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The Black Muslims and the Fall of America: An Interpretation Based on the Failure of Prophecy

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Introduction

Millenarianism is defined by Yonina Talmon as the pursuit of collective, ultimate, this-worldly, total, and imminent salvation (Talmon, 1968: 349-362). Following Norman Cohn's pioneering book, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, (1970), there has been a multitude of studies of millenarianism in various historical and geographical contexts.

Most of this immense literature is concerned with beliefs and behaviour in the stage of expectation. Millenarian movements are most spectacular when they await the imminent arrival of salvation on earth; adherents are then most likely to commit acts that challenge society, such as asceticism, withdrawal, antinomianism, or violence. But millenarians are equally interesting when they must react to the failure of their predictions and the disappointment of their hopes. Any group which commits itself to even moderately definite prophecies about the endtime is bound to find itself faced with this challenge.

The Nation of Islam attracted the most public and scholarly attention in the early 1960s when its millennial expectations were most acute; Mike Wallace did a TV documentary on Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X was at the height of notoriety, and Cassius Clay was converted to become Muhammad Ali. Several important books and articles date from that period (Draper, 1969; Essien-Udom, 1961; Lincoln, 1973; Parenti, 1964). But for our purposes, the most inter-

esting phase of the Nation of Islam is from 1965-66 onwards. Elijah Muhammad predicted the "Fall of America for those years, thus creating a situation of prophetic failure. Only a few scattered articles have dealt with this later period of Muslim history, and none has employed the literature on prophetic failure as a theoretical starting point (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1986; Mamiya, 1982; Ansari, 1981).

Parenti and Mamiya have shown how the economic success of the Nation of Islam has tended to shift the movement to a less radical orientation in which members seek a *rapprochement* with White society (Parenti, 1964; Mamiya, 1982). Our approach builds on this analysis by exploring the ideological dynamics of the movement's transformation.

We rely on a small but significant body of literature on "the failure of prophecy," as this phenomenon has become known. The seminal work is *When Prophecy Fails*, by Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter (1956). These social psychologists had the opportunity to study a small cult known as the Seekers, whose leader was a woman claiming to receive revelations from extraterrestrial beings. They informed her that the earth would soon be destroyed in a great flood, but that she and her followers would be rescued by a flying saucer and transported to another, paradisiacal world. A specific date was set for these events, which of course never came to pass. While some followers left the group in disappointment, others began to proselytize energetically to attract further adherents to their cult. Those who left the movement had been relatively isolated as individuals, while those who turned to evangelism had been able to offer each other social support.

The researchers' explanation drew on the theory of cognitive dissonance. The disconfirmation of the prophecy had resulted in psychological stress, exposing the Seekers to internal doubt and external ridicule. One way to relieve the tension was to liquidate commitment to the cult, but another way was to engage in proselytism. Attraction of a body of believers willing to accept the Seekers' rationalization that God had postponed the catastrophe because of their faith would effectively eliminate the cognitive dissonance.

The Festinger group pointed out some analogies from the history of religious movements, for example, the turning of the apostles to evangelism after the death of Jesus and the persistence of the Millerites, ultimately leading to Seventh Day Adventism, after the failure of their millennial expectations in 1844. Early on, Hardyck and Braden showed in another case study that increased proselytism was not

a necessary outcome of the failure of prophecy, even when all the conditions of the Festinger study were present (Hardyk and Braden, 1962: 136-41).

Zygmunt's analysis of the history of the Jehovah's Witnesses showed that they did not make a decisive commitment to world-wide proselytism until after suffering no less than five failures of millennial prophecy (1878, 1881, 1914, 1918, 1925), (Zygmunt, 1970: 926-48).¹ He found a typical cycle of reaction, consisting of "disappointment," "watchful waiting," "conjectures," reinterpretation of the prophecy, and "issuance of redated predictions," (933-34). The reinterpretations were particularly noteworthy. In each case, the Witnesses first asserted the claim that its previously advanced prophecies had been, in fact, partially fulfilled, or that some event of prophetic significance had actually transpired on the dates in question. The "events" selected to give substance to this claim were supernatural and hence not open to disconfirmation (934).

For example, the outbreak of World War I in 1914 was said to mark the "end of the time of the Gentiles." Each failure was "thus redefined in retrospect in a manner which provided non-empirical confirmation for the group's chiliastic outlook" (934).

A separate line of work by German theologians on the problem of the *Parousieverzoegerung* (delay of the Second Coming) in early Christianity has highlighted a special kind of eschatological reinterpretation, for which Ernst Benz has created the awkward but useful concept of "de-eschatologizing." For Benz, de-eschatologizing is "the removal of the original basic attitude toward the end of time in the gospel message" (Benz, 1968: 28). Following authorities such as Albert Schweitzer (1968), Benz sees the gospel message as essentially millenarian. The early Christians, in his view, were forced to deal with persistent delay in the return of Jesus to earth, foretold by the books of the New Testament. The problem was finally given a definitive solution by Augustine's ecclesiology and his reinterpretation of the Book of Revelation. According to Augustine, the Kingdom of God was not a future event to be expected, but a present condition in which the faithful participated. The Church, as the visible aspect of the City of God, could mediate salvation to its members; one did not have to wait for the Parousia. Augustine's *tour de force* retained all the gospel symbols of eschatological redemption but transformed them from objects of imminent expectation into theological dogmas without pressing temporal significance.

Converging with this line of theological investigation, there is also a new generation of psychologically inspired Scriptural studies drawing explicitly on cognitive dissonance theory and focusing on the disciples' reaction to the Crucifixion. These authors interpret Christological dogmas, such as the Resurrection, as the disciples' reaction to the disappointment of their hopes that Jesus would be revealed in His lifetime as the Messiah (Wernik, 1975; Jackson, 1975; Gager, 1975).

Drawing together the work done thus far on the failure of prophecy, one may identify certain typical responses:

- 1) Postponement of the date.
- 2) Reinterpretation of the events, suggesting that
 - a) the prophecy has actually been fulfilled, at least partially, but in an invisible or supernatural manner not subject to empirical falsification.
 - b) the faithful have somehow misunderstood God's providential plan.
 - c) further fulfillment will occur in the future.
- 3) Membership purges, in the belief that the failure of the end to come is God's punishment for the group's moral weakness or lack of faith (Zygmunt, 1972: 261).
- 4) Proselytism, especially if a suitable reinterpretation can be achieved and if adherents are able to offer social support to each other.
- 5) De-eschatologizing, a specific form of reinterpretation, suggesting that the fulfillment has occurred, albeit in a spiritual way, and that orientation to the future is no longer appropriate.
- 6) Resurgence of millenarian expectations, as adherents rediscover the original meaning of the de-eschatologized message.
- 7) Falling away, especially if the disconfirmation is so severe that no reinterpretation seems to work, and if adherents are relatively isolated from one another.

The rest of this paper will offer an interpretation of Black Muslim history based on the failure of prophecy literature. It will posit the non-event of the "Fall of America" as an ideological watershed in the movement's development, from which all the typical phenomena of failure of prophecy have arisen. This analysis makes the Nation of Is-

lam more intelligible within the scholarly panorama of millenarian movements.

History of the Nation of Islam

The emergence of the Nation of Islam in the 1930s marked the coming together of two trends: the mass movement of Blacks to the urban centres of the Northern United States (a demographic change made more potent by the Great Depression), (Lincoln, 1973), and their search for a political identity.² Millenarianism is an appealing doctrine for the poor and oppressed; in the race-conscious America of the mid-twentieth century, it was especially attractive.

The Nation began under the leadership of Wallace Fard, who was later interpreted by his followers as the Great Mahdi incarnate; but it was Elijah Muhammad, one of his first ministers, who shaped and defined the group's doctrine.³ The belief system of the Nation of Islam has changed considerably during the past fifty years; outlined below is its original doctrine.

A fundamental tenet of the Nation's doctrine was that Wallace Fard was actually God or Allah; God is not, as Christianity teaches, a spiritual being. The concept of a spiritual deity "enslaves the minds of the ignorant" with the promise of a spiritual hereafter (E. Muhammad, 1965: 3). While traditional Islam maintains that the last Prophet of Allah was Muhammad, the Nation interpreted Elijah Muhammad as the Last Messenger of Wallace Fard.

The purpose of Wallace Fard's mission was to awaken Black Americans to their status as the Chosen People of Allah. Blacks were the earth's original inhabitants and all belonged to the tribe of Shabazz. In prehistory the tribe had lived in perfect peace in Mecca, but their serenity was destroyed 6000 years ago with the birth of Yakub, a boy destined to "break peace, kill and destroy his own people with a made enemy," (E. Muhammad, 1965: 127). Yakub discovered the principle that "unlike attracts and like repels," and with this knowledge he intended to rule all Blacks. The authorities at Mecca eventually deported Yakub and his followers to the isle of Pelan, where he conducted genetic experiments aimed at transforming Blacks into Whites. His experiments were successful, and upon their completion, he returned with the Whites to Mecca. Created out of lies and greed, they were a truly evil people:

As they [grew] lighter and lighter they grew weaker and weaker. Their blood became weaker, their bones became weaker, their minds became weaker, their morals became weaker (X, 1971: 56).

The Whites easily swayed the inhabitants of Mecca and eventually came to rule the world. Their intrinsically evil nature, however, led them to commit heinous crimes, the worst of which was the enslavement of Blacks. According to Elijah Muhammad's prophecy, their 6,000 year rule of the world was ending in the twentieth century.

The Muslims' vision of an earthly salvation prompted a strict moral code. Members were forbidden to smoke, drink alcohol, take drugs, and gamble. As well, the Muslim leadership emphasized the institution of the family. Divorce was permitted but frowned upon, and sins such as adultery were harshly punished.

Elijah Muhammad's demand for a separate state on the North American continent was much publicized. Lincoln has noted, however, that the Messenger never acted as if the separation of the races were viable. Elijah had no concrete plans for separation, and the Nation's economic holdings were scattered across the United States (Lincoln, 1973: 100-102). But in much of the Nation's literature this demand was presented as the last opportunity for White America to redeem itself, something the Muslims held little hope for. In the context of an imminent millennium the separatist demand was trivial; Black Americans would soon receive their reward.

The Fall of America was the logical culmination of the Nation's doctrine. The ultimate downfall of Yakub's devils was prophesied in the Book of Revelation;⁴ its occurrence would reintroduce the bliss enjoyed by the tribe of Shabazz in Mecca. The demise of the White race had begun with World War I, the "War of the Anti-Christ," but Allah had granted a fifty-year period of grace. Elijah wrote:

The years 1965 and 1966 are going to be fateful for America, bringing in the "Fall of America" ... this is the setting of the nations for a showdown to determine who will live on earth. The survivor is to build a nation of peace to rule the people forever under the guidance of Almighty God, Allah (E. Muhammad, 1965: 270).

The millennium would be ushered in by an apocalyptic "battle in the sky." The Muslims interpreted Ezekiel's Wheel as representing "a small human planet made for the purpose of destroying the present world of the enemies of Allah," (E. Muhammad, 1965: 270). Carrying fifteen hundred bombing planes, this powerful "Mother of Planes" would initiate the fight against White America. Elijah noted that the Whites had been stockpiling aircraft since 1914 in preparation for this battle.

Elijah Muhammad's prediction of the Fall of America for 1965-66 opened the way for disappointment if the Fall did not take place. Because this time was so lengthy, however, it is difficult to assess the point at which the prophecy's "failure" was perceived by Elijah's followers. The Muslims' newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*' carried articles referring to the Fall throughout 1965 and 1966, but these varied greatly in their interpretation of the apocalypse: some referred to it as currently in progress,⁵ some pushed it further into the future,⁶ and others hinted that it had already partially occurred.⁷

By the close of 1966, however, the Fall had still not happened. The Muslims' immediate response was silence. References to the Fall abruptly disappeared from their publications, and 1967 became a period of reassessment for the Nation. The Fall of America returned to the Nation's rhetoric in 1968, but much of the early vigour had disappeared. Although the context of his prophecy had not changed significantly, Elijah Muhammad no longer made reference to specific dates for its occurrence.

His interpretation of the Fall of America varied greatly during the early 1970s. In many speeches, he appeared to be deschatologizing the Nation's doctrine,⁸ but in others he remained as vehement as ever in his belief that America would fall.⁹ The fluctuations in his statements were so great that it is impossible to determine any pattern to them. Members of the Nation, however, seemed to accept these variations without question. For almost a decade, the Muslims suffered cognitive dissonance without apparent effort to eliminate it.

Festinger *et al.* assumed that cognitive dissonance would always move individuals to attempt its reduction. For the Nation of Islam, this was clearly not the case, at least not over a short run of several years. It must be kept in mind that Muslim theology was already far removed from the rationalistic outlook of contemporary White society, so that dissonance arising from the failure of prophecy may not have been nearly so great to Muslims as it seemed to external observers. Also, Robert Carroll suggests that cognitive dissonance can function as an adaptive mechanism. Rather than immediately attempting to eliminate it, individuals learn from the tension and conflict the dissonance causes (Carroll, 1979: 104). This theory may help to explain the Muslims' behaviour. By the 1970s, the Nation existed in a world fundamentally different from that in which it had emerged. Politically, the Muslims faced a less segregated America. Also, as they had become a more institutionalized feature of Ameri-

can religious life, they had come under increasing pressure to conform to orthodox Islam. Their oscillation between beliefs forced them to reflect upon the Fall of America in the context of improved race relations in the United States and pressure from the international Islamic community.

By the mid-1970s, this process had begun to resolve itself. Before his death in 1975, Elijah Muhammad was tending toward a more moderate doctrine. Although he continued to identify Whites with evil, his last major speech to the Nation called for respect among men of all races, and he permitted Caucasians to share the podium with him (N. Muhammad interview, 1986, and *Muhammad Speaks*, March 28, 1975).

Media speculation about factionalism within the movement had been rampant in the weeks preceding Elijah Muhammad's death. The leadership transition, however, took place without incident. Elijah Muhammad named his son Wallace as his successor. In many ways, Wallace Muhammad was a surprising choice for the movement's leadership. He had had a turbulent history within the group; not only had he openly disagreed with his father on a number of occasions, but he had been ousted from the organization several times (Marsh, 1984: 69-76).

Wallace abruptly moved the Nation of Islam from a doctrine of political millenarianism to one of orthodox Islam. Not surprisingly, the first change that he made in the Nation's doctrine was the deschatologizing of his father's millenarian prophecy. In a series of articles in *Muhammad Speaks*, he detailed the new doctrine of the Second Resurrection.

There are revealing parallels in ... [Christ's] spiritual resurrection and our resurrection as a people in the body — Christ of the Second Coming, which is the Nation of Islam, The Second Coming of Christ is a gift of a community by or from the Divine Hand. Revelations [sic] 21:1-3.¹⁰

The Second Resurrection was no longer to be understood as an apocalyptic event but as a continuing mission. As a religious community, the Muslims had a responsibility to bring others to their faith.

The Mission of the nation of Islam is to restore the total man, the total life, the total community ... We are not going to give up the city and go to some artificial garden of Eden ... We haven't given up on civilization ... We're going to give it birth again ...¹¹

Wallace Muhammad specifically reinterpreted important aspects of the Muslims' eschatology, most notably Elijah's interpretation of Ezekiel's wheel:

Ezekiel saw this body as a wheel (Nation of Islam) in a wheel (world community), the Revelator saw it as a city manifested down from the sky, indicating a divinely revealed community.¹²

Much as Augustine had interpreted New Testament eschatology to view the Church as the embodiment of the Kingdom of God on earth, Wallace changed the apocalyptic vision of Ezekiel's Wheel into a symbol of the Muslims' divinely revealed community. By interpreting the Nation as having partially fulfilled its role in raising Black consciousness and moving Blacks to Islam (the "First Resurrection"), Wallace tied the history of the Nation to the Black movement, and at the same time allowed the Nation to become a non-millenarian religious community.

This new mission demanded that many facets of the Muslims' original doctrine be reinterpreted. In June of 1975, the Nation held a large gathering at Chicago's McCormick Place. With the statement "What was good teaching for yesterday was good for yesterday ... the same is not good for today,"¹³ Wallace initiated perhaps the most radical change possible in the Muslims' doctrine. One hundred days after his father's death, he announced, "from now on, whites will be considered fully human."¹⁴ No longer was the term "white devil" to be used, and Whites were to be permitted and encouraged to join the Nation.

You can destroy a devil by destroying the mind that the person has grown within them ... Today the Nation ... is destroying the devil without hands by casting him into our lake of Fire (Divine Truth and Knowledge).¹⁵

The only devil now to be conquered was ignorance.

In late 1975, Wallace made another important symbolic change when he chose the term "Bilalian," derived from the name of Bilal Ibn Rabah, to represent the American Black community.¹⁶ The slave Bilal, by his life and spiritual conviction, symbolized their historical experience, and provided a model of religious devotion for them to imitate. This change in name was an important step for the Nation; by overriding their identity as Americans, it drew them closer to the international Islamic community.

In the following year, Wallace made further but less sweeping changes to the Nation. They included: restoring Malcolm X's place in the Nation's history,¹⁷ formally renouncing his father's demand for land, (Whitehurst, 1980: 226), and flying the American flag at Muslim meetings (Williams and Sciolino, 1976: 33). In March of 1976, he announced that Wallace Fard would no longer be considered Allah,

and that Elijah Muhammad would no longer be interpreted as his Messenger. They were to be considered mere men, albeit divinely inspired.

In late 1976, Wallace initiated a second wave of changes that shaped the now moderate group of Muslims into an Islamic community. On October 18, the Nation of Islam became the World Community of al-Islam in the West (WCIW).¹⁸ In 1977, he completed the movement's transformation by renaming the Muslims' Temples "Masjids," and disbanding the Fruit of Islam, their private police force. During the 1980s, the WCIW continued its development as a religious community. In 1980 it became the American Muslim Mission, and in 1985, simply a Muslim community.

Although the changes made by Wallace Muhammad were accepted by the majority of Muslims, a small group were unhappy with the alterations he made to his father's doctrine. In 1978, Minister Louis Farrakhan publicly voiced his doubts and left the organization. After his departure from the WCIW, Farrakhan reflected upon Elijah Muhammad's original message and "stood back up," (A.W. Muhammad interview, 1986), determined to rebuild the Nation of Islam. He revived the myth of Yakub, Elijah's eschatological vision of Ezekiel's Wheel, and the Fall of America. This prophecy has played a major role in the recent history of the Nation of Islam; its reappearance, in various forms, marks the evolution of the movement.

In the first issue of his new publication, *The Final Call*, Farrakhan reported a discussion with Elijah Muhammad in 1972. The Messenger had allegedly stated to him:

Brother, I don't like to talk about this because it gives me great pain but the Nation is going to take a dive for the second time ... But, don't worry Brother. It will be rebuilt and it will never fall again ... Go exactly as you see me go and do exactly as you see me do ... you must practice righteousness or they (the enemy) will piece you in two ...¹⁹

This connection not only gave him added legitimacy, but also allowed the organization's division to be understood as a religious event, rather than merely the result of factionalism. The Minister began the "new" Nation by establishing study groups across the United States; highlighting the change in socio-economic status Elijah Muhammad's original members had undergone, few left Wallace's organization. Farrakhan's membership was, for the most part, newly recruited.

The 1980s made changes to Elijah Muhammad's teachings necessary and inevitable. Evidence of this surfaced in 1984, in an event that brought the Nation to the attention of the national press. Elijah had always questioned the logic of participating in the American political system (E. Muhammad, 1965: 218). 1984, however, saw Jesse Jackson's campaign to become the presidential candidate of the Democratic Party, and Louis Farrakhan supported his candidacy.

Throughout the campaign, the strength of Farrakhan's emotional involvement was evidenced in his speeches. While Jackson still appeared to have a chance of winning the Democratic leadership, Farrakhan's optimism led him to tone down his political rhetoric.²⁰ But after a series of political blunders in April of 1984 hurt Jackson's popularity, Farrakhan responded in an outspoken manner. At various times that month he "threatened a reporter with death,"²¹ deemed Adolph Hitler a "wickedly great man,"²² and criticized Michael Jackson for projecting a "female-acting sissified image."²³

As the leadership campaign progressed, Louis Farrakhan came to identify the possibility of Jackson's failure with the Fall of America:

The end of America is now in sight. You could save your miserable lives, but you're too filthy and wicked. You hate me for warning you. You hate me for defending ... my brother, the Rev. Jesse Jackson. Before 1986 comes in, we will close out both books — the Bible and the Holy Koran — and the world will be in the throes of that which will destroy every power ... in preparation for a new gospel ...²⁴

No apocalyptic events occurred as a result of Jesse Jackson's defeat, and the movement was once again faced with the problem of failure of prophecy. Rather than de-eschatologizing the Nation's doctrine, Farrakhan altered the content of his prophecy. The Muslims were gradually becoming more a part of the international Islamic community, and in response to this, they developed a more encompassing interpretation of the Fall of America.

Early in 1985, Farrakhan began a nationwide tour to promote POWER (People Organized and Working for Economic Rebirth), his plan for the economic development of black Americans. Funded by a five-million-dollar loan from Libya, POWER aimed to develop an economically independent Black population, as Elijah Muhammad attempted in the 1960s. His appearance in New York city became a major media event. In New York, Mayor Koch denounced him,²⁵ as did Governor Mario Cuomo,²⁶ while the Jewish Defence League held a Death to Farrakhan march.²⁷ The Nation rather abruptly began to in-

terpret this New York gathering as Judgement Day. *The Final Call* tied the meeting to UFO sightings, and implicitly to their interpretation of Ezekiel's Wheel. Articles in the paper referred to the occasion as *Al-Ghashiya*, (the Overwhelming Event), a Qur'anic reference to Judgment Day.

1986 began with Farrakhan redefining his mission within the Nation, and formally declaring a new direction for the movement.²⁸ The Minister had determined that his eight-year term as an evangelist was over; the time had come to develop the Muslims' spiritual beliefs. In order to develop more fully the Nation's ties to other Islamic countries, he departed on a tour of the Middle East, visiting a number of countries, including Libya. The Nation had always maintained close ties with that state, and in light of Ronald Reagan's threats to Colonel Qathafi, Farrakhan determined that bond should be closer. In his address to the Second World Mathaba Conference in Tripoli, Farrakhan described a dream revealing Ronald Reagan was planning to destroy Libya; the President had "put himself in the position of chief devil."²⁹ This religious/political vision became more developed during the Minister's tour, and was intensified by the American bombing of Libya in April. Gradually, the apocalypse became contingent on the aggressive actions of the American government against other nations, particularly Islamic ones. (A.W. Muhammad interview, 1986). Unlike the short-lived prophecies concerning Farrakhan's New York meeting, this interpretation of the Fall appears relatively permanent. It takes into account the Muslims' new religious and political perspective, as well as America's treatment of "the oppressed within her stomach," (A.W. Muhammad interview, 1986).

Although the Muslims have become increasingly moderate in some aspects, (in late 1986 Farrakhan initiated a mass program of Qur'anic study), their belief in the apocalypse remains alive. In January of 1987, after the alleged sighting of three UFOs by a Japanese pilot, Farrakhan issued the warning that Wallace Fard and Elijah Muhammad before him had made:

BELOVED BLACK PEOPLE, FLY TO ALLAH AND SEEK REFUGE IN HIM BECAUSE THE TIME OF THE END OF THE WORLD IS AT HAND.³⁰

Conclusion

This evidence permits several observations. First, there was no dramatic juxtaposition between failure of prophecy and increased proselytism, as reported by Festinger *et al.* in the case of the Seekers.

This is not surprising, since neither Elijah Muhammad nor Louis Farrakhan assigned to the Fall of America a date definite enough for a precise disconfirmation. Disappointment arose, but a complete failure of prophecy did not occur. In both cycles of prophecy, adherents have shown themselves capable of living for years with unfulfilled prophecy.

The major development has obviously been the de-eschatologizing of the Nation's doctrine carried out by Wallace Muhammad. In a very short period of time, he led his followers from millenarian expectation to a *rapprochement* with White society. This required a reinterpretation of the central symbols of Elijah's prophecy, such as the Fall of America, Ezekiel's Wheel, and the Resurrection. Wallace's strategy was to give an interior or spiritual meaning to symbols which had previously been understood in an exterior or physical way. In this he imitated the path of development of early Christian theology.

Farrakhan's return to the original message is also noteworthy. It recreated in miniature a situation often found in Christianity, namely the opposition between mainline churches accommodating themselves to society and radical sects living in expectation of the imminent Second Coming. Just as millenarian and non-millenarian Christians both draw inspiration from the same Scriptures, interpreted in different ways, so do both branches of the Black Muslims consider themselves the legitimate inheritors of the teaching of Fard and Elijah.

But prophecy remains a problem even for millenarian fundamentalists like Farrakhan's group. As they repeatedly experience the failure of their predictions of the Fall of America, one may expect them to make their own *rapprochement* with reality. Their ongoing efforts at close affiliation with the world religion of Islam suggest that they too will eventually de-eschatologize their message. Future students of the Black Muslims, as of other millenarian movements, should pay due attention to these developmental dramas that are played out long after the initial period of excitement.

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FOOTNOTES

¹For an update on the Witnesses, who also committed themselves to 1975, see Penton, 1985.

²The following section is based on Lee, 1987.

³The Nation's belief system is outlined in three works: *The Message to the Blackman in America*, *The Supreme Wisdom: Solution to the So-Called Negroes' Problem* and *The Teaching for the Lost Found Nation of Islam in a Mathematical Way*. Analysis of the Muslims' doctrine is here based on the first of these three books. Access to the latter works is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain.

⁴While the Muslims purported to shun Christianity ("the slavemasters' religion"), many of their teachings were based upon the Old and New Testaments. Their eschatology reflected their religious knowledge and experience. Wallace Fard, Elijah Muhammad, and their early followers were all more familiar with the Bible than the Qur'an.

⁵See, for example, *Muhammad Speaks*, July 30, 1965, p. 1.

⁶See, for example, *Muhammad Speaks*, February 12, 1965, p. 3.

⁷See, for example, *Muhammad Speaks*, January 7, 1966, pp. 1-2.

⁸*Muhammad Speaks*, February 19, 1971, p. 16.

⁹*Muhammad Speaks*, February 11, 1972, p. 4.

¹⁰*Muhammad Speaks*, May 2, 1975, p. 1.

¹¹*Muhammad Speaks*, May 23, 1975, p. 16.

¹²*Muhammad Speaks*, May 9, 1975, p. 1.

¹³*Muhammad Speaks*, July 14, 1975, p. 3.

¹⁴*Time*, June 30, 1975, p. 44.

¹⁵*Muhammad Speaks*, July 11, 1975, p. 13.

- ¹⁶Muhammad Speaks, October 24, 1975.
¹⁷The New York Times, February 2, 1976, p. 1.
¹⁸The New York Times, October 19, 1976, p. 33.
¹⁹The Final Call, May 1979, p. 3.
²⁰See, for example, The Chicago Tribune, February 26, 1984, IV, p. 5.
²¹The Chicago Tribune, April 4, 1984, p. 2.
²²The Chicago Tribune, April 15, 1984, V, p. 11.
²³The Chicago Tribune, April 11, 1984, p. 1.
²⁴The Chicago Tribune, April 15, 1984, V, p. 1.
²⁵The New York Times, October 9, 1985, II, p. 6.
²⁶The Final Call, December 1985, p. 4.
²⁷The New York Times, October 7, 1985, II, p. 4.
²⁸The Final Call, December 1985, p. 18.
²⁹The Final Call, May 30, 1986, p. 19.
³⁰The Final Call, January 31, 1987, p. 29.

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