The desperate tirades of the pan-Asiatics on the subject of the “white danger” were directed against the economic and political order and against the whole culture of the European-American world.

Such formulations were made to order for African Americans conditioned by a society where obsession with race permeated every aspect of daily life.
They also tended to reinforce the notion of the inherent superiority of an Eastern Islam over a Western Christianity.

Secular and Sacred Histories: The Asiatic Connection. Contrasting sharply with the highly negative depiction of Africa and African peoples in Western texts, Euro-American historiography and ethnography at times accorded an immense respect to Asia and its peoples. This was true even in the handful of works which conceded that the origins of humanity were to be found in Africa. Among a number of “world histories” published during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was Van Loon’s Story of Mankind, a work which, as noted earlier, was reportedly recommended by W. D. Fard. Van Loon viewed the history of civilization as an ongoing conflict between “Asia, the ancient teacher, and Europe, the young and eager pupil,” a struggle which continued into the twentieth century. Preparing to discuss the historical contributions of ancient Egypt, he affirmed that the Nile Valley “had developed a high stage of civilization thousands of years before the people of the west had dreamed of the possibilities of a fork or a wheel or a house. And we shall therefore leave our great-great-grandfathers in their caves,” Van Loon sighed, “while we visit the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean.” The southern shore, it turned out, defined the northern rim of the African continent. Excluded from “universal history,” Africa was accorded no mention until his discussion of the European colonial era.125

Many biblical scholars continued to support the notion that Asia had given birth to civilization some 6,000 years earlier. Bolstering scriptural claims as well, readers in ancient history were not unmindful of the distinction between Asiatic and African blacks made by Herodotus in the mid-fifth century B.C. Higgins’s Anacalypsis (1836), too, had posited the existence of an ancient, “great black nation” in Asia.126 With such a preponderance of secular and scriptural evidence, the African American embrace of an Asiatic self-reference would not be far behind.

Morocco and Mecca. For Moorish scientists the ancestral home was Morocco, located in the northwest quadrant of the African continent: “Why are we Moorish-Americans? Because we are descendants of Moroccans and born in America,” explained the Koran Questions for Moorish Americans127 (a variant of this theme specified Africa's southwest shore as well, but without mentioning any country by name).128 For the NOI, however, the original homeland was Mecca: “The root of civilization is in Arabia at the Holy City Mecca, which means where wisdom and knowledge of the original man first started when the planet was found,” Master Fard proclaimed.129 In general, the NOI worldview completely disassociated itself from Africa, whereas that of the MSTA favored the northern section of the continent. The MSTA does not seem to have spoken of any physical return to Morocco, but at least one early NOI document affirmed that “the Lost Found Nation of Islam will not return to their original Land [presumably Mecca] unless they first have a
Civic Identity: Relationship to the State

The nationalisms of both the MSTA and NOI were also reflected in their national flags. The idea of a national flag itself was probably sparked by the UNIA, whose red, black, and green banner foretold the political independence of the African continent. The Moorish flag, for its part, was based on the Moroccan national emblem, while the NOI's "national," or universal flag of Islam, was derived from that of the Turks. (The Moors also used the Turkish star and crescent as a product symbol on its commercially vended soaps, oils, and elixirs.) The stance of each group regarding American civic identity flowed in opposing directions, however.

Vigorously linked to American citizenship, Moorish-American national identity had to be openly declared in order to be acknowledged by government: "All men now must proclaim their free national name to be recognized by the government in which they live and the nations of the earth . . . ," declared Act 6 of the Moorish Divine Constitution. The Constitution, moreover, placed considerable emphasis on obedience to law:

ACT 4. All members must preserve these Holy and Divine laws, and all members must obey the laws of the government, because by being a Moorish American, you are a part and partial of the government, and must live the life accordingly.

ACT 5. This organization of the Moorish Science Temple of America is not to cause any confusion or to overthrow the laws and constitution of the said government but to obey hereby.

Prophet W. D. Fard, on the other hand, repudiated the existence of any ties between his followers and American governmental institutions. As "citizens of the Holy City of Mecca . . . their only allegiance was to the Moslem flag." This stance led to considerable persecution of NOI members by the Justice Department during World War II.

Identity and Naming Patterns

Both organizations held that blacks had to reclaim their individual as well as group names. For the individual renaming practices that constituted such a return, Moors attached the suffix El (pronounced Eel) or Bey to their
American names (e.g. Henry Louis Bey), whereas in the early years of the NOI the “slave” surnames of recent converts were replaced with a transitional X (e.g. Cornell X) until Prophet W. D. Fard was able to assign them their “righteous” Muslim names (e.g., Mohammed Shah). Following Prophet Fard’s departure in 1934, and in anticipation of his return, the X’s assigned to proselytes—or multiple X’s to avoid duplication—became their permanent last names by default.133

The emphasis on name conversions for members of either organization could have had its inspiration in any number of sources. Although Rabbi Arnold J. Ford referred derogatorily to the African-American Christian name as the “name in slavery,”134 name changes among Black Hebrews seem to have occurred mostly among the leadership, and even then rather inconsistently. Conversions to Ahmadiyya Islam, on the other hand, appear always to have been accompanied by name changes: Loucille Frazier became Fatima; Lee Hutchinson bore the new name Muhammad Ali; Carolina Bush took the name Hameeda; and Moses Johnson assumed the mantle of Moosa, to cite a few examples.135 Yet another model of rebirth through renaming could be found beneath the wing of Father Divine’s Peace Mission, where George Baker, Jr., became Father Divine, Leila Slaughter was known as Buncha Sweetness, Viola Wilson went by the appellation of Faithful Mary, and other devotees assumed sobriquets like Equality Smart, Wisdom Smiling, Sincere Satisfying, and Victory Dove.136

Prophetic Destiny and Human Intervention

Islam and Christianity alike posit the existence of an omniscient and omnipotent God, raising complications in the way of attempts to explain not only the existence of evil in the universe but also the role that human beings might be permitted to exercise in determining their own destiny on earth. Marcus Garvey had dealt with both issues by concluding that God’s purview ended with the creation of life on earth, and that, for better or for worse, the course of human affairs was fully in the hands of human beings. However, in Psalms 68:31 Garveyism did recognize at least one exception to God’s isolation from human affairs in the matter of Ethiopia’s destiny.

The theological views of the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam, however, were more complex in at least one respect. While both groups naturally viewed the apocalypse as preordained, they reacted to the approaching end of time not only by preparing for the gloriously inevitable, but by directing their efforts towards the material improvement of the conditions of the race—or at least the conditions of their respective followers—in the here and now. Such interventions could not simply proceed on their own initiative, of course, but were given sanction via God’s raising of a prophet who would not only redeem the fallen, but also lead them to a higher stage of material existence before the final sounding of the trumpets. From
the perspectives of both organizations, these mundane concerns acquired even greater propriety because one’s heaven and one’s hell were judged to be on this earth.

The reason for the fall from grace of the original Asiatics was ascribed to different causes by Moorish Scientists and Lost-Founds. Invoking an explanation that could be traced back to Deuteronomy 28 and the Israelite connection, the Moorish Holy Koran held that the descent occurred because black people had renounced their true God for the “Gods of Europe”:

16. Through sin and disobedience every nation has suffered slavery, due to the fact that they honored not the creed and principles of their forefathers.

17. That is why the nationality of the Moors was taken away from them in 1774 and the word negro, black and colored, was given to the Asiatics of America who were of Moorish descent, because they honored not the principles of their mother and father, and strayed after the Gods of Europe of whom they knew nothing.137

Prophet W. D. Fard’s theodicy offered quite another explanation as to why the original or Asiatic black man fell into a state of domination that began with slavery. Demonstrating that the march of science did not always lead to positive social ends, Fard exposed the machinations of one Dr. Yakub, a black scientist gone astray. After grafting white people—otherwise known as “devils”—from the biological stock of the Original People some six thousand years ago, Yakub, in his wisdom, then taught them how to rule blacks through the use of “tricknollogy.”138 But the question remained as to why God allowed such a fate to befall the original Asiatics:

Q: Then why did God make a devil?
A: To show forth his power, that he is all wise and righteous, that he could make a devil which is weak and wicked and give the devil power to rule the earth for six thousand years and then destroy the devil in one day without falling a victim to the devil’s civilization; otherwise to show and prove that Allah is the God; always has been and always will be.139

Tricknollogy, compounded by gullibility (and possibly cupidity) on the part of Asiatic black laborers, was the reason why a trader (presumably slave trader) was able to carry them away from their original homeland:

25. Can the devil fool a Moslem?
27. Do you mean to say that the devil fooled them three hundred and seventy-nine years ago?
28. Yes, the trader made an interpretation that they would receive gold for their labor; more than they were earning in their own country.
29. Did they receive gold?
30. No! The trader disappeared and there was no one that could speak their language.
31. Then what happened?
32. Well, they wanted to go back to their own country, but they could not swim 9,000 miles.140

Whether the loss of the original Asiatics was due to their straying away from God, or to God's inexplicable capriciousness, the goal of both Moors and Lost-Founds was to recover their original identity and religion, improve their material well-being, and prepare for the millennium. To that end God had raised a prophet to guide the lost sheep to the promised land. Within Moorish Science theology, however, the very notion of prophethood introduced a fatal flaw. In a chapter appropriated from the Aquarian Gospel, the Moorish Holy Koran heralded the fact that believers required no intermediary between themselves and God: "When man sees Allah as one with him, as Father Allah he needs no middle man, no priest to intercede."141 Yet in another section presumably written by Prophet Ali himself, the Moorish holy book declared the need for such an interceder: "The last Prophet in these days is Noble Drew Ali, who was prepared divinely in due time by Allah to redeem men from their sinful ways; and to warn them of the great wrath which is sure to come upon the earth."142

Master Fard based his claim to prophethood largely on a New Testament foundation. In the Gospels Jesus is often quoted as using the curious term, Son of Man (also present in earlier scriptures), in a self-referential way. But by referring to himself in the third person, certain passages, especially in the apocalyptic context of Matthew, have often been interpreted as Jesus foretelling a Messiah who would come after him. Certainly this is the way in which W. D. Fard construed such verses: "The only god is the Son of Man . . . ," claimed the NOI founder, and "no relief came to us until the Son of Man came to our aid, by the name of our prophet, W. D. Fard."143

Until the post-World War II era, at least, the notion of economic self-sufficiency was most fully developed by the MSTA. According to Noble Drew Ali, spiritual fulfillment could not be forthcoming without economic security:

In connection with our religious aims and beliefs, we must promote economic security. . . . No other one thing is more needed among us at this time than greater economic power. Better positions for our men and women, more business employment for our boys and girls[,] and bigger incomes will follow our economic security. We shall be secure in nothing until we have economic power. A beggar people cannot develop the highest in them, nor can they attain to a genuine enjoyment of the spiritualities of life.

Our men, women and children should be taught to believe in the capacity of our group to succeed in business, in spite of the trials of some of them. . . . Except in cases of actual dishonesty, discourtesy, lack of service and actual unreliability, our business enterprises in every field of endeavor should have the fullest of confidence, cooperation and patronage whenever and wherever they can be given.144
The MSTA developed its own product line of lubricants and nostrums, including a Moorish Body Builder and Blood Purifier, Moorish Mineral and Healing Oil, and Moorish Antiseptic Bath Compound. This last product claimed to be "beneficial for dandruff, rheumatism, stiff joints, tired and sore feet [and] also skin troubles, when used as a face wash."\(^\text{145}\)

Despite his reputation as a purveyor of silks and other exotic items in Detroit's "Paradise Valley," W. D. Fard seems to have shunned entrepreneurialism as an organizational aim. However, he remained quite vigorous in fostering the notion of individual self-reliance. "Would you sit up at home and wait for a mystery god to bring you food?" inquired one of the *Lost Found Moslem Lessons*. "Emphatically no," was the response.\(^\text{146}\)

Rather, the key to one's deliverance lay in harnessing divine mathematics to material goals:

> After learning Mathematics, which is Islam, and Islam is Mathematics, [it] stands true, you can always prove it at no limit of time. Then you must learn to use it and secure some benefit while you are living—that is, luxury, money, good home, friendship, in all walks of life. Sit yourself in Heaven at once! That is the greatest desire of your Brother and Teachers. Now you must speak the Language, so you can use your mathematical Theology in the proper term, otherwise you will not be successful, unless you do speak well. . . .\(^\text{147}\)

Along with economic security, both organizations promoted the idea of individual duties and responsibilities. Declared the Moorish *Constitution*:

> Husband, you must support your wife and children; wife you must obey your husband and take care of your children and look after the duties of your household. Sons and daughters must obey father and mother and be industrious and become a part of the uplifting of fallen humanity. All Moorish Americans must keep their hearts and minds pure with love, and their bodies clean with water.\(^\text{148}\)

While men underwent military training in the Nation, women had to learn "how to keep house, how to rear their children, how to take care of their husbands, sew, cook and in general, how to act at home and abroad."\(^\text{149}\)

Whites had taught blacks "to eat the wrong food," and as a result they had become "poison animal eaters." The flesh of all such beasts—"hogs, ducks, geese, 'possums and catfish"—was to be religiously avoided, but that of the noble barnyard chicken was permitted.\(^\text{150}\) Although outside the time frame of this essay, it is worth noting that in 1939 the MSTA established an old folks home in Prince George County, Virginia, near Petersburg, some 40 miles from the colony established much earlier by the Church of God. The group also held land in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts; Long Island, New York; and Woodstock, Connecticut. In 1945 the NOI established its own farm on some 140 acres of land in southwest Michigan.\(^\text{151}\)
Last Days and Times

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. (Rev. 20:1-3)

Entitled "The End of Time and the Fulfilling of Prophecies," chapter 48 of the Moorish *Holy Koran* does not refer directly to the Book of Revelation, but the connection is clear. "In these modern days," declared the Moorish *Holy Koran*,

there came a forerunner, who was divinely prepared by the great God-Allah and his name is Marcus Garvey, who did teach and warn the nations of the earth to prepare to meet the coming Prophet; who was to bring the true and divine Creed of Islam, and his name is Noble Drew Ali: who was prepared and sent to this earth by Allah, to teach the old time religion and the everlasting gospel to the sons of men. That every nation shall and must worship under their own vine and fig tree, and return to their own and be one with their Father God-Allah.152

The year 1914, designated by the Nation of Islam as the time when the white man's rule was judged to be up, seems to have been directly appropriated from the Jehovah's Witnesses.153 Witnesses referred to the "Time of the End,"

a period of one hundred and fifteen years, from A.D. 1799 to A.D. 1914, [which] is particularly marked in the Scriptures . . . discoveries, inventions, etc., pave the way to the coming millennium of favor, making ready the mechanical devices which will economize labor, and provide the world in general with time and conveniences . . . the increase of knowledge among the masses [will give] to all a taste of liberty and luxury, before Christ's rule is established . . . class-power . . . will result in the uprising of the masses and the overthrow of corporative trusts, etc., with which will fall also all the present dominions of earth, civil, and ecclesiastical. . . . All the discoveries, inventions and advantages which make our day the superior of every other day are but so many elements working together in this day of preparation for the incoming millennial age, when true and healthful reform, and actual progress in every direction, will be the order, to all and for all.154

But whereas the pre-millennial apocalypse foreseen by the witnesses was synonymous with late nineteenth-century class warfare, the post-millennial, twentieth-century version divulged by the NOI assumed a decidedly racial form.155

Finally, a brief closing remark. The African-American path to Islamization has been as ambiguous as it has been paradoxical, lending weight to
Wilson's observation that without the appearance of "heresies" during what might be viewed (but only after the fact) as a transitional stage from Christianity to Sunni Islam, the journey most likely would not have reached its fulfillment. The passage from Christianity to Islam was obviously not a one-step process, but appears to have wended its way in the late nineteenth century from the Hebrew identity of the Old Testament to the subsequent embrace of a syncretic Judaism; then, under the influence of a heterodox Ahmadiyya Islam, as well as other diverse attractions, from syncretic Judaism to an equally syncretic Islam; and finally, by the 1970s, from Islamic syncretism to the Sunni tradition. This provisional (and, in this summary form, oversimplified) paradigm, like so many others before it, may yet bend or break beneath the weight of further, revealed evidence. But if, in the meantime, it serves to elucidate in whatever way the early development of a significant and growing branch of African-American religious life, or to stimulate further research in that vein, then it will have more than served its purpose.

Notes

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2. See, for example, C. Eric Lincoln, “The American Muslim Mission in the Context of American Social History" in The Muslim Community in North America, ed. Earle H. Waugh, Baha Abu-Laban, and Regula B. Qureshi (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1983), pp. 215–33; Lawrence H. Mamiya, “Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Final Call: Schism in the Muslim Movement" in ibid., pp. 234–55; Zafar Ishaq Ansari, “W. D. Muhammad: The Making of a ‘Black Muslim’ Leader (1933–1961),” American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences 2,2 (1985): 245–62. The Islam of the MSTA and NOI clearly have to be distinguished from the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, but I am not altogether comfortable with existing nomenclature. For the moment I shall be more or less content to employ the term “syncretic" to denote the African-American forms in question. On the other hand, since syncretism essentially entails a selection of ideological elements across established religious demarcations, one wonders, really, how this process differs in function from the selections and borrowings which tend to demarcate denominations, sects, and cults from one another within established religions.

3. This chapter assumes a basic acquaintance with Moorish Science and Nation of Islam views. For studies of the NOI and its eschatology, see E. U. Essien-

4. Early on, Howard Brotz signaled the existence of parallels between Islamic and Hebrew groups after World War I, but later scholarship devoted to studies of the MSTA and NOI totally ignored his sightings. Like most researchers at the time, Brotz assumed that Judaic and Islamic syncretisms emerged just after the Great Migration of World War I. Recent studies of Black Hebrew congregations, however, show that these expressions developed long before the rekindling of interest in Islam among African Americans in the 1920s. See Howard M. Brotz, The Black Jews of Harlem: Negro Nationalism and the Dilemmas of Negro Leadership (New York: Schocken, 1970), p. 9; Merrill Singer, “The Southern Origin of Black Judaism” in African Americans in the South: Issues of Race, Class, and Gender, ed. Hans A. Baer and Yvonne Jones (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), pp. 123–38.

5. For a discussion of these identities within a wider American context, see Theophus H. Smith, Conjuring Culture: Biblical Formations of Black America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Werner Sollors, Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).


13. See Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 85. Cain’s mark, however, was not a curse but rather a sign that he was under the protection of God. On the other hand, African Americans also sometimes associated whiteness with the curse of Miriam, whom God smote with leprosy after she and Aaron spoke out against the marriage of their brother Moses to an Ethiopian woman: “Behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow” (Num. 12:10). The association of whiteness with leprosy has remained popular in some strains of Black Hebrew thought. For example, Prophet F. S. Cherry of Philadelphia’s Church of the Living God taught that “the first white man was Gehazi, who received his white color as the result of a curse which was placed upon him for sin (2 Kings 5:27).” Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, p. 34. See also Clarke Jenkins, *The Black Hebrews of the Seed of Abraham—Isaac and Jacob of the Tribe of Judah-Benjamin and Levi after 430 Years in America* (Detroit, 1969).


17. Embracing the first message while rejecting the second, for example, the Garvey movement nonetheless viewed Christianity in the 1920s as a vehicle of racial uplift no less fervently than did Black Christian missionaries. But the UNIA’s “Universal Negro Catechism” also interpreted Psalms 68:31 in a more secular vein: “That Negroes will set up their own government in Africa, with rulers of their own race.” In terms of projected destiny, Marcus Garvey’s Ethiopianism, as it turned out, bore a close resemblance to Theodor Herzl’s Zionism (see Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement*, p. 34).


19. Based on an analysis of newspaper clippings conducted some sixty years after the aborted insurrection, Thomas Wentworth Higginson reported that, during the planning of the insurrection, “a man named Martin, Gabriel’s brother, proposed religious services, caused the company to be duly seated, and began an impassioned exposition of Scripture, bearing upon the perilous theme [of insurrection]. The Israelites were glowingly portrayed as a type of successful resistance to tyranny; and it was argued, that now as then, God would stretch forth His arm to save, and would strengthen a hundred to overthrow a thousand.” Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Black Rebellion* (1889; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 77. In enlisting combatants, however, Gabriel was also said to have been desirous of including “partially the Outlandish [native-born African] people, because they were supposed to deal with witches and wizards, and of course useful in armies to tell when any calamity was about to befall them.” H. W. Flournoy, ed., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts from January 1, 1799, to December 31, 1807; Preserved in the Capitol, at Richmond*, 11 vols. (Richmond, VA, 1890), 9:153.


22. A detailed exploration of the class bases underlying these biblical identifications cannot be dealt with here. Raboteau notes, however, that the theme of Exodus dominant during slavery gave way to that of Ethiopianism thereafter. Nineteenth-century Ethiopianism, however, whether in the form of a Christian redemption of Africa or a veneration of ancient Egypt and Ethiopia, was largely the province of churchmen and other members of the black educated elite. From Reconstruction through World War I the concern with migrationist or emigrationist movements seems to have once again thrust the theme of Exodus and Hebrew identification to the forefront at the grassroots level. Nonetheless, during World War I and after, Ethiopianism also assumed popular expression in the mass-based UNIA, above all, as well as in sects such as the Star Order of Ethiopia and Ethiopian Missionaries to Abyssinia (the Abyssinian Movement). An intense mass identification with modern Ethiopia, reflected in organizations such as the Ethiopian World Federation, followed the Italian invasion of that country in 1935. See Raboteau, *Fire in the Bones*, p. 41; Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement*, p. 34; Joseph E. Harris, *African-American Reactions to War in Ethiopia, 1936–1941* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univer-


26. Around 1909 a dismissed South African Wesleyan Methodist preacher named John Msikinya visited the United States and returned to South Africa as a bishop of the Church of God. Another South African by the name of Enoch Mgijima joined the movement and, when Halley’s Comet appeared the following year, announced that it was a sign that “Jehovah was angry, and that unless men turned to their ancient religion there would be a disaster.” The New Testament, he warned, “was a fiction of the white man’s and they must worship on the model of the Israelite patriarchs who in their day had been liberated from the yoke of oppressive rulers.” After Msikinya died, the South African branch split, with half the parishioners following Mgijima until in 1918 he was “discommunicated” from the Church of God parent organization for allegedly claiming to have received visions indicating that South African whites should be crushed by blacks. Three years later his group of “Israelites,” facing an ultimatum after failing to disperse following the observance of their Passover, charged at police and soldiers with swords and spears; 163 Israel-


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(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 193. In 1925 it was reported that a congregation of 300 blacks had planned to erect a synagogue in Chicago; Work, Negro Year Book, 1931–1932, p. 258. Baer and Singer, African-American Religion, p. 113, mistakenly identify the “Abyssinian Movement” (Star Order of Ethiopia and Ethiopian Missionaries to Abyssinia) as a Black Hebrew sect.


38. “4,000 Black Jews Hail Advent of Year 5698,” p. 8; Godbey, “The Lost Tribes a Myth,” caption accompanying photo of Moorish Zionist Temple members, unpaginated photo insert.


40. Shapiro, “Factors in the Development of Black Judaism,” p. 269; Landes, Negro Jews in Harlem, p. 182. This particular legend is compatible with an “extreme” strand of Yoruba tradition which, according to Biobaku, “regards Ile Ife as the spot where God created man, white and black, and from where mankind dispersed all over the world” (S. O. Biobaku, The Origin of the Yoruba [Lagos: University of Lagos, 1971], p. 11. I am indebted to Rowland Abiodun for this citation).


43. Cited in Kobre, “Rabbi Ford,” p. 27.

44. Clark, Small Sects in America, p. 151.

45. In 1945 the group announced plans “to establish a co-operative agricultural project on Long Island” for five hundred families, which would include “a temple, a theological school, a recreation center and a convalescent home for returning service men.” Following the group’s purchase of land, the project ran into immediate racial and religious opposition from white residents, and had


47. “But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. . . .” (Deut. 28:15). George Washington Williams and other articulate black observers of the nineteenth century associated the decline of African civilization with moral degradation, with a “turning away from God.” Unlike the Black Hebrews, however, they failed to designate the specific religion from which Africans purportedly turned away. Given a choice, no doubt, they would have preferred to specify Christianity as that religion, but such divergences from the historical record were better left to leaders of grassroots religious sects and cults; see Raboteau, *A Fire in the Bones*, p. 44.


51. A case in point is the proliferation of pseudo-Eastern prophets, seers, mystics, and corresponding sects in African-American urban communities beginning around World War I. From the 1890s onward, the Vedanta Society's conversions of European immigrants residing in the United States raised additional assistants for the Hindu cause. The English-born Margaret Noble, for example, became Sister Nivedita; Herr Leon Landsberg changed his name to Swami Kripananda; and Mme. Marie Louise received the title of Swami Abhayananda. However, the ability of the non-Hindu-born to rise to a position of Hindu spiritual leadership (a phenomenon unknown in India itself), not to mention a newfound opportunity for the Negro to “pass” as Hindu, provided unanticipated openings: “We must remember,” wrote a sympathetic observer of Hinduism in the United States, “that certain Americans, by virtue of their complexion, are naturally equipped to play the role of a popular Hindu teacher. . . . The astute Joe Dowling,” for example, “of coal-black visage and some small town in Illinois appeared on Keith's vaudeville circuit under the name of 'Joveddah de Raja,' an opulent nomenclature smacking of Roman divinity, French nobility and Hindu
royalty all in one. . . . In 1926 the princely Joveddah, now a profound 'philosopher and psychologist,' began broadcasting words of Oriental comfort and wisdom from radio stations in New York and environs. . . ." De Raja ran a thriving correspondence-course business until his operation was finally shut down by "de police." Wendell Thomas, *Hinduism Invades America* (New York: Beacon, 1930), pp. 79, 81, 218–19.

52. Arthur M. Schlesinger, "A Critical Period in American Religion, 1875–1900," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 64 (October 1930–June 1932): 524. The challenge to the Protestant church as an institution came in several forms: an increased estrangement from working-class urban dwellers and, even for those parishioners who attended church regularly, an indifference masked by the persistence of religion as social convention. Unlike working-class Catholic immigrants who found the Roman Catholic Church to be "the one familiar landmark in a strange and alien land, many native-born, urban white wage earners continued to profess a belief in Christianity while remaining opposed to Protestant "churchianity." The conspicuous materialism of many urban churches—their imposing stone edifices, lavish interiors, expensive pipe organs, and like accouterments—appeared to the working-class poor to be totally divorced from the spirit of Christian ideals. Moreover, the impersonal character of large urban congregations stood in marked contrast to the intimate quality of their small rural counterparts. Further eroding the Church’s ties to labor was the initial public support given industrialists by prominent ministerial leadership during the tumultuous labor strikes of the later 1800s, as well as the church’s determination to shut down legitimate businesses devoted to leisure activities on Sunday. See Stephen Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 18; Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America* (New York: Scribner’s, 1965), p. 295; Aaron Ignatius Abell, *The Urban Impact on American Protestantism, 1865–1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1943), p. 64; H. F. Perry, "The Workingman’s Alienation from the Church," *American Journal of Sociology* 4 (March 1899): 622.

53. The phenomenon was hardly restricted to the United States; a devitalization of Christian doctrines and symbols had been taking place throughout industrialized Europe as well; see Gottschalk, *Emergence of Christian Science*, p. 3.


56. I have addressed some of the implications of these developments for Nation of Islam ideology in my "Religious Heterodoxy and Nationalist Tradition: The Continuing Evolution of the Nation of Islam," *Black Scholar* 26 (Fall–Winter 1996): 8–11.

of many speakers to address the Parliament was Mohammed (Alexander Russell) Webb, formerly thought to have been the first American convert to Islam.


59. Only eight representatives were present at any one time, however. Thomas, *Hinduism Invades America*, p. 105; remarking upon the spread of Hinduism to Western countries, Coomaraswamy concluded, “The East has indeed revealed a new world to the West, which will be the inspiration of a ‘Renaissance’ more profound and far-reaching than that which resulted from the re-discovery of the classic world of the West” (Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Message of the East* [Madras: Ganesh, n.d. (after 1909)], p. 4.

60. Layman, *Buddhism in America*, p. 28.


62. A specific attraction of Ahmadi Islam to Moorish Science Temple and Nation of Islam leaders would seem to have been its championing of an Islamic prophethood succeeding that of Prophet Muhammad—a heresy in the eyes of traditional Muslims, to be sure, but a unique spiritual opportunity for one properly qualified to mediate between God and humanity.


67. As Valentinus noted, “What liberates us is the knowledge of who we were, what we became; where we were; wherinto we have been thrown; whereto we speed, wherefrom we are redeemed; what birth is, and what rebirth. Such knowl-
edge is not only the instrument of salvation but also the form in which the goal of salvation—perfection is realized. But self-knowledge in this case is not to be understood as a self-reflecting upon the quality of one's individual strengths and weaknesses, nor a fulfillment of the task, as suggested by Gramsci, of compiling a trace-inventory of the historical processes that have shaped one's being. Rather, the maxim, 'Know thyself,' is to be viewed strictly as an unfolding process of spiritual revelation." Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 35, 45; Antonio Gramsci, Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1944), p. 4.


70. The absence here of a specific discussion of gender identity does not constitute an oversight. Unlike the 1950s and later (with respect to the NOI in particular), documents from the years 1920–30 to which I have had access reveal almost nothing in the way of discussions relative to the subject of gender. In general, however, it can be said that the NOI was much more a rigidly patriarchal organization than was the MSTA. For an additional brief remark on this subject, see my "Religious Heterodoxy and Nationalist Tradition," p. 8.


72. Also purportedly based on materials found in a Tibetan monastery, Notovich's work postulated that the eighteen undocumented years in the life of Jesus were spent in India, a theme given further embellishment in the *Aquarian Gospel*. Ahmadis, on the other hand, claimed that Jesus, while sojourning in India, subsequently died and was buried in a tomb in Srinagar, Kashmir. See Peter Lamborn Wilson, "Shoot-Out at the Circle Seven Koran: Noble Drew Ali and the Moorish Science Temple," *Gnosis* 12 (Summer 1989): 45; Nikolai Notovich, *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: V. R. Gandhi, 1894); Ghulam Ahmad, *Jesus in India; Being an Account of Jesus' Escape from Death on the Cross and His Journey to India* (1899; rpt. Rabwah [West Pakistan]: Ahmadiyya Muslim Foreign Missions Dept., 1962?). A photo of Jesus' alleged Kashmir tomb was reproduced in *Moslem Sunrise* 2 (January 1923): 168. For critiques of Notovich, see Max Müller, "The Alleged Sojourn of Christ in India," *Nineteenth Century* 36 (October 1894): 515–22; J. Archibald Douglas, "The Chief Lama of Himis on the Alleged 'Unknown Life of Christ,'" *Nineteenth Century* 39 (April 1896): 667–78.


74. "Masterpiece of Religious Literature; Secrets of Other Creeds Revealed," *Moorish Guide* (December 15, 1928). The first edition of the Moorish *Holy Koran* was published in 1927, and it is unclear whether a revised version ever saw the light of day. Ali's idiosyncratic version of the Holy Qur'an was hardly the first. In Morocco in the 740s, for example, Salih ibn Tarif declared himself to be the awaited Mahdi, and introduced his own Qur'an to his followers. Budgett Meakin, *The Moorish Empire: A Historical Epitome* (New York: Macmillan, 1899), p. 46.

75. NOI departures from traditional Islam have been duly noted in Zafar Ishaq Ansari, "Aspects of Black Muslim Theology," *Studia Islamica* 53 (1981): 137–76. While steadfastly asserting the authenticity of his Muslim beliefs, Elijah Muhammad nonetheless seemed ill at ease with a version of Islam cobbled together from disparate sources. For several decades he argued that the Torah had been given to Moses as a guide for Israel, the Holy Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad for the Arab world, and the Gospels to Jesus as a guide and warning to Christians. Hence, he reasoned, African Americans needed a holy book of their own, one tailored specifically to their needs. The argument came close to denying the universality of Islam. Such a book was never forthcoming, however (Muhammad, *Message to the Black Man*, p. 87).


84. The compass and the square seem to have developed separately as Masonic symbols and appeared in their familiar, interlaced form beginning in the mid-eighteenth century. The axe as symbol is not prominent in Freemasonry, however, but does appear in an earlier version of the 22nd (Knight of the Royal Axe) degree in the Scottish Rite. The Masonic ladder has only three steps, representing the values faith, hope, and charity. Although the ladder mentioned in the *Holy Koran* consisted of twelve unnamed steps, it also contained a “trinity of steps, faith, hope, and love.” Moorish *Holy Koran*, 5:20, 6:11; Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad*, pp. 41–42; Kenneth Mackenzie, *The Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia* (New York, 1877), s.v. “Royal Axe”; Henry Wilson Coil, *Coil’s Masonic Encyclopedia* (Richmond, VA: Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Co., 1996), s.v. “Ladder.”


87. *Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 1, Q & A 9* (Beynon cites the *Lost Found Moslem Lessons as Secret Ritual of the Nation of Islam*, Parts I and II). Fard’s sword reference here was to the Shriner symbol: a scimitar placed above the “universal flag of Islam” (in this case, a downward facing star and crescent). The star and crescent were joined as a symbol of both the Ottoman Empire and Islam under the rule of Sultan Selim III in 1793. For a pictorial representation of the Shriner symbol, see Wilson, *Sacred Drift*, p. 27.


89. Moorish *Holy Koran*, 1; *Koran Questions for Moorish Americans* (Chicago: 1928), Q & A 2, 3, pp. 65–76; Moorish *Holy Koran*, 3:5–12. The reference to upper and lower selves in the *Aquarian Gospel*, whence this particular section of the Moorish *Koran* was extracted, likely came from Theosophy. Theosophists, in turn, derived the concept from the sevenfold nature of human existence as taught by certain Buddhist doctrines, according to which one’s upper, or spiritual being was comprised of three principles, and one’s lower, or carnal-sensuous being of four (see Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, pp. 66–68).

90. *Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 2, Q & A 1*. 
91. Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 2, Q & A 15.
92. Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 2, Q & A 10, 11. Elijah Muhammad later clarified this dualistic notion by affirming that the black man was God, but that the supreme God was Allah in the person of Master Fard.
95. Moorish Holy Koran, 47:1, 6; Koran Questions, Q & A 31.
97. The biblical Moabites inhabited the uplands east of the Dead Sea in present-day Jordan, and not "the North Western and South Western shores of Africa" which Drew Ali claimed for them. Ali also claimed that African Americans were enslaved because "they honored not the creed and principles of their forefathers" and had "strayed after the gods of Europe." The offspring of an incestuous relationship between Lot and one of his daughters (Gen. 19:37), Moab, however, had not turned to another god, but was punished along with his people because he had become too prideful, had magnified himself against the Lord (Isa. 16:6–7, Jer. 48:42). See also Moorish Holy Koran, 47:6; Moorish Science Temple of America, The Divine Constitution and By-Laws, Act 6.
99. Interestingly enough, one version of the story held that the Ten Tribes were deported to Africa; see Raisin, Gentile Reactions to Jewish Ideals, p. 424.
100. Similar hopes were voiced in Isa. 11:11 and Jer. 31:7.
102. For an illuminating study of the differences between European and North American views of Pre-Adamites, see Giuliano Gliozzi, Adamo e il nuovo mondo; la nascita dell'antropologia come ideologia coloniale: dalle genealogie bibliche alle teorie razziali (1500–1700) (Florence: La nuova Italia, 1977), pp. 514–621.
104. Griffin Lee [Paschal Beverly Randolph], Pre-Adamite Man: The Story of the Human Race, from 35,000 to 100,000 Years Ago (New York: Sinclair
The African-American Experience


107. Hendrik Willem van Loon, The Story of Mankind (1921; rpt. New York: Liveright, 1984), p. 382; Beynon, “The Voodoo Cult,” p. 900. Since original man (l'homme originel, l'homme sauvage, l'homme naturel), according to Rousseau, “desired only the things that he knew, and knew only those things in his possession or easy to acquire, there was nothing more peaceful than his soul or more circumscribed than his spirit” (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Du Contrat social: ou, Principes du droit politique [Paris: Garnier Frères, n.d.], p. 113) [my trans.] Special thanks to Robert Paul Wolff for assistance in locating this passage.


110. Moorish Holy Koran, 48:6; see also Koran Questions, Q & A 31–33.

111. Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 1, Q & A 7.

112. Beynon, “The Voodoo Cult,” p. 900, has indicated that Breasted’s Conquest of Civilization was one of the books recommended by the Prophet to his followers. If so, it is not difficult to imagine where Fard may have derived some of his unenlightened views. That which a handful of other Western writers of the period were prepared to grant to peoples of Asian descent (as well as deny to those of African heritage), Breasted claimed for Europe alone. Civilization,
according to the noted Egyptologist, was the province of the Great White Race, sired in a triangular region known as the Great Northwest Quadrant. This “vast triangle” included “all Europe, southwestern Asia and northern Africa,” and had been, “until recently the scene of the highest development of life on our planet.” Although Mongoloids now inhabited the quadrant, they did not arrive there “until long after civilization was already highly developed.” Isolated from the Great White race by an impassable Sahara Desert, on the other hand, “and at the same time unfitted by ages of tropical life for any effective intrusion among the White Race, the negro and negroid peoples remained without any influence on the development of early civilization.” William Breasted, The Conquest of Civilization (New York: Harper, 1926), pp. 112-13.

113. Fascinating in this regard are certain origin—myths of the Yoruba, who variously consider themselves to have emanated from Egypt or Arabia. One version even claimed that “the Yoruba sprang from Lamurudu, ... one of the kings of Mecca” (Biobaku, The Origin of the Yoruba, p. 11). Again, I am indebted to Rowland Abiodun for this citation.

114. Moorish Holy Koran, 45:2-7. Noble Drew Ali no doubt would have appreciated the following remarks of Dr. Tsuneichi Komaki of Kyoto Imperial University, delivered in a series of radio broadcasts during World War II: “America originally belonged to Asia and the Indians in America belong to the Asiatic race. Europe, which is a peninsula of Asia, embraces the Mediterranean Sea ... India, Burma ... belong to Asia, as well as Australia. ... The people of ‘Japanese race’ advanced along the shore of Alaska and North America as far as the coast line of Peru. ... Traces we find in the Andes districts in Peru give clear evidence of a cultural connection with sun worship which is characteristic of Japan. ... Africa is also a part of Asia. In ancient Greece, it was considered a part of the Asiatic continent. ... In northern Europe there is Asiatic blood running thick in the veins of the inhabitants. In southern Europe, in France, we find many ancient tools formerly used by the people of Asia” (cited in Saul K. Padover, “Japanese Race Propaganda,” Public Opinion Quarterly 7 [Summer 1943]: 194-95).


117. Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 1, Q & A 7.


128. "The Moorish Americans are the descendants of the ancient Moabites who inhabited the North Western and South Western shores of Africa," *Divine Constitution and By-Laws*, Act 6.

129. *Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 1*, Q & A 4. Actually, MSTA and NOI versions may not have been as far apart as they appeared, for the Moorish *Holy Koran* averred, "The key of civilization was and is in the hands of the Asiatic nations. The Moorish, who were the ancient Moabites, and the founders of the Holy City of Mecca" (Moorish *Holy Koran*, 45:2).

130. Prophet W. D. Fard, *This Book Teaches the Lost Found Nation of Islam. A Thorough Knowledge of our Miserable State of Condition in a Mathematical Way, When We Were Found by Our Saviour W. D. Fard* (n.p., n.d., c. 1934), Problem No. 32. (Beynon cites this work as *Teaching for the Lost Found Nation of Islam in a Mathematical Way.*) One of Master Fard's lessons cautioned that "All Moslems will murder the devil because they know he is a snake and also if he be allowed to live, he would sting someone else. Each Moslem is required to bring four devils, and by bringing and presenting four at a time, his reward is a button to wear on the lapel of his coat, also free transportation to the holy city of Mecca to see Brother Mohammed" (*Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 1*, Q & A 10).


133. Sister Mary Bey, head of a local Georgia branch of the Moorish Science Temple, explained that "Bey" was the "international name" appended to the Christian name of temple officers, whereas "El" was the suffix assigned regular followers. Monroe Work, ed., *Negro Year Book, 1937–1938* (Tuskegee, AL: Negro Year Book Publishing, 1938), p. 219. Bey is a Turkish title originally used
by Ottoman administrators. For the NOI, on the other hand, “X” signified “exslave” as well as the traditional symbol assigned unknown algebraic quantities.


137. Moorish Holy Koran, 47:16-17.

138. Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 2, Q & A 21-28. The Yakub myth may have been created out of whole cloth by Prophet Fard, but an actual historical incident perhaps related to this invention in some obscure way is worth recounting. In 1194 the army of the Almohad Caliph Ya’qub al-Mansur routed the Franks at the Battle of El Arcos (or Alarcos). Following their defeat, some 40,000 European prisoners of war were taken to Morocco to work on Ya’qub’s renowned edifices. The construction projects having been completed, the Christian captives were then set free and allowed to form a valley settlement located somewhere between Fez and Marrakesh. On his deathbed Ya’qub lamented his decision to allow these Shibanis (as they came to be called) to form an enclave on Moroccan soil, thereby posing a potential threat to the stability of the Moorish empire: see Meakin, Moorish Empire, pp. 79-80, 278, 301-302.

139. Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 2, Q & A 38. This passage raises the question, of course, as to who actually made the Devil—God or Yakub.

140. English Lesson No. CI, Q & A 25-32. Three hundred seventy-nine years before 1934, the year in which this lesson was written, would be 1555, the mythical NOI date marking the arrival of African slaves on the North American continent. Recently Minister Louis Farrakhan sought to explain the disparity between this legendary date and 1619, the actual year in which the first African captives arrived in the Virginia colony. Rather than concede that W. D. Fard and Elijah Muhammad were both in error, Farrakhan recently canonized the period between the two dates as the “64 Lost Years.” Skeptics may roll their eyes in disbelief, but even the least proficient numerologist understands that the combination of 6 and 4 yields 1, which stands for God . . .

141. Moorish Holy Koran, 10:22.


143. Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 2, Q & A 10, 11. See also Muham mad, Message to the Blackman, pp. 18-19; Strauss, Life of Jesus, pp. 293-96; Douglas R. A. Hare, The Son of Man Tradition (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), passim.


145. Wilson, Sacred Drift, p. 37.

146. Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 2, Q & A 11.

147. Prophet W. D. Fard, This Book Teaches the Lost Found Nation of Islam, Problem 13.


149. Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 1, Q & A 12, 14.

150. Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 2, Q & A 12; English Lesson CI, Q & A 9, 10; Beynon, “The Voodoo Cult,” p. 901.


153. Beynon notes that Master Fard urged his followers to listen to radio broadcasts of Judge Rutherford, spiritual head of the Jehovah's Witnesses (Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult," p. 900). According to Witness doctrine, "The length of the period of Gentile supremacy or Jewish chastisement was discovered in Leuiticus 26:18 and Daniel 4 to be 'seven times.' A time was taken to mean a symbolic year of 360 days, each one of which represents a calendar year. Seven times would denote, therefore, a period of 2520 years. The Gentile lease of power would legally cease to exist 2520 years after 606 B.C. [another predetermined "point in history from which all Gentile times" could be further calculated] so that Gentile supremacy would end in 1914 A.D. This date marked for them the end of the world, i.e. the end of present world organizations." Milton Stacey Czatt, *The International Bible Students: Jehovah's Witnesses* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933), p. 6.

